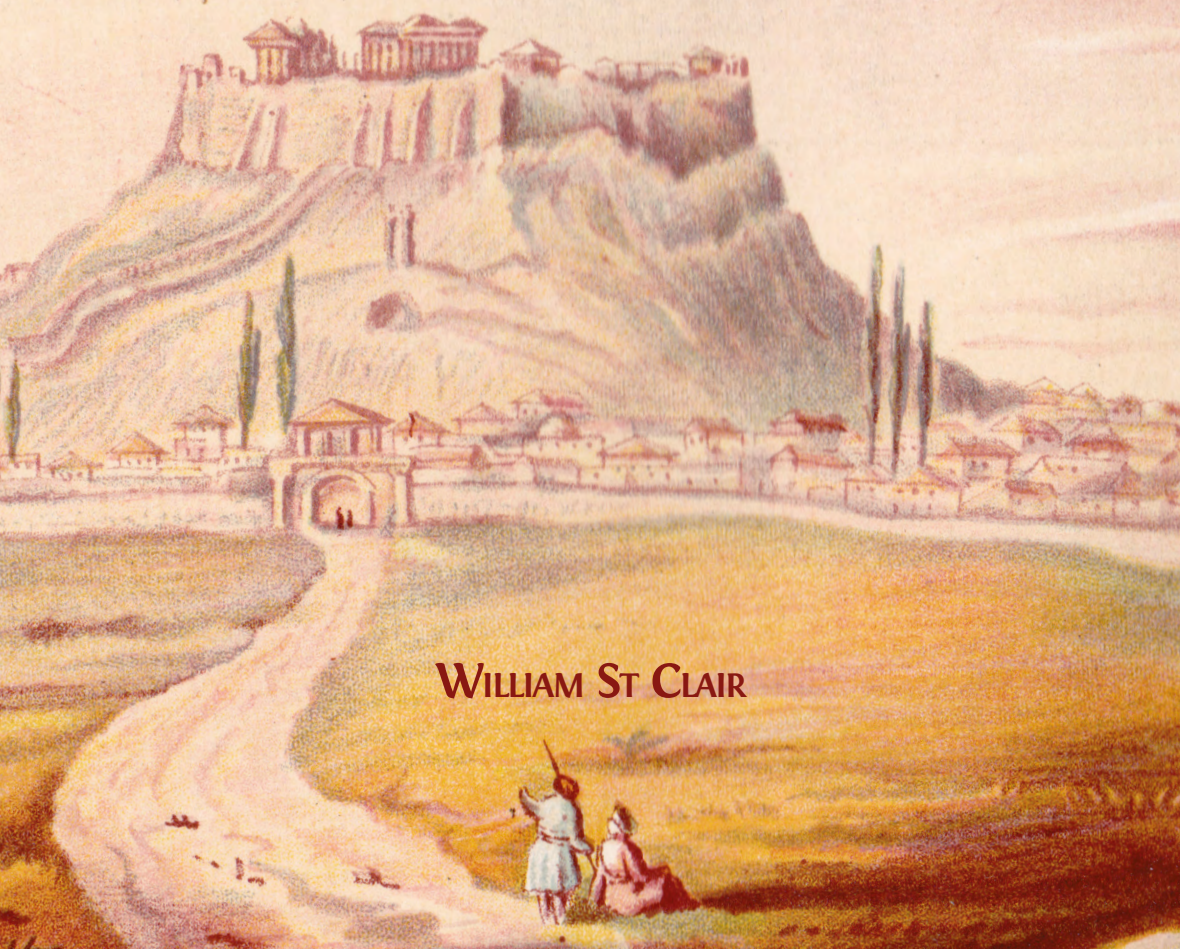


# Who Saved the Parthenon?

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<sup>r</sup> 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.

Cover design by Anna Gatti.

# 15. The Dead

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For years after the surrender of the Acropolis to the Ottoman army in June 1827, Athens was a scene of desolation. Apart from the small Ottoman military garrison, there were scarcely any people. The eerie silence, the ‘funeral quiet’ as one visitor called it, was occasionally broken by the owls ‘winging their way over the ruins of the city, and uttering doleful cries, as if wailing for its destruction.’<sup>1</sup> Many of the olive trees had been felled to enable the Ottoman cavalry to operate in corridors in the plain between Athens and Piraeus.<sup>2</sup> In July 1830 a fire that burned for three days destroyed more trees.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from a dozen or so houses built in the European style that belonged to the foreign consuls, such as that of Gropius, it was recorded that ‘scarcely a tenth of the houses remain standing.’<sup>4</sup> And they had been

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- 1 Quotation from Trant, 263. An ‘almost uninhabited town.’ Disraeli, *The Letters of Benjamin Disraeli*, edited by John Matthews *et al.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982–2014), i, 176.
  - 2 John Auldjo, in Athens on 16 April 1833, noted: ‘We walked towards Athens, along the old road, and struck into the olive grove, very little of which now remains, it having been destroyed by both Greek and Turk’. Auldjo, John, *Journal of a Visit to Constantinople and Some of the Greek Islands* (London: Longman, 1835), 21; But, since we read of the olive groves soon after the ending of the fighting, he may have exaggerated. The link with cavalry operations was noted by, for example, Gringo, Harry [Lieutenant Wise, US Navy], *Scampavias from Gibel Tarek to Stamboul* (New York: Scribner, 1857), 96.
  - 3 Finlay, who was present, *Journals and Letters*, i, 30.
  - 4 Eye-witness descriptions include: ‘a collection of narrow streets and winding lanes, half obstructed by heaps of modern ruin.’ Faber, Frederick William, *Sights and Thoughts in Foreign Churches and among Foreign Peoples* (London: Rivington, 1842), 580; ‘A l’exception de cinq ou six palmiers on encore debout, qui dominant les toits, en ne remarque aucune végétation dans la ville.’ Morot, Jean-Baptiste, *Journal De Voyage: Paris a Jérusalem, 1839 Et 1840* (Paris: J. Claye, second edition, 1873), 44. Macgregor, *Sketches in Greece and Turkey* (London: Ridgeway, 1833), 72; ‘Almost every house in the city was destroyed ... ‘every house roofless’, Disraeli writing from Athens, 30 November 1830. Disraeli, *Letters*, i, 175–77. ‘every house roofless’ ... ‘almost uninhabited town’, Claridge, 259. ‘The houses were mostly

