

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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14. The Living

When, in the late 1820s and early 1830s, the war eventually shuddered to an end, the human price that had been paid was everywhere to be seen. On the mainland, along both sides of the long, jagged, disputed, and still unofficial border that separated the warring parties, all the villages were in ruins.¹ The people were pale and malnourished and, in some places, starving. In 1827, the whitening bones of men and animals were still to be seen almost blocking the pass where the Greek insurgents had destroyed the army of Dramali in 1822. The local people, who showed them off proudly, were however on the edge of starvation, unable to eat the little food they had, a handful of rice a day, without being sick.² In 1833, another eyewitness reported that the bones were almost blocking the pass.³

- 1 The miseries of the population, including the widows and refugees, are unflinchingly described in 'Notes on Greece in 1829. From *The Journal of an Officer*', in *United Service Journal and Naval and Military Magazine*, London, 1830, 649–59. For example: 'Wherever you travel you are invariably struck with the emaciated, fever-like appearance of the inhabitants. Whether this arises from the state of filth they exist in, impurity of the air, poverty of food, or what evil cause, is not exactly decided upon'. Other eyewitness accounts include: '[With the single exception of Nauplia] every town and village on the mainland — I do not speak hyperbolically-is in ruins', Macgregor, 17, describing his visit in 1832; and 'Ruined houses, mosques with their tower only standing, streets utterly rased ... great patches of ruin a mile square as if a swarm of locusts had had the power of desolating the works of man as well as those of God'. Disraeli, *The Letters of Benjamin Disraeli*, edited by John Matthews *et al.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982–2014), i, 168, describing Ioannina in October 1830.
- 2 Barber and Brewer, 355–57. Brewer, an American missionary, who gave them copies of Greek New Testaments, notes the presence of orphans from Athens.
- 3 Strong, Frederick, Esq, Consul at Athens for their Majesties the Kings of Bavaria and Hanover, *Greece as a kingdom: or, A statistical description of that country, from the arrival of King Otho, in 1833, down to the present time: drawn up from official documents and other authentic sources* (London: Longman, 1842), 88. Strong says the bones were cleared away soon afterwards, and although anything of value is likely to have been taken, one day the remains may be excavated and subjected to analysis.

In May 1828, near Corinth, the Comte de Caraman saw people eating grass.⁴ An eye-witness tells of a man who had hanged himself rather than face slow death by starvation.⁵ There were reports of cannibalism.⁶ In 1834, on the island of Melos, with its strategically valuable harbour that was assigned to Greece, the pre-Revolution town of eight thousand inhabitants was, according to Colonel Temple, 'reduced to twenty sickly cadaverous looking peasants.'⁷ A visitor to Crete, which was assigned to the Ottomans, in the same year reckoned that, as a result of cleansing, illnesses, and migration, the population had fallen to half the level of 1821 and that the balance had swung heavily towards the Christians.⁸

In some regions there were scarcely any men to be seen other than the very old. Some survivors had lost limbs, or been blinded, had their tongues cut out or their ears cut off to be sent in bags to Constantinople, to be displayed alongside the severed heads and scattered in the streets as food for the dogs.⁹ Nor did fugitives arriving from elsewhere fare much better in a land unable to feed its own people. Near Navarino, John Carne who in 1822 was a visitor passing through in the tradition of the eighteenth-century travellers, described meeting a long, slow-moving column of survivors of the massacres in Chios (Scio) who had reached Greece by sea: 'the women were some of them dreadfully ill, reduced by famine and suffering, yet carrying their infants in their arms; the men were all on foot; the few surviving branches of families, strangers, orphans, and widows, were all blended together in one common bond

4 Caraman MS, British Library, i, opposite 31.

5 Cornille, 294.

6 Madox, John, *Excursions in the Holy Land, Egypt, Nubia, Syria, &c* (London: Bentley, 1834), i. 193. He reports, at i, 204, that he took away marble from the temple at Sounion.

7 Temple, i, 20. He was one of the few to doubt publicly whether the Revolution had been worth the human cost. A general view was offered by another visitor: '... de la Grèce, dispersés aujourd'hui sur des rochers, ne rappellent rien d'autrefois, et semblent placés là, pour contempler avec apathie, ce sol abandonné de leur vieille patrie. Dans tout cela, je ne vois point la Grèce! cette terre que je parcours n'est que la dépouille des âges accumulée sur un cadavre'. Cornille, Henri, *Souvenirs d'Orient* (Paris: Bertrand, 1836), 194. The relevance of the harbour, discussed in Chapter 5, to understanding the Melian dialogue composed by Thucydides is discussed in *The Classical Parthenon*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>.

8 Pashley, Robert ... *Travels in Crete* (Cambridge and London; Murray, 1837), ii, 325–26.

9 Noted by many, including Tietz, M. von, Prussian Counsellor of Legation, *St. Petersburg, Constantinople, and Napoli di Romania in 1833 and 1834* (London: Richter, 1836), ii, 295.

of misery. We gave up our horses for the relief of some of the young and delicate girls of the party.’¹⁰

A heap of whitening bones was to be seen on the island of Sphacteria in the Bay of Navarino, where a troop of Greeks who had sought refuge there had been massacred by the army of Ibrahim.¹¹ The camels of the Ottoman, and later of the Egyptian, army that had survived and gone feral devoured anything green.¹² Travellers were robbed and kidnapped for ransom.¹³ Beggars, many mutilated, crowded the doors of the few churches that remained in use.¹⁴ Most were casualties of the Revolutionary Wars, but others had taken part in the civil wars between Revolutionary factions, whose differences, other than a competition over spoils, contemporaries found it hard to understand. History shows that these are such a common feature of revolutions that they demand to be factored into any attempt at a theory of such convulsions, almost as a model.

