

The Parthenon by Mary Beard.

Profile Books Ltd., 2010.

This is an updated version of Professor Beard's biography of the great Greek monument originally published in 2002 as part of a series which took in other such structures, some still standing like the Coliseum, others no longer extant like the Temple in Jerusalem.

The book follows a similar pattern to others in the series, investigating the history of the Parthenon itself, its representation in art and literature, its broader artistic and architectural influence, and providing a practical and detailed guide for those wishing to explore the site itself.

Undoubtedly what prompted this revised text was the opening of the new Acropolis Museum in June 2009 and the latest outbreak of hostilities between the Greek authorities and the British Museum over the ownership of the Elgin Marbles; Beard, who is not known for being reluctant to express her opinions, sits on the fence with regard to the issue, admitting in her concluding paragraph that the Parthenon and its sculpture 'have come to stand for deracination, dismemberment, desire and loss' [p.201].

Nevertheless, all controversies aside, the Parthenon remains one of the wonders of both the ancient and the modern world, a truth that remains unaffected by the controversies that periodically swirl around it.

Mary Beard's book would make an excellent companion for anyone planning to visit Athens, although only the outside of the Parthenon will be visible until at least 2020!

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