stripped of anything usable. According to the American N.P. ('nosy-parker') Willis, who was in Athens in September 1833, all the houses had been 'pulled down to the very cellars and [were] lying choked in the rubbish [...] The inhabitants thatch over one corner of these wretched and dusty holes with maize-stalks and straw, and live like beasts.'<sup>5</sup> As he wrote: 'Scarce one stone is left upon another.'<sup>6</sup> The only way to move about other than on foot was by crouching with knees up under the chin, on the special saddles of the small Turkish horses used for riding on steep and rocky mountain paths.<sup>7</sup> An Italian periodical, perhaps relying on printed accounts, published an image, shown as Figure 15.1, of a party of western visitors picking their way through the destroyed streets and discovering the people of Athens living in makeshift shelters that they shared with their animals and domestic fowls, and with the rats, a species that had done well out of the war.<sup>8</sup>

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burned or knocked down.' Frankland, Charles Colville, Captain, *Travels to and from Constantinople in 1827 and 1828, or, Personal narrative of a journey from Vienna ... to Constantinople* (London: Colburn and Bentley, 1830), i, 302; 'literally a mass of ruins—the inglorious ruins of mud houses and wretched mosques, forming in all quarters such undistinguishable piles, that in going about I was wholly unable to fix upon any peculiarities of streets or buildings by which I might know my way from one part of the capital to another'. Quin, Michael J., *A Steam Voyage down the Danube, with sketches of Hungary, Wallachia, Servia and Turkey, etc.* (London: Bentley, 1835), ii, 199; 'The houses are nearly all in ruins and deserted: a soldier here and there, and one or two men with lemons in the bazar, were all the living objects I met with: our way was generally over heaps of rubbish, and no desolation can be more complete, than that of this city, so dear both to the scholar and artist.' Jones, ii, 29; '[W]hole streets lie prostrate in the dust', Burgess, Rev. Richard, *Greece and the Levant: or, Diary of a summer's excursion in 1834: with epistolary supplements* (London: Longman, 1835), i, 275. Much of Athens had already been in ruins before the surrender: 'The city presents a wretched picture of desolation: its narrow streets are half blockaded by the ruins of its houses, three-fourths of which seem to have been overthrown; and those which still remain, are, with the exception of the residences of the consuls, miserable, tottering hovels, devoid of all comfort or convenience'. Emerson, *Picture of Greece in 1825*, i, 269. Gropius's house was shown as Figure 14.1.

- 5 Willis, N.P., *Pencilings by the Way* (London: second edition, three volumes, Macrone, 1836), ii, 131. The ancient Athenian account of civilization being an advance from living like brutes, but always at risk of slipping back, is discussed in *The Classical Parthenon*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>.
- 6 Willis, *Pencilings*, ii, 131.
- 7 Noted by Willis, *Pencilings*, ii, 129, 131, and 145. As another example 'pestiferous and unwholesome'; [that] 'proceeds from the general filth of the town, and may have been aggravated by the interment, without caution or order, of the victims in the late wars, whose putrid remains have infected the atmosphere'. Standish, Frank Hall, esq., *The Shores of the Mediterranean* (London: Lumley: 1837 and 1838), ii, 47. Standish visited in September 1835.
- 8 Noted by Chalk, Charley, *Charley Chalk; or, the Career of an artist; being sketches from real life ... With illustrations by Jacob Parallel* (London: G. Berger, [n.d.], c.1840), 289. There

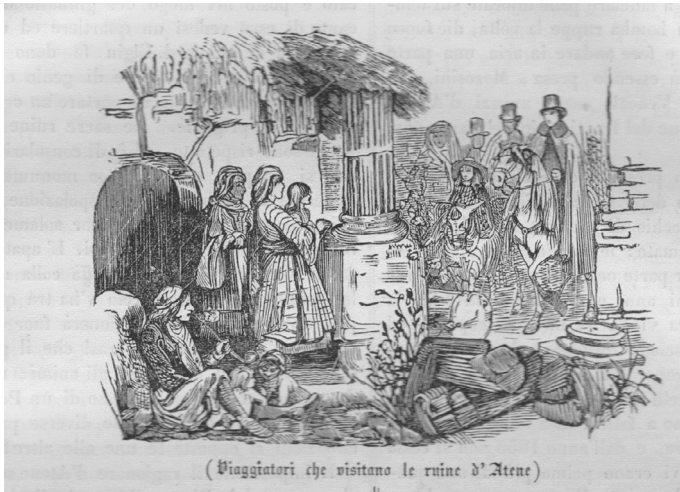


Figure 15.1. The modern and the ancient ruins of Athens, 1830s. Woodcut.<sup>9</sup>

On the road from Piraeus, visitors passed a monument to Karaïskakis, his remains brought from Salamis where he had died of his wounds, his coffin displayed within a metal paling. Nearby was a tumulus where, at some time after 1833, the dry bones of those who had been killed in the fighting at and around Athens in 1827, or put to death later, were buried in a mass grave.<sup>10</sup>

Elsewhere in Greece too, as the towns had been destroyed, the population found shelter among the ancient ruins, as caught, for example in Figure 15.2.

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are enough externally checkable references in this book, notably in its reference to travelling with the family of Thomas Gordon, for the passages on Greece to be regarded as sincere.

9 Woodcut from 'Atene. Viaggiatori che visitano le ruine d'Atene', in *Museo letterario artistico e letterario*, Turin, 16 February 1839, 56. A possible source may be 'dirty and infectious haunts in which some Greek families are crowded together, and as it were, buried alive.' *Travels in the Holy Land; or, a visit to the scenes of our Redeemer's life* by Alphonse de Lamartine, in 1832–1833. Translated from the original Paris edition by Robert Huish (London: printed [for] William Wright, [n.d.], 1837), 93. A few other pictures of Athens in its ruined state are reproduced in monochrome in Angelomatis, Christos, Αγγελομάτης, Χρήστος, *Η Απελευθέρωση των Αθηνών, Ο Μεντρεσές και οι αναμνήσεις του* (Athens: Skiadas, 2007).