From 1827 onwards, as the scale of the humanitarian disaster became known, a large and well-sustained relief effort was mounted by philhellenic societies abroad, mainly in Switzerland and in the United States, who now sent food and clothing when previously they had sent money and armaments. The islands of Aegina and Poros, where the American relief effort was concentrated, were soon packed with refugees, mainly women and children but also mutilated and elderly

10 Carne, John, *Letters from the East* (London: Colburn, 1826), 498.

11 Michaud, *Correspondence d'Orient*, i, 36. The island had been made famous by Thucydides, as the place where the Athenians cut off a party of the Spartan army; and by Homer, as the named city of Nestor of Pylos, whose Mycenaean 'palace', when excavated in the twentieth century, yielded numerous inscriptions written in Linear B.

12 Noted by D'Estournel, i, 84.

13 Described by Finlay, George, *The Hellenic kingdom and the Greek nation* (London: Murray, 1836), dated from Athens, 25 July 1836. Many examples mentioned in *The Journals and Letters of George Finlay*, edited by J.M. Hussey (Camberley: Porphyrogenitus, 1995), at, for example, i, 46, 50, 72, 97. Among those attacked were Christopher Wordsworth and the French artist Eugène Peytier, to be discussed in Chapter 16, who is said to have lost the use of a hand.

14 'The old and infirm, the youthful and deformed, the cripple, the madman, the moping idiot, — in short, all that one ever meets of distortion in shape and wretchedness in condition, among mendicants, was there.' Sanborn, F.B. ed., *Memoirs of Pliny Earle, M.D.: with extracts from his diary and letters (1830–1892) and selections from his professional writings (1839–1891)* (Boston: Damrell & Upham 1898), 130. He was in Athens in 1839.

men. Jonathan Miller, a former colonel and philhellene, who was put in charge of distributing the supplies from the United States, recorded each distribution of food and clothing, including some to the survivors of the siege of the Acropolis of Athens, in detail.¹⁵ One widow, with five children, whose husband had lost his life there, who was recommended by the Austrian consul Gropius, was given 'half a barrel of bread, and 15 yards of cotton cloth', more than the normal ration but still only short-term relief, especially as she was obliged to share it with others.¹⁶ Miller helped two men whose hands had been cut off and another who had lost both his feet.¹⁷ As he saw the scale of the suffering, the religious faith that he had adopted when he was younger was sorely tested. As he wrote about one party of refugees: 'What were my feelings, when at evening I saw seven women and three children, who escaping from Ibrahim Pacha at Gastouni [part of Elis in western Greece], arrived at this place in such a state of distress and wretchedness as cannot with modesty be described. The three children were as naked as when they were born, and their mothers but a little better off. When I first saw them, I involuntarily raised my hands to Heaven. Alas! said I, why were these wretches brought into existence?'¹⁸

As late as 1840, when the economy of Greece was developing rapidly, partly as a result of an international loan they received, there were many unfortunates who, as was noted with some disgust by a German tailor who had come to Athens in search of work: 'on all hands crawl about the streets and beset strangers in importunate shoals'.¹⁹ In different parts of Greece, the local people are recorded as gathering limpets on

15 Miller, Col. Jonathan P., of Vermont, *The condition of Greece, in 1827 and 1828; being an exposition of the poverty, distress, and misery, to which the inhabitants have been reduced by the destruction of their towns and villages and the ravages of their country, by a merciless Turkish foe ... As contained in his journal, kept by order of the Executive Greek Committee of the city of New-York; commencing with his departure from that place in the ship Chancellor, March, 1827, and terminating with his return in May, 1828; during which time he visited Greece, and acted as principal agent in the distribution of the several cargoes of clothing and provisions sent from the United States to the old men, women, children, and non-combatants of Greece; Embellished with plates* (New York: Harper, 1828).

16 Miller, *Condition*, 110.

17 Noted in *ibid.*, 111.

18 *Ibid.*, 46.

19 Holthaus, *Wanderings of a journeyman tailor through Europe and the East, during the years 1824 to 1840*. By P.D. Holthaus. Tr. from the 3rd German ed. by William Howitt (London: Longman, 1844), 251.

the beaches, snails in the hills, and carrion wherever it could be found, reverting to the hunter-gatherer economy of the first humans during the neolithic age.

Most of the suffering was, however, hidden and unrecorded except in the cold statistics of the census of population compiled after independence. Thousands who had sought shelter in caves in the mountains are thought to have died from illnesses brought on by weakness.²⁰ Much of the livestock had been seized by the armies and the irregular forces (in modern terms 'militias') or by casual marauders, men who were themselves often on the edge of starvation. It was unusual, one visitor wrote, to see the bullocks without which the hard soil of Attica could not be ploughed, and donkeys and pigs 'seemed quite extinct.'²¹ Only the wild dogs, the rats, the scorpions, the snakes, and the scavenging birds thrived, some near the sites of camps or 'where skeletons lay along the shore' or along the routes taken by travellers and the places where they were obliged to stay.²²

Trying to make sense of what he saw, the English churchman, the Rev. John Hartley, who spent some weeks in the Peloponnese in 1828, was reminded of the biblical *Lamentations of Jeremiah*, quoting: 'We are orphans and fatherless; our mothers are as widows [...] Our necks are under persecution [...] For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burned up [...] neither can men hear the voice of the cattle: both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled.'²³ Were the prophecies of Ezekiel, the ancient Jewish writer, Hartley also wondered, now being fulfilled in Greece? But if, as he thought, he was witnessing a divine retribution, what were the sins that Divine Providence had chosen this moment to punish? If whole communities were being destroyed or

20 Described by St Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free*, 334–47.

21 Summarised from Heath, Richard, *Edgar Quinet, his early life and writings ... With portraits, illustrations, etc.* (London: The English and Foreign Philosophical Library, vol. 14. 1877), 111.

