

Hellenic Cultural Association “Nostos”

under the auspices of the Greek Embassy in Argentina

3rd International Literary Competition

Subject:

“The Parthenon Marbles: The history of a looting or the looting of history?”

Participation in the contest with the literary text

“The Sacred Dance of the Caryatids”

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In the sky of Attiki the sun shines like a flame that is never put out; a dazzling flame constantly strengthened by the wind. Under the sun the houses, the roads, the children, the people, the geraniums on the balconies and the bougainvilleas, the cars and the cement, the streets, the place, the land, the statues at the Propylea and the Roman Market with the peddles, the faux bijoux at the hands of the university students.

In the center of Athens, a popular neighborhood is at a short distance from Omonia Square, people are in need of a job and a good, decent future for their children. Under the sun of Attiki, there, in the main road of this neighborhood, the big building shines like a recently whitened wall of an island house. *Academy of the Spirit* it was named by the Master who founded it. A sacred place.

The Master said that *just as in ancient Greece there was a Sacred University, in modern times there is this place where spirit can be expressed and the line that unites the Universe with man can become a little more visible; the inner line. The union that has not yet become knowledge but exists nevertheless between the Creator and His creations.*

It is summer night and at the Academy students are conversing at the big hall. The Master is among them. Forever present. Even after fifteen years from his death. Constantine, one of the older students, says that the marbles on the floors should be changed, many years have gone by and the time has come to lay a new base. The rest agree, they support the suggestion and propose ideas for its realization. Although the amount of money needed is considerable and the Academy's resources are limited because they come only from subscriptions, in a few days a truck unloads the new floor at the entrance of the building. The material is white marble from the mountain of Dionisos and the joy of the students is inexpressible.

The workers' hands are experienced, the plates are placed side by side and the place is gradually taking a new form. On the foundation of the Academy white rocks are placed, sturdy, expensive, bright like the Aegean light, the same rocks exactly from which ancient temples were once built and statues of gods were carved.

Helen looks at the new floor and her eyes open widely like the ecstatic eyes of a child in front of a miracle. The bright light coming from the white colour of the marbles makes her eyes escape the present time. It is as if her gaze, while focusing on that ancient

material, travels in time and looks at the past, coming in contact with the images of an era the history of which remains unspoiled through time.

Later on, Helen said to her husband Constantine and the other students that as she was looking at the white marbles on the floor a thought, like a flash, crossed her mind. This new floor is a very good opportunity, it is mainly the base, to revive the “chorodromena”, dances taught by the Master to reveal the wisdom of body movements and to show that the movements of the arms, the legs, even the whole body and the facial expressions can very well express the balance of energy in the body and emit harmony and beauty in the surrounding space. Helen went on saying that as she had the idea of the revival of “chorodromena” at the same time she was sure that they could be performed again, that they were not forgotten since the time the Master taught them, because all knowledge lies within us, we know the semiology of the movements. The Master knew the field of the sacred dances and he taught it, so it is passed on to us. That is what she saw on the brand new floor: the everlasting dance of the body as it was once expressed in ancient times through the sacred dances and continues to be expressed nowadays through the memory cells.

As the first “chorodromena”, under the guidance of Helen, took place, the Academy’s students were becoming day by day a solid and unbreakable body which under the sounds of the ritual music were moving in harmony like a group of priests which expresses with outer movements the innerness of the ontological existence.

One night, Helen accidentally saw on TV some instances from the opening of the new Acropolis Museum. A lot of people were present, the officials’ speeches were well prepared, the statues, even through the TV screen made their presence impressive and radiant and Helen watched feeling very moved. Later on, after switching off the TV, she entered the internet to watch again this important day. Looking at the texts and the images, the interviews, the essays and the pictures, she randomly read some words of the professor of Classical Archeology of the Aristotle University, Dimitris Pandermalis, president of the New Museum of Acropolis. The professor said, announcing the beginning of an international meeting organized some time ago at the Museum, that “*we are not just talking of the return but of the reunion of the Sculptures*”. At a question of a

journalist “*which of the museum statues touches you the most?*” he had answered the following:

“At night, when I stay until late at the museum, I sit in the inner balcony and look at the Archaic Gallery. After five-ten minutes you start to get a little dizzy and you have the feeling that they start to move.”

At that moment in Helen’s mind came the choreography of the next “chorodromeno”. It would be called and would actually be “*The Ritual Dance of the Caryatids*”. Only a few hours were needed for Helen’s conception to be materialized. And the result was a beautiful “chorodromeno”! Six female students of the Academy – symbolically the six Caryatids which support the Temple of Erechtheion, the so-called “The Caryatid Porch” for which, it is told, that Ictinus was inspired while watching a ritual dance of the Virgins dedicated to the goddess Artemis – formed a Π shape, and with harmonious, soft and at the same time forceful in tension movements began to recreate the inner arrangement of those ancient maidens. Those attending this specific choreography said that it was as if they were witnessing the revelation of the female entity, her sacred and mystagogic inner expression, which only in ancient temples and co-temples such as the temple of Erechtheion, where multiple worships were under the same roof, is met.