10 Perdicaris, *The Greece of the Greeks*, 38, and 29fn. Perdicaris estimated the number as 1,500 left on the battlefield and 400 taken alive and beheaded, the first number much the same as was estimated at the time, the latter somewhat greater.



Figure 15.2. Corinth, 1843, local people sheltering among the ancient Roman Ruins. Lithograph of a picture made on the spot by Theodore du Moncel.<sup>11</sup>

Most churches had been destroyed by the Ottoman armies in 1822 and those few that were not had been desecrated.<sup>12</sup> During the Revolution, when Ottoman forces captured a Christian village, they had ridden their horses into the church, the mutual fouling of sacred buildings being part of the performance and display of the conflict. By 1839, in accordance with a neo-Hellenic programme of monument cleansing, all the minarets of Athens had either been destroyed in the fighting or had been taken down.<sup>13</sup> Among the most conspicuous monuments to go was the large Muslim cemetery situated in marshy ground in front of the Acropolis entrance where much of the fighting had taken place. Edgar Quinet, who visited in 1830, noted that the new marble tombs with turbans proclaimed that a large number of ‘chiefs’ had recently died in the Acropolis.<sup>14</sup> At that time the cemetery gave off an odour, as did the

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- 11 Private collection. Reproduced in du Moncel, Vicomte Théodore-Achille-Louis, *De Venise à Constantinople à travers la Grèce et retour par Malte, Messine, Pizzo et Naples ...* (Paris: Bry, 1846). Reprinted with other versions in lithograph in Du Moncel, Théodore, *Οδοιπορικό του 1843 από την Αθήνα στο Ναύπλιο* (Athens: Olkos, 1984), 113.
  - 12 Letter from Gropius dated 15 April 1824 from Athens printed in Blaquiére, *Second Visit*, 154.
  - 13 Carnarvon, Earl of, *Reminiscences of Athens and the Morea, extracts from a journal of travels in Greece in 1839* (London: Murray, 1869), 15.
  - 14 Quinet, 354. Among them may have been a commander, killed in a sortie from the Acropolis, said to have been ‘a man of importance ... dearly loved by [Reschid]’. Makriyannis, *Memoirs*, Lidderdale edition, 103.

dead bodies lying above ground elsewhere in the town.<sup>15</sup> Unusually, we have a view of how the Muslim cemetery appeared ten years after the Greek state took over the Acropolis, an amateur sketch shown as Figure 15.3.



Figure 15.3. 'View of the Areopagus & sacred road from under Acropolis'. Pencil and watercolour sketch made on the spot by George Nugent Grenville, Baron Nugent, in 1843–44.<sup>16</sup>

'The Koran could not ever put down roots in Athens', the nineteenth-century national myth-maker Dimitris Kambouroglou was later to write, 'for the dust of the ancient Hellenes buried there would prevent them from growing and would eventually uproot them'.<sup>17</sup> In my explorations of the area, much of which now lies in the frontier zone where the tourist buses usually park, I have noticed marble paving stones that, from their rhomboid shape, seem to have come from Muslim tombs made from ancient marble.<sup>18</sup> Nor was Athens exceptional. All over independent Greece, deliberate damage had been done to the cemeteries of the Muslims. 'Their very memory seems to be detested' wrote an American visitor, 'for in all Greece, I did not see a single Turkish cemetery which had not been violated, its cypresses cut down, and the tomb-stones

15 Quinet, 355.

16 Private collection. On the reverse, 'Sketched by Lord Nugent' as a pencil annotation, perhaps added later. Nugent's visit to Athens in 1843–44 is reported in his *Lands Classical and Sacred*. Since the original is faded, I have edited the image.

17 Quoted by Hamilakis, *A Nation*, 61.

18 The frontier zone is discussed in Chapter 24.

overturned and broken'.<sup>19</sup> They had been cleansed even in places where there had been no fighting, including at Nauplia, the provisional capital.<sup>20</sup>

Among the visiting foreigners, the modern ruins of Athens did not evoke the same emotions as the ancient. Men accustomed to conventions of bitter-sweet melancholy and admiration that they had inherited from the philosophical histories and picturesque viewing conventions of the previous century, saw only despair and felt only disgust.<sup>21</sup> Among the buildings, euphorbous plants, whose exhalations were thought to be poisonous, spread in profusion, and innumerable lizards, now safe from the storks, springing out unexpectedly, added to the biblical scene.<sup>22</sup> The modern ruins were, according to a visitor in 1840, like the bloody corpse of stabbed victim.<sup>23</sup> Nor was this merely a figure of speech. The decomposing bodies of up to two thousand Greek fighters who had been killed in the failed attempt to relieve the siege of the Acropolis in May 1827 still lay, stripped of anything valuable, disturbed only by the

19 Morris, E. Joy, *Notes of a Tour through Turkey, Greece, Egypt, Arabia Petraea to the Holy Land* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1842), i, 75.

20 'the mosques and different shrines of the prophet have been demolished, and now appear sad deformities in the place — having their entrances all choked up with rubbish; and the courts which surround them are dépôts for filth, while their burying-grounds can now scarcely be recognized amid the ruin and neglect around them'. As for the coloured tombstones, 'Nature, hiding from the face of day the contemptible effects of human vanity and passion, has coloured over the rifled sepulchre with the rankest of her vegetation'. Black, *Narrative of Cruises*, 140. He was writing in April 1824.

21 The differences were noted explicitly by Quinet, 334. And by Richard Monckton Milnes: 'There is so much that is separate, and fallen, and falling, that admiration is checkt by mourning'. Milnes, Richard Monckton, *Memorials of a Tour in some parts of Greece* (London: Moxon, 1835), 126. His visit was in 1832 shortly before the handover. René Spitaels, who felt mainly disgust and contempt for the Greeks in their misery, described Athens as 'a chaos of the prosaic ruins of today'. Spitaels, René, *De Bruxelles à Constantinople par un touriste flamand* (Brussels: Librairie polytechnique, 1839–1841), 162. Noted also by Marchebeus, *Voyage de Paris à Constantinople par bateau à vapeur nouvel 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), 102; 'I know not anything so desolate-looking an so uninteresting as these modern ruins [in the Peloponnese]'. Hervé, Francis, Esq., *A Residence in Greece and Turkey; with notes of the journey through Bulgaria, Servia, Hungary, and the Balkan, Illustrated by tinted lithographic engravings from drawings by the author* (London: Whitaker, 1837), i, 115.