22 *Ibid.* The dangers from dogs, snakes, and scorpions are noted by the painter Francis Hervé who visited the plain of Argos in the early 1830s.

23 Hartley, Rev. John, *Researches in Greece and the Levant*, 2nd ed. (London: Seeley and Burnside, 1833), 25. Hartley also quotes the descriptions of desolation by Isaiah, and other Old Testament authors.

scattered for the sins of their members, the misery fell on those who had least responsibility for the war. At least two other visitors who published printed accounts of their experiences made the same comparison with the description in Ezekiel.²⁴

Hartley was told by Orthodox priests that they were giving absolutions to killers who made death-bed confessions, some men admitting to having killed not only Muslim and Jewish men and women but personal enemies from within their own Orthodox community.²⁵ George Finlay, a former philhellene who decided to settle in Greece, tells how, when he was researching for his *History of the Greek Revolution*, he was shown round the sites of the killing by the men who had carried them out.²⁶ Visitors heard of cases where the Muslims had surrendered on terms only to be massacred or enslaved as in Athens in 1822, for example at Salona (ancient and modern Amphissa, near Delphi.²⁷ According to Ambrosios Phrantzes, an Orthodox priest, one of the earliest historians

24 'l'enceinte de la ville ressemble à la vallée d'Ezéchiél.' Michaud, *Correspondence d'Orient*, i, 47; and Zambelli, D[omenico], 'Atene nel 1841', in *Giornale arcadico di scienze, lettere ed arti*, 93, 1842, 235.

25 Hartley, 315–16. That the Orthodox priests would grant 'absolution' for a fee was noted by Tietz, von M., Prussian Counsellor of Legation, *St. Petersburg, Constantinople, and Napoli di Romania in 1833 and 1834* (London: Richter, 1836), ii, 287. When the French Roman Catholic churchman, Abbé Pègus, one of many sent to Greece to try to bring the Orthodox Church into the jurisdiction of its Roman Catholic rival, made a list of the differences between the two churches based on his years in the region, he noted that perjury was not a mortal sin when intended to deceive an enemy. 'Ils croient qu'il est permis de tromper son ennemi de quelque manière que ce soit, quand bien même il faudrait se parjurer, et qu'il n'y a pas, en cela, de péché mortel'. Pègus, l'Abbé, *Histoire et phénomènes du volcan et des îles volcaniques de Santorin: suivis d'un coup d'oeil sur l'état moral et religieux de la Grèce moderne composés en 1837 par M. L'abbé Pègus* (Paris: A l'imprimerie Royale, 1842), 525.

26 'murder' and 'murderers' are his words. Finlay, George, *A History of Greece from its Conquest by the Romans to the Present Time, B.C. 146 to A.D. 1864*, 7 vols. edited by H.F. Tozer (Oxford: Clarendon, 1877), vi, 162fn. Finlay, at vi, 192, is also the source of the proverb, 'The moon devoured them' that I quoted without citation in St Clair, William, *That Greece Might Still Be Free* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2008), 1.

27 "We first drove them out of the city into the citadel, and when they surrendered, we sent them, according to the terms of the capitulation, to the villages of the province from whence—" "From whence, what?" Instead of giving a reply, the young chief turned his countenance, and gave a significant motion with his hand, which meant, what he did not wish to express—from whence, contrary to the stipulations, they were sent to the devil'. Perdicaris, *Greece and the Greeks*, i, 159, reporting a conversation in 1837.

of the Revolution who had been an eye-witness of similar events of which he was ashamed, it was a Greek proverb that 'the moon devoured them.'²⁸

Widows and children were to be found in almost every Greek-speaking village. Some families had taken in orphans, but others, who had sold all their possessions in order to redeem their enslaved daughters, had nothing to spare.²⁹ In many villages, boys aged between fifteen and sixteen were married to girls aged as young as ten or eleven, that is, as soon as they reached menarchy, one effect of which was gradually to restore the gender imbalance brought about by the Revolution.³⁰ Some girls and boys had turned to prostitution.³¹ Others were given help. We hear of 'an Armenian beauty, who had run away from the Turkish capital and her home, with Mr. L., a gentleman more deeply tinctured with a love of adventure than is usual among the sober sons of Scotia. She was now his bride, speaking just enough English not to be able to disguise her feelings, and with a native accent that made her imperfect sentences still more pleasing.'³²

At the end of August 1828, ten months after the battle of Navarino, a small French expeditionary force arrived, under the terms of the Treaty of London, to oversee the return of the Egyptian forces to Egypt. When they arrived at the camp of the Egyptian army commanded by Ibrahim, they found girls who had been enslaved at the fall of Missolonghi two years before. The French Government later hung a picture at Versailles of General Maison freeing the slaves, shown as Figure 14.1.

28 Quoted by Finlay, *Greek Revolution*, i, 184, from Phrantzēs, Ambrosios, *Epitomē Tēs Historias Tēs Anagennētheisēs Hellados* (Athens: Typographeas hē Vitōria tou K. Kastorchē kai syntrophias, 1839–1841), i, 335.

29 Pukler Muskau, le Prince de, *Entre l'Europe et l'Asie ...* (Paris: Werdet, 1840), i, 6.

30 Strong, 12. The young age of brides in classical Athens is noted in *The Classical Parthenon*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>, with a discussion of some of the implications, including on the design of the Parthenon frieze.

31 Noted by, for example, Howe, *Letters and Journals*, i, 332. 'When I think of the miserable lot of those who, deprived of father, mother, brother, or protector, have grown up corrupted, to follow the horrid trade of prostitution ...'

