

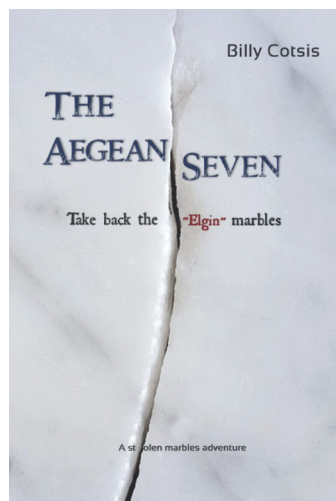
Book Review

The Aegean Seven Take Back the 'Elgin' Marbles

Cotsis (B.) Pp xxx. + 128, ills. Independently published, 2021. Paper, £6.99.
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As with all the reviews I write for the Journal of Classics Teaching, my task is to gauge the suitability of a book for teacher use in classroom instruction. Whatever my personal feelings about a book, I try to stick to this goal. Therefore, I will say at the outset that I do not believe *The Aegean Seven* to be suitable for classroom instruction. Without a doubt, students taking Classical Civilisation, Ancient History or Ancient Greek in middle or high school are likely to study the fifth

century building programme on the Acropolis, and I would imagine that most teachers who implement such courses would spend time covering the removal of the Parthenon marbles from the Acropolis by Lord Elgin. The post-classical history of the Parthenon marbles is dramatic, engaging, and has far-reaching consequences that affect politics and international cultural relations to this day. A well-written work of fiction on this topic would be a great ancillary read for students.

However, the body-shaming language of *The Aegean Seven*, (Lord Elgin is constantly referred to as a 'little fatty'), the sex scenes (albeit tame), and the slightly confusing storyline do cause me not to recommend this to my fellow teachers of Classics. This aside, instructional time in the classroom with students gets ever more precious while the requirements from examining boards are ever more stringent, so the introduction of any book less than vital, less than helpful, less than inspiring, seems wasteful.

The premise of this book is a fictionalised account of seven people who work together to take back the Parthenon marbles from the British Museum. The author describes it as a 'dramedy', 'An Ocean Eleven minus Brad Pitt meets Dan Brown, Byron and Thucydides'. For me, the storyline fell a little short of this. However, there were definitely things I appreciated on a personal level about Cotsis' work. For example, I appreciated Bouboulina's cameo role as she definitely doesn't appear enough in literature, and I appreciated the naming of one protagonist as Melina, after Melina Mercuri, late champion of the marbles' return to Greece. I also appreciated how the book spotlights the struggles of the early eighteenth century and the author's challenge to the reader to learn as much as they can about Greek places from 'Alexandria and the Cyrene to Constanta and Mariopoulis and more'. For teachers of the ancient world however, I just don't think that this book is the one with which to do it.

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