22 d'Arc, E. Gauttier, 118; 'The scorpion lurks, the lizard breeds secure'. Hill, George, 'The Ruins of Athens', in *Titania's Banquet. Pictures of Woman and Other Poems* (New York: Appleton, 1870), 63.

23 Michaud, i, 164.

scavenging animals and birds, along a corridor from Philopappos to the sea.<sup>24</sup> Near the site of Plato's academy, where Reschid had established his headquarters in 1826 and 1827, lay the bleaching skulls of seventy Greek fighters who had been taken alive and put to death. The local boys, who picked them up, mocked the visitors by pretending that the skulls were laughing at them.<sup>25</sup>

According to Alphonse de Lamartine, who visited Athens in August 1832, it was 'sombre, sad, dark, arid, desolate — a weight on the heart.' As he remarked, invoking a Christian providentialism: 'It is a land of apocalypse, that seems struck by some divine malediction, by some great word of prophecy; a Jerusalem of the nations, in which there is no longer even a tomb!'<sup>26</sup> The population in Athens in 1830 was put at three hundred and fifty, perhaps the lowest point since the place was first settled in neolithic times.<sup>27</sup> Gradually however the Greek population returned from Salamis, Poros, Aegina, and from their refuges in the caves and monasteries in the Attic hills. They began to repair the houses, build new ones, replant the crops and rework the fields, and by 1833 the numbers were back to the thousands and increasing.<sup>28</sup> But in 1835 Athens was struck by a deadly infectious illness that some attributed to 'the general filth of the town, and [it] may have been aggravated by the interment, without caution or order, of the victims in the late wars, whose putrid remains have infected the atmosphere.'<sup>29</sup>

24 That the bodies were left unburied was noted by Quinet, 334. After the Ottoman withdrawal they were later gathered into a memorial. Noted by Baird, 18.

25 'The groping antiquary pores, to spy— A what? a name, perchance ne'er graven there; At whom the urchin, with his mimic eye, Sits peering through a skull, and laughs continually'. Hill, 63.

26 Lamartine, i, 75.

27 Macgregor, 72. Claridge, 259, looking back eight years later, put the number at the lowest point at '500 or 600 inhabitants'.

28 The extraordinarily rapid social and economic progress of independent Greece, with the help of the guaranteed loan, and how closely it followed Thiersch's proposals of 1833, is vividly illustrated by the tables of statistics in Strong, Frederick, *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). He had personally observed the changes during his residence in the country for eight years.

29 Standish, Frank Hall, esq., *The Shores of the Mediterranean* (London: Lumley: 1837 and 1838), ii, 47. Standish visited in September 1835. In accordance with mainstream medical opinion at the time, Standish thought that infectious illnesses were spread by 'miasma' in the air. He notes however that the crew of an Austrian ship, who fell

As for the Acropolis, by April 1833, when the Greek state took over from the Ottoman army, the six summers and winter rains had allowed nature to work its changes. In many places a thin layer of greenery had taken root among the stones.<sup>30</sup> Nothing, it emerged, had been touched since 1827. Even the broken rope that the assassinated Odysseus Androutsos had supposedly used in his alleged escape attempt in 1825 still hung from the Frankish tower.<sup>31</sup> No repairs had been made and no further damage had been done. The sight of the scattered fragments of marble sculptures reminded a visitor in 1852 of 'mangled bodies on a dreadful battle-field'.<sup>32</sup> Nor was this just a figure of speech. When the Bavarian and Greek forces took over the Acropolis in April 1833, they found bones and skulls lying among the broken marble and the rusting shells.<sup>33</sup> In the summer of 1835, two years after the Ottoman forces left, one visitor described the 'shot and shell, numbers of which are still lying where they were exploded' and 'in one big hole [...] a pile of skulls and bones of those who were killed in the siege'.<sup>34</sup>

A.L. Koeppen, a military instructor from Denmark, later a professor of classics in the United States, was on the Acropolis at some time in the late 1830s when a Greek woman, as he describes her, came to retrieve the bodies of her husband and her son who had been killed by the same cannon ball.<sup>35</sup> It was possible, Koeppen noted, to tell the Muslim dead from the Christian, the former buried face up, the latter lying on their sides, and some graves of prominent persons may have been marked.<sup>36</sup>

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ill from drinking the water, which suggests that the illness was due to the pollution of the water supply.

30 As picked out by some of the first artists to visit, notably Cole.

31 The rope was still to be seen in 1840, for reasons that are not obvious. Buchon, 67.

32 Hettner, Hermann, *Athens and the Peloponnese, with sketches of Northern Greece* (Edinburgh: Constable 1854), 8.

33 Noted by, for example, 'Francis', 258; Andersen, ii, 154, 156; and Baird, 43. When in a letter dated 6 May 1827, Reschid claimed that the interior and exterior of Acropolis had been 'cleared and purified of the filth of the brigands' bodies', he was evidently referring to living revolutionaries not to corpses. Noted by Ilicak, 'Revolutionary Athens', 14, from Ottoman archives.

34 De Ross, Lord, *Journal of a tour in the principalities, Crimea, and countries adjacent to the Black Sea in the years 1835–36* (London: Parker, 1855), 26.

35 Koeppen, Prof A.L., *Sketches of a traveller from Greece, Constantinople, Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine* (Chambersburg, PA: Printed by Kiefer, 1854), part 2, 19.