32 Colton, Rev. Walter, late of the United States Navy, *Land and Lee in the Bosphorus and Ægean; or Views of Constantinople and Athens, edited from the notes and manuscripts of the author*, by Rev. Henry T. Cheever (New York: Barnes, 1851), 239.



Figure 14.1. The meeting of the two generals at Navarino in September 1828. Oil painting by Jean-Charles Langlois.³³

Like many nineteenth-century presentations of war, it shows the women as beautiful actresses, still gorgeously dressed despite the years of siege and starvation, and, as in this case, with hints of nudity that might have reminded learned viewers of ancient statues. Although dozens of girls and women are shown huddled together, none of the enslaved boys can be seen, perhaps as an act of self-censorship by the artist or his patron.

To the dismay of the French, who saw themselves as liberators, some of the young women and girls refused to be released. Even among those who knew the name of the town or village where they had previously lived, and had relatives alive, preferred the comparative security of their situation as concubines and chose to accompany their masters as the army returned to Egypt in merchant vessels arranged by the powers.³⁴ Nor were such cases isolated. The heroic picture does

33 Wikimedia Commons from the Collections du château de Versailles, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Entrevue_du_g%C3%A9n%C3%A9ral_Maison_et_d%27Ibrahim_Pacha,_%C3%A0_Navarin,_septembre_1828_\(d%C3%A9tail\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Entrevue_du_g%C3%A9n%C3%A9ral_Maison_et_d%27Ibrahim_Pacha,_%C3%A0_Navarin,_septembre_1828_(d%C3%A9tail).jpg). A fine engraving, which took the image in monochrome to a wider viewership, was included in *Galeries historiques de Versailles*, a large book that celebrated the military history of France, published, as part of a royalist mythologizing of the Napoleonic 'heritage', in 1838.

34 Mangeart, J-s, *Souvenirs de la Morée* (Paris: Igonette, 1830), 27. The same observation was made by Marchebeus, *Voyage de Paris à Constantinople par bateau à vapeur nouvel*

not show the brothels of 'courtesans' established at the camps and seaports frequented by the French soldiers and sailors that provided another alternative.³⁵

Horried at what they had seen of Ibrahim's camp, with its filth, insects, dysentery, ophthalmia, snakes and scorpions, the French force was delighted at the prospect of some real soldiering, and attacked the fortress of Navarino itself and then the other coastal fortresses of Coron and Modon, which were still in Ottoman hands and which provided possible bases to which troops could be sent and a re-conquest mounted, but they surrendered with only a token show of resistance. The two castles that commanded the western entrance to the Gulf of Corinth did resist but were soon overcome. The French general and his troops were keen to march on the Acropolis of Athens, but his orders were countermanded when he was reminded by the British officers who were, in the theatre of operations in effect, members of his staff, that the Treaty did not permit him to operate outside the Peloponnese.³⁶

In 1828, the European consuls in Alexandria in Egypt had also been set the task of buying back those who had been enslaved in the capture of Missolonghi, many of whom had been sold at low prices by the Ottoman soldiers to dealers at Preveza two years before.³⁷ There is a record of about one hundred and fifty being redeemed and brought

itinéraire orné de vues et vignettes sur acier, avec tableaux indiquant les lieux desservis par les paquebots à vapeur, sur la Méditerranée, l'Adriatique et le Danube, le prix des places et des marchandises, les distances et la valeur des monnaies par Marchebeus, architecte du gouvernement (Paris: Artus, 1839), 76, although he is reporting accounts of others whom he met later.

- 35 Michaud and Poujoulat, *Correspondance d'Orient 1830–31* par M Michaud de l'Academie Française et M Poujoulat (Paris: Ducollet, 1833–1835), i, 51. Michaud also discusses, in his account of Constantinople and its slave markets, how Ottoman masters usually treated their slaves with kindness, as family members, with many later freed and some promoted to high positions, as is noted later in the chapter, including the case of an enslaved woman from Lesbos who was reluctant to face the ceremony of again becoming a Christian.
- 36 Summarized from the plain log-book style account of the junior French officer Duheaume, M.A., Capitaine au 58^e Régiment d'Infanterie de ligne, *Souvenirs de la Morée pour servir à l'histoire de l'Expédition Française en 1828–1829* (Paris: Anselin, 1833).
- 37 Kew FO 78/164, 117. We see the same patterns when the revolutionaries captured a town, as, for example, was reported by the Italian philhellene Brengeri who was at Corinth in 1822: 'Turkish girls and women were publicly sold for thirty or forty piastres each, according to their age or beauty'. Brengeri, 'Adventures of a foreigner in Greece no III', in *The London Magazine*, NS VI, September to December 1826, 179.

back by ship, and of searches being made 'for slaves of Christian parents' in the harems of Cairo.³⁸

At Athens in 1841 Hans Christian Andersen noticed a few black-skinned families who had been slaves during the Ottoman period, now living in poverty.³⁹ Their links with the African societies from whom they had been taken before the Revolution, never strong, had long since been irreparably broken. The same may be said of the women and girls who had been enslaved when the Greek Revolutionaries had captured a town, for example, as was reported by the Italian philhellene Brengeri who was at Corinth in 1822: 'Turkish girls and women were publicly sold for thirty or forty piastres each, according to their age or beauty'.⁴⁰

A picture of the slave market in Constantinople composed from sketches made during a visit made in 1834, when the numbers sold had reverted to pre-Revolution levels, is given as Figure 14.2

When the Greek Revolution finally ended, the turnover of the slave markets at Constantinople, Smyrna, and Alexandria reverted to more normal levels, the women and boys now supplied from wars and uprisings in the wider Middle East, as well as by slave traders from Africa for black-skinned people, and from Georgia and Circassia for white-skinned people.⁴¹ The chaplain of an American warship, who was shown round by an Armenian guide at some time in the late 1830s, described a veiled girl from Georgia, aged about fifteen, who was dressed in an 'extremely thin and pliant robe' that showed off her body underneath. The dealer had, it was reported, taught her how to perform in front of potential customers.⁴²

38 Kew FO 78/166, 402, 409. Richard Church, the commander-in-chief of the Greek army, who led the forces that recaptured Missolonghi, wrote in 1830 of the 'happy meeting of women and children restored to their fathers, to their husbands, to their brothers, and to their homes after nine years of desolation'. Church, Sir Richard, *Observations on an eligible line of frontier for Greece as an independent state* (London: Ridgway, 1830), 21.

