

Who Saved the Parthenon?

A New History of the Acropolis
Before, During and After the
Greek Revolution



WILLIAM ST CLAIR



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Cover image: Figure 2.7. 'View of the Acropolis from the banks of the Illysus, Sep^r 1824.' Chromolithograph from a contemporary amateur picture. From: William Black, L.R.C.S.E., Surgeon, H.M.S. Chanticleer, *Narrative of Cruises in the Mediterranean in H.M.S. "Euryalus" and "Chanticleer" during the Greek War of Independence (1822–1826)* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1900), frontispiece. The chromolithograph was made by McLagan and Cumming of Edinburgh c.1900. Public domain.

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Editors' Note

This book is the culmination of decades of immersion in its material and years of painstakingly careful research and writing. Sadly the author, William St Clair, died in 2021 shortly before the manuscript was planned to go into production. He left behind electronic folders filled with his most recent drafts of the book's many chapters. It was our task, together with all the staff at Open Book Publishers, the academic press of which William St Clair was chairman, to make the book ready for publication.

Most of the chapters were in a polished state, but several bore the marks of unfinished drafting and one, which he had only just begun to write, had to be abandoned, its material folded into other chapters of the book. The task of editing the manuscript was therefore a complex one. We worked closely on the significant revisions required, balancing the final changes needed to craft a book worthy of William St Clair's distinguished academic record while remaining faithful to what we thought were his precise intentions. The guidance of Roderick Beaton was invaluable in steering us through the many pitfalls that might otherwise have arisen when editing a book whose author was no longer there to clarify points of confusion, smooth out wrinkles or correct previously unnoticed errors. Thanks are also due to Emily Lane, who worked with William St Clair and provided him with a keen editorial eye during earlier phases of the writing process, and to Sam Noble, who helped us in the final stage.

Every effort has been made to find any information that was missing from the references and captions, but inevitably in such a large book, without the author to lay his hand on the required volume or to interpret a cryptic note, the occasional gap may remain.

The most radical decision we took was to remove five chapters from the manuscript entirely and include them in a soon-to-be-published separate volume, *The Classical Parthenon: Recovering the Strangeness of the*

Ancient World. It had always been William St Clair's plan to release these chapters to be published on their own, in what he called a customised edition. The majority of readers of this latter volume he thought would be classical scholars who would not necessarily be interested in the modern Parthenon during the Romantic era, the Greek Revolution and up to the present day. However he did intend that all the chapters also remained in the larger single volume. It was our decision that, in an already lengthy book, we should pay heed to the instinct that had first led William St Clair to separate out these customised chapters. We hope that our efforts as editors have helped to make this first of two books a superb literary legacy from an outstanding scholar with a lifelong interest in the Parthenon and all its meanings.

David St Clair and Lucy Barnes March 2022.

Preface

William St Clair, who died on 30 June 2021 at the age of 83, while this book was in preparation for press, is justly well known to readers interested in the ancient monuments of Athens and particularly in the fortunes of their sculptures since the early nineteenth century. *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, first published in 1967, tells the story of the flawed Scottish aristocrat who determined to take advantage of his appointment as HM Ambassador to Constantinople, in 1799, in order to improve the standards of the decorative arts in Great Britain—and ended up transporting a large part of the sculpted monuments from the Acropolis of Athens to London, where they later ended up in the British Museum. Thirty years after that book's first publication, the author returned to the controversial story of these 'marbles' in a third edition, published in 1998, that added much new material about the monuments and raised searching issues about the custodianship of cultural heritage. No less of a classic is St Clair's second book, first published in 1972 and reissued in 2008 with much new visual material thanks to the possibilities of digital publishing offered by Open Book Publishers. *That Greece Might Still Be Free* tells in unprecedented detail the often tragic stories of those European and American volunteers who risked everything to go and fight in the Greek Revolution, or War of Independence, during the 1820s.

As might be expected, the author returns to the themes of both those books in *Who Saved the Parthenon?*—but with a considerable difference. During the intervening decades this most versatile of scholars had turned his attention to such diverse matters as what he called the 'political economy of reading', the early history of feminism, and the history of slavery, as well as becoming a champion of Open Access publishing. All of these separate strands come together in the remarkable richness of the present book. Drawing on his in-depth study of publishing practices and reading habits in Britain from the first printed books to

the mid-nineteenth century, published in 2004 as *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, St Clair had more recently applied himself to developing a concept of ‘viewing’ to match that of ‘reading’ that he had explored in that book. In the chapters which follow, the author of *The Reading Nation* maps out what he calls ‘a history of conjunctures of consumption’, as he discusses the many contrasting, overlapping, and self-contradictory ways in which different categories of viewer, and many different individuals of many different backgrounds and nationalities, have viewed the ancient monuments of the Acropolis from the seventeenth century to the present—with the lion’s share going to the period immediately before, during and after the Greek Revolution of the 1820s.

During the same period, St Clair had addressed the early history of feminism in Britain, in the twelve volumes of facsimiles of rare editions, with editorial introductions and commentary, *Conduct Literature for Women*, edited with Irmgard Maassen. Covering the period from 1500 to 1710, these appeared in two sets of six volumes in 2000 and 2002 respectively. The history of slavery became the subject of another large-scale monograph with the publication in 2006 of *The Grand Slave Emporium: Cape Coast Castle and the British Slave Trade*, published a year later in the USA as *The Door of No Return, The History of Cape Coast Castle and the Transatlantic Slave Trade*.

Together with its companion volume, *The Classical Parthenon: Recovering the Strangeness of the Ancient World* (on which see the Editors’ Note), *Who Saved the Parthenon?* draws together all these disparate themes and approaches. The result is a complex synthesis that is hard to categorise, or to compare with other books, including the author’s own, that traverse some of the same terrain. Two causes espoused vigorously by William St Clair in his later years—the history and ethics of the custodianship of cultural heritage (as exemplified in the emblematic case of the ‘Elgin Marbles’) and the value of Open Access publishing—animate the whole project, the first as a running theme (though never, this time, the dominating one), the second in the book’s expansive structure, its inclusion of a wealth of visual images, on a scale that would scarcely have been possible in a volume designed to be bound and marketed by traditional methods, and, of course, the collaboration with Open Book Publishers.