36 A photograph of unsorted fragments of Muslim tombs untidily heaped near the Propylaea on the Acropolis is reproduced by Hamilakis, Yannis, 'Indigenous Archaeologies in Ottoman Greece' in Bahrani, Zinab, Zeynep Çelik, Zeynep, and

Visitors remarked on the 'shot and broken shell, mingled with human skulls and bones'.<sup>37</sup>

The metal seems mostly to have soon been removed for re-use, but the bleached bones lying among the broken marble remained among the sights on the Acropolis for much of the nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup> It became a custom for visitors to take skulls as souvenirs. As the German Prince Pückler-Muskau, who had seen the stealing of the skulls piled at Missolonghi wrote, the British took whatever they wanted from above ground or below. He wrote, with the disdain of one who did not have to work for his living, that, not content with having stripped poor Greece of her artistic masterpieces, 'the islanders' were now taking the bones of the heroes of the Greek Revolution to be gawked at by button-makers in London.<sup>39</sup> When, on 23 January 1851, the French author Gustave Flaubert went to see the excavated Parthenon slabs displayed inside the Parthenon, he saw a gnawed human thigh bone there too.<sup>40</sup> As late as 1879, an anonymous visitor noted that: 'I saw a considerable number of men's skulls and other bones in shallow open holes in the Acropolis of Athens, which the local dragoman told me were the remains of Greeks and Turks who had fallen in the war of independence fifty years ago'.<sup>41</sup>

It would have been difficult by then to separate the dead from the first siege of 1822 from those of the second of 1826/27, the Greeks from the Turks, the Christians from the Muslims, the women from the men, the fighters from the non-combatants, or those who had been killed in the fighting from those who had died as a consequence of lack of water

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Eldem, Edhem, opposite 59, no date for the photograph given. They may be from the Muslim cemetery on the low ground cleared and awaiting re-use as part of the monument cleansing, rather than evidence for the existence of a Muslim cemetery on the summit.

37 [Francis, 'our hero', who accompanied the author], *Thoughts and Sketches by the Way* (London: published by subscription, many names are titled, 1845), 285. '[S] tumbling now and then over one of the rusty bomb-shells or cannon-balls.' Murray, E. Clare Grenville, *From Mayfair to Marathon* (London: Bentley, 1853), 420.

38 'Even the struggles of Turk and Greek have left their memorials in bones and skulls, with which a deep pit is filled'. Chase, Thomas, M.A., *Hellas, her Monuments and Scenery* (Cambridge MA, Sever and Francis, 1863), 147.

39 Pückler-Muskau, *Entre l'Europe et l'Asie*, i, 11. The 'islanders' was still being used by the German army in the Second World War, as mentioned in Chapter 23.

40 'Dans le Parthénon, aux pieds d'une des tablettes, un fémur rongé, tout gris'. Flaubert, *Voyage*, 434.

41 'To Constantinople by the Shipka Pass — October 1879' in *Blackwood's Magazine* CXXVII, February 1880, 247.

or food. When, in the 1840s, Charles Ernest Beulé, with funding from France, began his excavations on the Acropolis, some of the human remains he turned up were still putrefying. What was assumed to be the skull of an Ottoman soldier was kicked about by the Greek workmen. Another skull, which had belonged to a man who had lost all his teeth, was given to a foreign visitor who was fascinated to see how his gums had adapted to his attempts to chew his food without teeth.<sup>42</sup> A tinted sketch of the inside of the Acropolis gate made in 1853 by Harald Conrad Stilling, a professional artist from Denmark, shows two human skulls perched on gathered fragments of an Ionic ancient building with a scattering of large and small cannon balls, evidently an attempt to use the debris of war then being turned up in the clearances to display and commemorate the Revolution.<sup>43</sup>

How many people had been killed or who had died in the Acropolis during the Greek Revolution is not known, but the numbers were not trivial. As the Greek general Makriyannis, who was present during most of the 1826/27 siege, wrote in his *Memoirs*: 'The men were slaughtered by the shells and mortar bombs; the graves up on the citadel became full, and we buried the dead at Serpentzé', the walled area on the south slope.<sup>44</sup> The French military philhellene, Fabvier, who lived through the last months of the siege and was amongst those who surrendered, estimated that sixty Greeks and philhellenes had died during the siege of 1826/27.<sup>45</sup> But when in 1840, Edgar Garston, who had fought in the war as a philhellene volunteer, said that the number of human skulls piled on the Acropolis was then more than fifteen hundred, that may have been an exaggeration.<sup>46</sup>

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42 Beulé, *Fouilles*, i, 16. That foreigner he refers may have been the American anatomist Benjamin Mott, discussed below although the dates do not quite fit.

43 Bendtsen, Margit, *Sketches and Measurements, Danish Architects in Greece 1818–1862* (Copenhagen: Royal Academy of Fine Arts *et al.*, 1993), figure 19 and description at 370, dated July 1853. It is possible that this is a picturesque composition, not intended to be a realistic presentation of an actuality, but that was not Stilling's style, either generally or in the picture. Since the metal cannon balls that had a monetary value as scrap seem to have been collected early on, the balls shown are probably those made of marble.

44 *Memoirs*, ed. H.A. Lidderdale, 102. The Serpenji, the walled area on the south slope, was discussed and illustrated in Chapter 4.

45 Debidour, 332 from archives.

46 Garston, Edgar, *Greece Revisited and Sketches in Lower Egypt in 1840, with Thirty-Six Hours of a Campaign in Greece in 1825* (London: Saunders and Ottley, 1842), i, 127.

At that time, it was planned to bury them together along with any others found as the summit was cleared.<sup>47</sup> But in the 1850s, visitors smelt the stench from the cisterns in which ‘some hundreds of skulls and skeletons’ were still to be seen.<sup>48</sup> The grilled door to the chamber under the Parthenon, where the human remains had been gathered, is shown in the detail of a photograph made in the 1850s, by James Robertson, as reproduced as Figure 15.4. They were not to be removed until the 1870s.<sup>49</sup>



Figure 15.4. The Parthenon from the west, detail. Photograph by James Robertson. ?1850s.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Garston, i, 127.