39 Andersen, H.C., *A poet's bazaar / from the Danish of Hans Christian Andersen, by Charles Beckwith* (London: Bentley, 3 vols, 1846), ii, 171.

40 Brengeri, 'Adventures of a foreigner in Greece no III', 179.

41 An eye-witness description of the Constantinople slave market in 1835, with comments on how many of the senior members of the Ottoman Government had themselves been slaves, is given by the much-travelled Elliott, C.B., M.A. F.R.S., Vicar of Godalmin (late of Bengal Service), *Travels in the Three Great Empires of Austria, Russia, and Turkey* (London: Bentley, 1838), i, 381–84.

42 Noted by Rev Walter Colton in the various editions of his book, such as *Land and Lee*, 79. The full titles of the various editions are given in the Bibliography.



Figure 14.2. 'The Aurut Bazaar, or Slave Market'. Steel engraving.⁴³

Although according to an estimate, in the mid-eighteenth century, around 20,000 persons a year had passed through the market in Constantinople alone, only occasionally do the enslaved momentarily emerge from the historical records as individuals.⁴⁴ As far as the Greek Revolution is concerned, Robert Pashley, who explored Crete in 1833, met the daughter of the leader ('proedros') in a remote village who had been captured and enslaved during the war, sold through the slave market at Alexandria, but been formally given her freedom after twelve years, and who now spoke both Turkish and Arabic as well as her native Greek.⁴⁵ Whether she was voluntarily manumitted, as seems likely, is not known, but for those whose only hope was to be redeemed, the prices were high. According to Richard Claridge, who visited the Constantinople slave market in 1836, young black boys and girls could at that time be obtained for the equivalent of £10 to £20 each, much

43 Allom and Walsh, *Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor, Illustrated in a Series of Drawings from Nature by Thomas Allom. with Descriptions of the Plates by the Rev. Robert Walsh, L.L.D., Chaplain to the British Embassy at the Ottoman Porte* (London: Fisher, 1838), plate i, 37.

44 Baltimore, Lord, *A tour to the East, in the years 1763 and 1764, with remarks on the city of Constantinople and the Turks; also select pieces of Oriental wit, poetry and wisdom* (London: printed by Richardson and Clark, 1767), 74–75.

45 Pashley, Robert Esq., Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, *Travels in Crete* (Cambridge: Pitt Press, and London: Murray, 1837), i, 66.

the same price as for a luxury Persian shawl.⁴⁶ And, we could add, much lower than the price of a set of Stuart and Revett's *Antiquities of Athens*.⁴⁷ White women, Claridge noted, 'are shown in rooms adjoining the bazaar, and sell according to their youth and beauty, at from £20 to £150', prices only affordable by the very rich.⁴⁸ In 1824, probably the year during the war when the market was most glutted, girls aged around fifteen years from Greek-speaking Chios and from Psara, another island where the Revolution had been violently suppressed, were on sale at about £30 equivalent, much higher than for black girls from Africa, and passed to new owners.⁴⁹ The English medical doctor R.R. Madden had raised a subscription to buy a Greek girl taken in Chios and she was sent home.⁵⁰ But, at such prices, only a handful of the hundreds of thousands of women and children who were enslaved during the Revolution could hope to be redeemed. The American travel writer, J.L. Stephens, who visited the slave market in Constantinople in 1835, was surprised to find how easy it was to evade the rule that only Muslims were permitted to buy slaves by employing a middle-man. Since only black women, whom he assumed, through racist eyes, suffered less than whites, were at that time available, and since some openly flirted, ('displayed and performed'), in hopes of being bought by a wealthy buyer, he relied on a guide as he compiled his description of the boom days of the Greek Revolution when 'during the whole of that dreadful struggle, every day presented new horrors; new captives were brought in, the men

46 Claridge, R.T., *A Guide along the Danube from Vienna to Constantinople, Smyrna, Athens, the Morea, the Ionian Islands and Venice ...* (London: F. C. Westley, 1837), 154. Other prices that are largely consistent with those quoted by Claridge, gathered from a variety of first-hand accounts of about this time, are given by Knight, *Outlines*, 294. They all show white-skinned slaves as priced at around three times the price of the black-skinned, and children as extremely cheap.

47 In 1841 in London a set of all five volumes of the first edition was priced at £26/5/0, Bohn Catalogue 21881; the second edition in four volumes was priced at £10/10/0. Bohn, 2317.

48 Claridge, 154.

49 Madden, R.R., Esq. M.R.C.S., *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia, and Palestine, in 1824, 1825, 1826, and 1827* (London: Colburn, 1829), i, 2 and 6. Stratford Canning's visit to Psara and account of what he saw are described in Chapter 17.