Through the reconstruction of how the Caryatids stood, upright body, one knee slightly bend, sometimes one hand extended holding an offering to render and their gaze bright like the Pendelic marble, penetrating time looking alive and sparkling even today, the revival of the whole story was magic. In this “chorodromeno” the concepts of unity, group, of the collective ritual dancing act were expressed, as the heritage of history’s wisdom is transferred through time and meets with the next generations, the next maidens (Korai) consciously continuing to support the sacred temples of spirit through the centuries.

The group performing the “chorodromena” acquired the knowledge and the experience of how the Caryatids through their timeless support offered and still offer to the spiritual field of the land - where “land” is the whole planet – the eternal standing of the woman and were created to convey exactly this message. The female students of the Academy group were saying that after the conclusion of this “chorodromeno” they experienced the Offering, the Protection, the Support, the Vigilance and that the temples worldwide,

whether they are called Parthenons or Erechtheions or otherwise, are living organisms. Like man, their pillars are the arms and the bones of the feet and their bone marrow are the lead that holds the ancient pillars standing in time. And as the common wisdom says that the woman is the pillar of the house, so the ancient Caryatid is none other than the entity of the woman which has honorably accepted to be the support of the civilizations, to have the direct, clear gaze and look the whole planet into the eyes and convey the message of spirituality. The Caryatid, while holding in her hand the offering, becomes the priestess who offers to the world the fruits of spirit, the inner human beauty; and does so in eternity.

A few days after the night that Helen had seen on the internet the articles about the opening of the museum, she visited the new Museum of Acropolis with her husband and son. The sight was radiant, moving, the crowd standing in ecstasy in front of the eternal beauty of civilization and being close to the Caryatids their gaze seemed more alive and real than any recreation. On the opposite side, outside the big, clear, high technology glass which enters the visitors' sight in the inner space of the human existence, the Parthenon, the sacred rock made time look like a myth. You had the feeling looking at it that you were and still are in the ancient times, the past and present are united, undivided, the light of the day shining on the marbles brought to the atmosphere the shiver that someone would feel seeing alive the "Kaniphors", the virgins who carried the panniers at the procession of the Panathinea and are speculated to be the prototype for the Caryatids.

At some point Helen turned and looked randomly beside her. A tourist had slightly bended and was examining a detail from the fold on the tunic of a Caryatid. With his bended body in front of the statue, it seemed as if he was a pilgrim bowing to the civilization that this statue represented. Helen shivered all over. The sight shocked her. In her mind another image was formed, for the future of course but so alive as if it was in the present: that the marbles of the Parthenon return to Greece, at their place, at their sacred land and dance, because here on this sacred rock lays their magnetic field and this return is the union, is the coherence of the history of Greek people which was interrupted with the looting of the marbles. As a consequence, when the Turkish domination ended and the contemporary Greek state was founded, this act was the cause of the following

problems: the orphanage of civilization, war experiences, economic impediment of the inhabitants and most importantly the lack of cultural prototypes for the children.

In a few seconds Helen remembered intensely the analysis of this subject discussed in the Academy by the students sometimes at nights. They said that following the end of the Turkish domination, Greece was called upon to create, to establish better still, a contemporary state with roots in its ancient civilization, the Acropolis, which symbolically is the tree whose roots supply man - Greek or any other citizen of this world – with the intellectual field of the spirit. The patron forces might have helped Greece in its struggle for liberation but with the removal of sections from the Parthenon Marbles, in essence they broke the country's connection to its past; in a way the "flow of the river" was interrupted. Greece as a newly established state was prevented from reuniting its contemporary history with that of its ancestors. It was as if part of its roots connecting it with its spiritual field was cut off and as a result, although the "tree" existed and still exists, it is not properly developing. How is it possible for the country to find its place in the universal field of spiritual values when its spiritual base was bombarded? If it was left to come to light and become work, it would help the country to express the spiritual field for which the Parthenon was built. In other words, for the development of the philosophy, poetry, arts, music and prosperity not only within the country but across the whole planet as well, whose suffering is the consequence of the lack of coherence between its countries. How then is it possible for this country to continue to produce and export civilization when it is still missing the pieces of its stolen marbles?

A single image inside the new Acropolis Museum unfolded in front of Helen's eyes - a foreigner who unknowingly came and bowed respectfully in front of the tunic of a Caryatid - was enough to place at that exact moment with accuracy the history of the Greeks' civilization in its proper place.

The place of respect and admiration. The place of the world bowing in front of the beauty of spirit as it was expressed in ancient Greece and must continue to do so nowadays. This scene brought in Helen's mind the thought that the sacred group of Vigilance, Protection and Support of the universal temple of spirit is formed again, in the same way that in this place, the New Acropolis Museum, the spiritual values of civilization are guarded, the eternally alive Caryatids return and reach out their hand again in order to present their

offering to the whole world. And during their return, at the time when the sixth Caryatid is placed beside the others, at the moment when the statue's feet touch its ancestral land, Helen saw, as in a vision, that she bends and worships the place of reunion, the place where the historic past comes and takes its place on the base of the present and mainly the future. And Helen who bends and worships in essence is none other than the one woman, the spiritual, the ontological, the one who takes part in the sacred team through the soul, the sacred work of the Caryatids. The so-called timeless Maiden; the eternal "pillar..."