<sup>48</sup> ‘I never saw so many ravens together as I saw around and on the Acropolis. Their hoarse croaking was mournful and in horrid keeping with their presence; and I must say with disgust I saw, and to the shame of the present generation, on the southern side of the Parthenon, an open vault where some hundreds of skulls and skeletons lie exposed,— the remains of those who lost their lives in the last revolution for their country. The sight was revolting, the smell still offensive’. Corrigan, Dr., *Ten days in Athens: with notes by the way: summer of 1861* (London: Longman, 1862), 110. Eliza C. Bush in 1867 recorded that: ‘looking into what appeared the bed of a cistern, I beheld a number of human skulls and bones’. Bush, Eliza C., *My pilgrimage to eastern shrines* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1867), 34. ‘Even the struggles of Turk and Greek have left their memorials in bones and skulls, with which a deep pit is filled’. Chase, Thomas, M.A., *Hellas, her Monuments and Scenery* (Cambridge M.A., Sever and Francis, 1863), 147. He visited in 1853.

<sup>49</sup> The Greek Government ‘a aussi démoli au sud du Parthénon certains hypogées ou l’on avait jeté pêle-mêle une grande quantité d’assements humains’. Burnouf, 16.

<sup>50</sup> Private collection from a modern scan of an unidentified copy. Published also in Robertson, James, *Photographs, ‘Athens and Grecian Antiquities 1853–1855’, From the*

Another practice among visitors was to pick up a skull as a prop for a philosophical meditation on the transience of lives and empires. The custom was caught in an engraving, shown as Figure 15.5.



Figure 15.5. 'Temple en ruines.' Wood engraving.<sup>51</sup>

Although not named, nineteenth-century viewers throughout Europe and beyond would instantly have recognised the cloaked man shown holding the skull as Byron, author of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, wearing the dark cloak that had been adopted as a mark of Byronism since 1814. Many would also have picked up the allusion to Hamlet's 'Alas poor Yorick' speech. A diminishing number would have remembered the older, Christian, meaning that is also alluded to. In the early modern period, 'temple' had been commonly used to connote the human body as the seat of the soul.

An update was later supplied by another poet, Sir Edwin Arnold, who is known to have visited the Acropolis and may have personally performed the meditating convention.

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*Photographic Archive of the Benaki Museum* (Athens: Museum of Cycladic Art, 1998), no 1, 60.

51 Wordsworth, Christopher, *La Grèce, Pittoresque et Historique, Ancienne et Moderne*, translated by E. Regnault (Paris: Curmer, 1841), 67, noted as engraved by Orrin Smith, no artist named. As far as I can ascertain the image did not appear in any of the English editions.

**'Inscribed on a skull picked up on the Acropolis at Athens'.<sup>52</sup>**

I am the skull of Nedjim, a Turk,  
     Who fought at Athens with the Giaour;  
 When cannon-balls were hard at work  
     Shattering the Parthenon — that hour  
 A classic fragment took me fair  
     Under the waist-cloth, and so made  
 "Ruins" of me. For long years there  
     My remnants with the rest have laid.  
 Scant burial got we from the Greek —  
     The green fly and the hooded crow  
 Helped the hot sun to leave me sleek,  
     Till, as thou seest, my pate did grow  
 White as new Parian. At the last  
     A Briton spied me, as he passed  
 Roaming the strewn Acropolis,  
     And lightly fashioned me to this.  
 Drink! if thou wilt; and, drinking, say  
     Never did ancient craftsman make  
 Cyathus, Krater, Patera  
     Fitter a mighty thirst to slake.  
 But! call not me a thing of the clod!  
     The Parthenon owned no such plan!  
 Man made that temple for a God,  
     God made these temples for a man!

Arnold was familiar with the languages and customs of the peoples of India as well as having had a traditional classical education. His allusions would have been picked up by many readers, as would his reference to Byron's having made a drinking cup out of a skull of a pre-Reformation monk that was found at Newstead Abbey, one of many religious buildings that had been seized by the English monarchs and awarded to their supporters during the European Reformation.

To others, however, the skulls lying on the Acropolis were more than invitations to ponder. In the early 1840s, a famous American anatomist, Dr Valentine Mott, who had travelled extensively, made a collection of skulls on the Acropolis, along with other bones found in Greece, that were boxed up, and over three years shipped to New York, where

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52 Arnold, Sir Edwin, *The Secret of Death, from the Sanskrit, with some collected poems* (London: Trübner & Co., 1885).

they formed part of the largest collection of anatomical specimens ever assembled.<sup>53</sup> Mott's aim, as was shared by those who built up other large collections in London, Edinburgh, and other cities with medical schools, was primarily to use anatomical specimens in the teaching of anatomy to students. But they were also being increasingly used in the practice of phrenology, a semi-scientific attempt, never confirmed as having any validity, to determine the character of the inner immaterial mind of an individual from the external characteristics of the material skull.

Mott, who was confident that he knew which skulls had belonged to which communities and was, to an extent, arguing in a circle, was not departing far from the mainstream of his day, when he noted that the skull of the Turk was 'more spherical, from the early habit of bearing the turban, whereas the Greek is of full volume, and bold and expressive outline, comprising in its ensemble those full and salient prominences that denote the highest traits of intellect'.<sup>54</sup> One might have expected, from what was already known about the movements of populations, some voluntary, some forced, and from the seizures, rapes, enslavements, and harem-life of women, some recent, some dating back centuries, and from the continuous importation of slaves of both sexes from far away, that continuity in the gene pool ('blood') was not to be expected. But Mott evidently thought that the philhellenic claim of the identity of the modern with the ancient Hellenes was genetic, and was making more than a poetic point when he declared that Pittakis 'studied the monuments of Greece with Greek eyes and Greek feelings'.<sup>55</sup> Also insufficiently critical, we might judge, was the high-ranking Scottish churchman, Rev. John Aiton, D.D., who attempted to phrenologize directly from the living people he saw in Greece in 1851: '[...] a frivolous, foppish, and self-conceited set of beings. Their head is remarkably small, and their forehead low and everyway contracted

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53 Mott, Valentine, *Travels in Europe and the East* (New York: Harper, 1842), 297. Mott's accounts of his visits to Greece are summarised by Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 241–43. I have not been able to ascertain the dates of his two visits to Athens but they appear to have occurred towards the end of his journeying. Mott's skulls were destroyed when the New York Medical School building burned down in 1866.