50 The translation of an alleged autobiography of an enslaved woman who was redeemed by foreign funds and managed to make her way back to Greece is given by the philhellene Villeneuve, 257. Although heavily edited and, to an extent adapted to the genre and style of a traditional fiction, it seems to contain plausible features.

raving, struggling, and swearing eternal vengeance against the Turks, and the women shrieking distractedly in the agony of a separation [...] with hundreds of young girls, with tears streaming down their cheeks, and bursting hearts [...] sold to the unhallowed embraces of the Turks for a few [United States] dollars a head.⁵¹ Few mentioned the part of the market where slaves who were 'blind, lame, and deformed; some crawling about on crutches. others unable to use their distorted limbs' were sold in job lots 'for a mere trifle' to speculators who hoped to be able to find some use for one or two.⁵²

In Greece, Samuel Gridley Howe, who was helping to arrange a relief effort, met some of the returnees redeemed from Egypt when they were disembarked at the island of Poros in December 1828. In listening to their stories, it was evident to him that many had lost all recollection of where they had come from. As he wrote: 'Some had nearly lost the uses of their native language, others were mutilated, others had their ankles worn sore by chains; all had suffered, all were wan-looking and discoloured, some were blind, many were still suffering from ophthalmia and other eye diseases.'⁵³ It was however already becoming clear that many members of the Ottoman leaderships wanted to ameliorate the traditional Muslim laws and customs of slavery as punishment. But also, as was noted by many at the time, slavery did not necessarily imply ill-treatment. Of the women and children taken to Egypt, many were reported to have been bought by 'local grandees' as acts of humanitarianism.⁵⁴

Individuals occasionally appear in the accounts, although seldom for more than a moment or in stories recorded by visitors. In 1857, for

51 Stephens, J.L., *Incidents of travel in Greece, Turkey, Russia, and Poland by the author of "Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land." with a map and engravings. In two volumes, fifth edition* (New York, Harper & brothers, 1838), i, 238.

52 Skene, Felicia, *Wayfaring Sketches among the Greeks and Turks, and the Shores of the Danube. By a Seven Year's Resident in Greece* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1857), 199–200. Skene's visit was in 1845. A note in the book says that the market had since been closed.

53 Howe, *Letters and Journals*, i, 311–12.

54 See the documents transcribed in Appendix F. Even during the massacres and enslavements at Chios in 1822, some of the Ottoman leaders who had unleashed the terror had attempted to mitigate its effects. For example Strangford to Londonderry, dated 10 May 1822: 'The Captain pasha has redeemed with his own money a vast number of the wretched women and children whom the Turkish troops had sold as slaves. This act of generous humanity is perfectly characteristic of this most excellent man'. Kew FO 78/108 29.

example, the American travel writer Bayard Taylor met 'George', who had been sent to Egypt as a boy slave with his mother and sisters after his father had been killed at Missolonghi, and who had managed to return home after seven years and was now working in Greece as a courier.⁵⁵ In 1850, James Henry Skene, who had lived in the Ottoman territories and in Greece for twenty years and knew some of the languages, met a man at Vidin in present-day Bulgaria who had been enslaved at the age of five after the massacres in Chios in 1822. The man remembered how, as a child, he and his two sisters, along with many other children, were thrown into hampers, strapped to horses, and taken to Constantinople. When the master who had bought him died, he became the property of the sultan and was made to serve in the navy, but when Skene met him he had a good position with the local pasha, for whom he had great respect, and had no wish to go back to Chios.⁵⁶

The Ottoman system that had produced a Reschid still turned enslaved boys of Christian parentage into loyal Muslim military commanders. In 1855, Fustel de Coulanges, already famous as historian and topographer, who was then making a survey of the island of Chios, reported that, on an Egyptian warship that was carrying troops to the Crimean war, both the captain and the colonel of the embarked regiment had been born in Chios, sold in Alexandria, and were now holding high positions in the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁷

Among many other former slaves was the bey of Tunis. It was said that Ibrahim Edhem Pasha, grand vizier in the 1870s, had been bought as a boy in the slave market at Smyrna after the suppression of the Revolution in Chios, an episode that he himself could not remember and that he may have attempted to disown. There was nothing unusual

55 Taylor, Bayard, *Travels in Greece and Russia with an excursion to Crete* (New York; Putnam, 1859), 35. There is no mention of what happened to his mother and sisters.

56 Skene, *Frontier Lands*, i, 251. A thoughtful description of the Constantinople slave market in 1835, with comments on how many of the senior members of the Ottoman Government at that time had themselves been slaves, is given by Elliott, C.B., M.A. F.R.S., Vicar of Godalmin (late of Bengal Service), *Travels in the Three Great Empires of Austria, Russia, and Turkey* (London: Bentley, 1838), i, 381–84.

57 Coulanges, Fustel de, 'Mémoire sur l'Île de Chio', *Archives des Missions scientifiques et littéraires* ...Tome V (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1856), 641. De Coulanges reported that the pre-Revolution order in Chios had been restored, including amity between the Christians and Muslims, with the help of a successful policy of actively forgetting the events of 1822.

about such a transformation in fortune under Ottoman law and custom, nor in the reputation of many of the leaders, which seems to have been well-deserved, for treating their slaves with kindness and care. But we can see too that a summary on-the-spot decision by an Ottoman soldier, based on the absence of bodily hair implying that a boy was under fourteen years of age and therefore qualified to be enslaved rather than put to death, became increasingly hard to justify in the increasingly 'European' country that the leadership of the Ottoman Empire wished to become.