54 Mott, 197.

55 Mott, 180. On the title page of his guidebook, Pittakis described himself as 'Athenian'.

[...] St Paul pronounced them to be liars always; and they are so still, without exception, and on every occasion'.<sup>56</sup>

Among the discoveries from the first excavations into the soil of the Acropolis were ancient vases containing cremated human remains and other grave goods, confirming that the ancient Acropolis had, among its many other functions, been a repository for the dead, although probably only for those who were accorded the honour by the city.<sup>57</sup> An ancient helmet with the skull of the dead soldier preserved inside would today provide DNA evidence about the genetic make-up of an individual who was privileged in his time.<sup>58</sup> And it began to be assumed by nineteenth-century visitors that real ancient Athenians had looked like the ancient Athenians presented on, for example, the frieze of the Parthenon. They ignored the portrait busts and descriptions of the appearances of Pericles, Socrates, and of numerous other individuals that showed a wide variety, to the extent that a huge literature had been composed in ancient times that offered advice on how to discern inner character from external bodily appearance. The reverse imagining from an artistic presentation of an ideal to a real, from the marble to the human was soon to be among the most persistent misapprehensions of the western tradition.<sup>59</sup> To James Dalloway, for example, who lived in the Levant for many years and travelled extensively before the Revolution: 'The contour of Grecian statues, and the profiles on their medals, are still to be seen in the faces of their degenerate successors'.<sup>60</sup> However the

56 Aiton, John, D.D., *The Lands of the Messiah, Mahomet, and the Pope* (London and Edinburgh: Fullarton, 1852), 467.

57 'des urnes lacrymatoires, des vases renfermant des ossements humains'. Poujoulat, Baptistin, *Voyage à Constantinople, dans l'Asie Mineure, en Mésopotamie, à Palmyre, en Syrie, en Palestine et en Égypte, par m. Baptistin Poujoulat. Faisant suite à la Correspondance d'Orient* (Brussels: Wouters, 1841), 11. Poujoulat's visit was in October/November 1836.

58 Baruffi, G. F. Professore di Geometria della R. Univ. di Torino, Membro di Parecchie dotte Societa ecc., ecc., *Viaggio in Oriente* (Turin: Silvestri, 1847), 120.

59 For example, 'Les fronts nouveaux, les nez camus, les pommettes saillantes, la face courte et large n'étaient pas des raisons suffisantes pour écarter tout d'abord la supposition de crânes du peuple antique'. Salle, Eugene de, *Pérégrinations en Orient, Orient, ou: Voyage pittoresque, historique et politique en Egypte, Nubie, Syrie, Turquie, Grèce, pendant les années 1837–38–39*, second edition (Paris: Pagnerre, 1840), ii, 203.

60 Dalloway, James, *Constantinople, Ancient and Modern* (London: Bensley, 1797), 6. He was however sceptical of the cultural continuity claims of Guys, discussed in Chapter 8. For example, 'In the highly coloured pages of De Guys, and his forced comparison of the ancient with the modern inhabitants of Greece, taste and

practice of phrenology also presaged another shift that Disraeli, who was proudly pro-semitic, had welcomed. The imagined community of religious affiliation was morphing, through the imagined community of nation, into modern racism, perceived as an identity, genetically ('racially') constituted and implying a moral character or disposition, from which it was impossible to resign.

It was around the same time as Mott was looking at the Parthenon and collecting his skulls in Athens that in Edinburgh another eminent anatomist, Robert Knox, later to be fictionalized in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson, was applying his specialist knowledge to the pieces of the Parthenon displayed in the British Museum. Full of admiration for the knowledge of human anatomy that the ancient marble sculptors demonstrated in their work, he too was among many who uncritically assumed that real classical Athenians had physically resembled the idealized Athenian men and women presented on the Parthenon frieze, among whose characteristics is that, except in what they are presented as wearing, they show little individuality.<sup>61</sup>

In the faces of some of the centaurs on the Parthenon metopes, Knox recognized those of modern Russians. In the Coptic gallery, he was struck by the resemblance between one statue and some of its contemporary viewers. As he wrote: 'Astounding fact in the history of Man! For nearly forty centuries the world rolled through space since this inimitable bust was carved; raised on the banks of the Nile, the admiration of the then living generation; now gazed at under the smoky, murky skies of England, by a race ignorant of its history, careless of its origin; whilst around it, in groups or singly, walks the Israelite, the descendant of the Copt, unaltered by clime or time, as unchangeable as the enduring rock from which the busts of his forefathers have been hewn'.<sup>62</sup> Nor was the Knox tradition without its champions in the wider anglophone world, although his recommendations for eugenic cleansing were not actively followed up. Writing in 1883 of the so-called Theseus from the east pediment, Lucy Mitchell, the American author of what she

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ingenuity abound, but the positive establishment of his hypothesis must be waved'. Dalloway, *Constantinople*, 9.

61 Discussed in *The Classical Parthenon*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>.

62 Knox and Fau, *The anatomy of the external forms of man: intended for the use of artists, painters and sculptors* By J. Fau; edited with additions by Robert Knox. With an atlas of twenty-eight plates (London: J.B. Baillière, 1849), 231.

misleadingly claimed to be the first English-language history of Greek sculpture, perceived that 'the skull has those strong, square, proportions peculiar to intellectually superior races.'<sup>63</sup> The essentialist notion of race as biologically fixed was to be developed in other European countries and the United States, with consequences that the modern world is still living with.<sup>64</sup>

So deeply internalised were biological errors about 'race' that many saw what they expected to see. To Edward Blaquiere, who made two visits to Greece during the Revolution, it was not a surprise that the ancients had excelled in sculpture when 'the models were abundant and beautiful.'<sup>65</sup> The American E. Joy Morris, who visited Greece soon after the Revolution saw '...several Greek young men, whose graceful forms, and fine heads immediately brought to mind the classically-moulded limbs and features of the Belvidere Apollo'.<sup>66</sup> Of the people Hermann Hettner saw in 1852, 'the entire plastic art of the ancients speaks to us livingly from their forms',<sup>67</sup> while the visitor to Aegina in 1879 and first quoted in Chapter 9 wrote of the boys: 'Three or four of these young fellows, with their large eyes, low foreheads, finely-cut profiles, and luxuriant heads of hair, might have sat as models for the Pan-Athenaic procession with which Phidias adorned the frieze of the Parthenon'.<sup>68</sup>

Among the other consequences of the Revolution was the disappearance of the storks. When, in the winter of 1832/33 during the final months of Ottoman military occupation, the Swiss artist Johann Jakob Wolfensberger depicted the Doric Portico in Athens, the nesting sites on top that had been a familiar sight for centuries were no longer to be seen. His picture of the ruined town is shown as Figure 15.6, as engraved.