We hear of a prominent Greek man from Athens, not named, who after years of searching managed to locate and redeem his mother and his sisters, except for one sister who had already been bought by, and was now married to, an Italian merchant of Salonika.⁵⁸ A French philhellene officer, in a matter-of-fact account of his experiences in Greece, printed a translation of an alleged autobiography of a woman, whose husband had been put to death at Tripolitza, who was sold as a slave at Smyrna, taken to Egypt, redeemed by foreign funds and managed to make her way back to Greece. Although to an extent adapted to the style of a traditional fiction, her account seems to contain plausible features.⁵⁹ Sir Richard Church, who led the forces that recaptured Missolonghi in one of the last campaigns of the war, in a pamphlet published in 1830 that was, partly at least, intended to help rehabilitate his reputation after the disaster at Athens in 1827, wrote of the 'happy meeting of women and children restored to their fathers, to their husbands, to their brothers, and to their homes after nine years of desolation'.⁶⁰ Church declared too that the Ottoman forces, having been treated in their defeat in accordance with the European military customs of war, were as pleased as if they were sitting down to tea after a game of village cricket in England. Rather than unexpectedly being permitted to remain alive in a war marked by attempts at extermination, the soldiers, Church wrote, stretching plausibility further, conceded that their former enemies deserved to win: 'having heard the solemn and hearty thanks offered

58 Morris, i, 47.

59 Villeneuve, M. Eugène de, Capitaine de Cavalerie dans l'Armée Hellénique, *Journal fait en Grèce pendant les Années 1825 et 1826* (Brussels: Tarlier 1827), 257–75.

60 Church, Sir Richard, *Observations on an eligible line of frontier for Greece as an independent state* (London: Ridgway, 1830), 21.

up to the Almighty, and even the fierce Albanians, on leaving the country in which they had been fairly overcome in the field, partaking of the bread of their conquerors and embracing them gratefully for the good treatment they had received at their hands, and declaring that the Greeks had a right to the enjoy the country they had so fairly won'.⁶¹

Occasional stories of slaves returning home, however, although vaguely reassuring to some as examples of an indomitable spirit, cannot disguise the sheer scale of the norm to which they are rare exceptions. Estimates made in 1828 showed the changes in population that had occurred since 1821 according to the old, now replaced, identity categories. In the Peloponnese, out of a pre-war population of 458,000 Christians and 42,750 Muslims, there were now only about 400,000 Christians and no Muslims apart from 'some isolated individuals'.⁶² In suppressing the revolution in Chios (Scio) in 1822, the Ottoman forces were estimated to have killed 23,000 men, and captured 47,000 women and children, most of whom were sold through the slave markets.⁶³ The Orthodox population of the island was estimated to have fallen from around 120,000 to 20,000.⁶⁴ The number of Muslims, 1,000 before the war, had risen to 8,000.⁶⁵

But the Greek Revolution had its individual winners as well as its losers. In many parts of Greece were warlords who had become rich by seizing the lands, houses, animals, and moveable goods of the Muslims who had now gone as a result of the cleansings.⁶⁶ Although in the Peloponnese, the most extreme case, the Muslims had been in the minority, they had owned twice as much land as the Christians, all of which was taken over by the Revolutionaries.⁶⁷

61 *Observations*, 21. Although such stories cry out to be disbelieved, there is evidence, to be discussed in Chapter 18, that, under the leadership of Reschid, who was now grand vizier, a change had occurred.

62 Kew FO 78/167, opposite 153.

63 Kew, FO 352/22, file 3.

64 See Prousis, Theophilus C., *British Consular Reports from the Ottoman Levant in an Age of Upheaval, 1815–1830* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2008), who made use of primary evidence, 144.

65 Kew FO 78/167, opposite 153.

66 Examples of men, such as Colocotronis and Gouras, who had become rich are given by Makriyannis, 6, 96–97.

67 This emerges from the survey made in 1828 quoted in tabular form by Dalègre, Joëlle, *Grecs et Ottomans, 1453–1953: de la chute de Constantinople à la disparition de l'empire ottoman* (Paris: Harmattan, 2002), 62.

Most of the enslaved had no alternative but to make the best of their new situation. All over the Ottoman Empire, women, girls, and boys who had been seized after their male relatives had been killed in the fighting or put to death after capture, lived in alien communities speaking alien languages, geographically far from their birthplaces with which they had no contact. We find a few accepting their fate, some thriving, and a handful reaching high office, but the majority of those who had any memory of their former state, we may be confident, were condemned to lifetimes of hopelessness however well they were treated in their new lives.

In the long negotiations for Greek independence, some facts could be altered by decision. Armies could withdraw from some locations and occupy others. Frontiers and maps could be redrawn, amnesties given, claims for financial compensation considered, money from loans and grants devoted both to immediate relief and to longer-term reconstruction, exports of antiquities refused or permitted, and new identities forged. What could not be reversed, except for occasional exceptions, was the displacement of the enslaved. Even if a general repatriation had been suggested, as the mountains of diplomatic documents suggest that it never was, such a policy would have been impossible to carry out. As a group, the enslaved of the Greek Revolution, with only a handful of exceptions, largely disappeared from the recorded history, although not from the genetic makeup of the Balkans and Middle East. In the national liberation histories of Greece, they were scarcely mentioned, and, unlike the men who were killed and the women who took their own lives, they were seldom shown or memorialized in the visual presentations of the Revolution. Like the mosques, the minarets, and the Muslim graves, they were cleansed from the national story.

Of the total Greek-speaking Orthodox Christian population of the Ottoman Empire before the Revolution, only about one third lived in the territories that were to be assigned to independent Greece.⁶⁸ In the three years of 1834, 1835, and 1836, moreover, 60,000 people emigrated from newly independent Greece, many of them to territories still under Ottoman rule.⁶⁹ There was, we can be confident, a range of motives and pressures, but this and other population movement contributed to

68 Clogg, *Concise History*, 46.

69 Noted by, for example, Slade, Adolphus, *Turkey, Greece And Malta* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1837), i, 253.

turning Greece into a culturally uniform country. At the same time many immigrants arrived from Constantinople and from Europe, some as refugees but others as colonists and investors hoping to take advantage of new opportunities. In area and population Greece was the smallest of the European kingdoms, an enclave, 'the last fastness of the European world', as was noted at the time.⁷⁰

Nor was there any certainty, despite the international guarantees, that the Ottoman Empire, with its immense resources, and now a state that was also modernising fast, would not at some future crisis reconquer the breakaway territories. As Youssouf Bey, who was in command in Athens in 1830, told an English visitor: 'God willing, as soon as we have recovered from the last war, we will conquer Greece again.'⁷¹ And indeed, sixty-seven years later, Athens lay at the mercy of a victorious Ottoman army that advanced to within three days' march before an armistice was hurriedly patched together by the European powers.⁷²

And would the new nation state itself be content with boundaries that excluded much of the territory that in ancient times had been among the heartlands of Hellas? Were the maps of ancient Hellas that mainly showed the classical moment in the 5th century BCE, as fixed as if it were set in marble, to be the arbiters of the fate of the living people of the present? Were the ancient Hellenes to be allowed to cleanse or resettle communities of Orthodox and Muslim, and the others such as the Albanian-speakers and the nomadic Vlachs whose ancestors had been brought there by the vagaries of a long past and had little sense of belonging in the nation that wanted to assimilate them?

Nor did the formerly dominant Orthodox identity, with its own real and mythographised pasts and its aspired-to futures, disappear when overlaid with nationalism. Had not Admiral Cochrane in urging the Greek forces to relieve the siege of Athens in 1827 declared that he

70 The phrase used by Lord Carnarvon who visited in 1839. Carnarvon, Earl of, *Reminiscences of Athens and the Morea, extracts from a journal of travels in Greece in 1839* (London: Murray, 1869), 38.

71 Trant, 276.

72 In the 'Thirty Days War' between Greece and Turkey, 18 April to 18 May 1897, whose contradictions, such as Allied forces defending Ottoman Crete against the Greeks are notably described by Nevinson, Henry W., *Scenes in the Thirty Days War between Greece and Turkey* (London: Dent, 1897).

wanted to plant the national flag on the church of the Holy Wisdom (Aghia Sophia) in Constantinople? From the beginning, there are indications of a growing feeling that the whole neo-Hellenic project was a fantasy of philhellenic foreigners, and that those who had fought the Greek Revolution, a war of religion, needed a more contemporary ideology and one more closely related to their more recent identity and experience. As an unnamed Greek literary figure told the visiting British political economist Nassau Senior in 1857: 'We do not consider the Parthenon as our national temple. The Parthenon belongs to an age and to a religion with which we have no sympathy. Our country is the vast territory of which Greek is the language, and the faith of the orthodox Greek church is the religion. Our capital is Constantinople; our national temple is Santa Sophia for nine hundred years the glory of Christendom. As long as that temple, that capital, and that territory are profaned and oppressed by Mussulmans, Greece would be disgraced if she were tranquil.'⁷³ Already, there was talk of another imagined future, in which Greek independence was the new beginning of an inexorable, perhaps a providentially ordained, historical process that would see Constantinople again become the capital of a new Byzantine Christian Empire, a way of thinking, 'the great idea', that was to lead to the disastrous Greek military invasion of what is now Turkey in 1922, another shift of the geopolitical plates that led to another huge movement of refugees, and forced exchanges of populations.

And, for some western visitors, the peoples of Greece, even in their post-Revolution miseries, were seen through eyes conditioned by immersion in the writings of the ancients. For example, Edgar Quinet, who in Athens during the last days of Ottoman rule noted that the widows in their black veils reminded him of the *Suppliants* in the play by Euripides of that name. As he declared, he regarded himself as fortunate, ('une bonne fortune'), to be seeing Athens in the same state as it had been in 480 and 479 BCE immediately after it had been destroyed by the army of Xerxes.⁷⁴ It was a description in a fictional drama set in a mythic age that Quinet recalled, not an eye-witness account, but

⁷³ Senior. Nassau W., *A Journal kept in Turkey and Greece in the autumn of 1857, and the beginning of 1858* (London: Longman, 1859), 358. The literary figure is only identified as 'Zeta'.

⁷⁴ Quinet, 368.

his remark, which readers may have thought was treating real people with cold detachment, reminds us that wars in the classical period were conducted in accordance with norms that are not dissimilar and whose indirect victims were seldom given more than a passing mention in the ancient historiographical tradition. It was the orator Demosthenes, whose works owe their survival more to the fact that they could be used to teach the arts of rhetoric than to their content, who described a journey from Athens to Delphi through the territory of the city of Phocis where he saw 'homesteads levelled with the ground, cities stripped of their defensive walls, a countryside all emptied of its young men; only women, a few small children, and old men stricken with misery.'⁷⁵ And what Quinet may not have fully appreciated is that *The Suppliants* was an intervention in an actual debate that took place in classical Athens about how refugees and other defenceless victims of war should be treated in a state that prided itself on its unique progress from brutishness to civilization.⁷⁶

There was a more direct, more reliable, and more hopeful parallel with that time, the recovery of the natural environment after the Revolution. Theodore Aligny, a French artist unusual for his age in picturing the landscape of Attica without buildings or human figures, caught a moment when the vegetation, and especially the olive trees, were rapidly recovering, as reproduced as a detail from a larger composition in Figure 14.3.

On the viewer's right is an olive tree that has been cut down, sprouting back into life with new shoots, a phenomenon that, to the Athenians of the classical era who designed and built the Parthenon, had been adopted as the most potent symbol of the success, the continuity, and the resilience of the ancient city.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Dem. 19 64

⁷⁶ Discussed in *The Classical Parthenon*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>. The play contains one of the fullest statements of the progress from brutishness claim.

⁷⁷ As discussed in *The Classical Parthenon*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>.



Figure 14.3. Théodore Caruelle d'Aligny, *Attica Viewed from Mount Pentéli* (1845).
Etching on ivory China paper.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ The Chicago Art Institute, Public Domain, <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/158216/attica-viewed-from-mount-penteli>