63 Mitchell, Lucy M., *A History of Ancient Sculpture with numerous illustrations, including six plates in phototype* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1883), 353.

64 The development of theories of essential racism in Germany and how authors and artists as well as politicians drew on the authority of the ancients in the self-fashioning of the German nation is discussed in Chapter 23.

65 Blaquiere, Edward, *The Greek Revolution, Its Origin and Progress* (London: G. & W.B. Whittaker, 1824), 291.

66 Morris, E. Joy, *Notes of a Tour through Turkey, Greece, Egypt, Arabia Petraea to the Holy Land* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1842), 20.

67 Hettner, Hermann, *Athens and the Peloponnese, with sketches of Northern Greece* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1854), 3.

68 [Anonymous of 1879], 'A week in Athens', in *Blackwood's Magazine*, cxxviii, September 1880, 329.



Figure 15.6. 'The Agora, Athens, Greece.' Steel engraving.<sup>69</sup>

No storks' nests are shown in the drawing of the Portico made by Christian Hansen in 1833, nor in any other pictures made around that time.<sup>70</sup> Artists did not always include elements that might detract from the main features that they wished to present, usually the ruins of an ancient building, and some images can be regarded as explicitly rhetorical acts of picturing intended to persuade towards a philosophical narrative rather than to act as documentary records of an actuality. At least one engraver omitted the storks and their nests when he re-copied from engravings made by others.<sup>71</sup> But when we reach the greater trustworthiness of the

69 'Drawn by Wolfensberger, engraved by J.B. le Keux.' Wright, ii, opposite 52. Lacour, 163 and 172, records meeting Wolfensberger in Athens in November 1832.

70 Reproduced in Bendtsen, Margit, *Sketches and Measurements, Danish Architects in Greece 1818–1862* (Copenhagen: Royal Academy of Fine Arts et al., 1993), 116. Not pictured in Cole, William, *Select Views of the Remains of Ancient Monuments in Greece, as at Present Existing, from drawings taken and coloured on the spot in the Year 1833* (London: for the Author, Ackermann, 1835) nor in the 1843 watercolour by Ippolito Caffi reproduced in Tsigakou, *Recovery*, 144–45.

71 An Italian re-engraving of the Stuart picturesque views attributed to Trojani, 1833, which in other respects are reasonably faithful copies, omits the storks that Stuart showed. No nests are shown on the Portico in the views by Thürmer, Joseph, *Ansichten von Athen und seinen Denkmahlen. Nach der Natur gezeichnet und radirt von J. Thürmer. Vues d'Athènes, etc* (Rome: De Romanis, no date, but some of the views are noted as etched in 1825) reproduced by Matton, Lya, and Matton, Raymond, *Athènes et ses Monuments du XVIIe Siècle à nos jours* (Athens: Institut français d'Athènes, 1963), LXI, but since they were also commonly shown in the settled days before the Revolution they were probably elided by the artist or engraver. The role of the storks

light-on-chemical era of photography, the absence continues. There is, for example, no nest shown in the aquatint of the daguerreotype of the Portico made by Girault de Prangey in 1842.<sup>72</sup>

The storks, a feature of the cityscape of Athens since ancient times, had entirely disappeared.<sup>73</sup> In the spring of 1829, they had arrived in Athens as they had done since time immemorial, but they did not nest.<sup>74</sup> And 1829 appears to have been their last year. In May 1830, although Athens was again under Ottoman rule, E. Gauttier d'Arc looked without success for the storks' nests he had read about in Chateaubriand's account written a generation earlier, when they had been central to Chateaubriand's developing theory of history as man and nature.<sup>75</sup> And, as was noted by another visitor in the summer of that year: 'the faithful stork has not found a hospitable roof and has sought another dwelling for herself and her family.'<sup>76</sup> The nests had been destroyed in the burning of the town or used as firewood, and some birds may have been killed for food, but, whereas after earlier disasters they had returned and gradually rebuilt their nests stick by stick, this time they did not. Plato, in the *Laws*, rejecting the binary of Man and the rest of the living world, understood that storks, cranes, and some other birds and animals, such as bees, had developed a complex culture of their own,

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in classical Athens is discussed in *The Classical Parthenon*, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0279>.

72 Reproduced in *Athens a Photographic History*, no. 6.

73 Although there are many pictures made before the Revolution that show storks and their nests, notably those by Stuart, Dodwell, and Dupré, others elided the nests even although the written record shows that they were present. J-B-G D'Ansse de Villoison says of his visit in 1785, that 'almost all the buildings of Athens and Thebes were covered with storks'. D'Ansse de Villoison, J-B-G, *De l'Hellade à la Grèce, Voyage en Grèce et au Levant (1784–1786)* edited by Étienne Famerie (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 2006), 112. The protection given to the storks and their nests was also noted by Hunter, William, *Travels in the year 1792 through France, Turkey and Hungary ...* (London: second edition, Bensley, 1798), i, 267–269. There are no nests shown on the Doric Portico, a long established site, in the drawing by Christian Hansen in 1833, nor in any of the other pictures made around that time. Some may not have been included in the compositions or may have been elided by the engraver. A set of re-engravings of the Stuart picturesque views made in Italy in 1833 and attributed to 'Trojani', which in other respects are reasonably faithful copies, omits the storks that Stuart showed.

74 Quinet, 346, 347.

75 Gauttier d'Arc, E., *Fragmens d'un Voyage en Italie, en Grèce et en Asie pendant les Années 1829–30* (Paris: Aufray, 1831), 116.

76 Michaud and Poujoulat, ii, 106.

and he would not have been surprised at the thought that the storks, as a species with memory and perhaps some sense of possible futures, had abandoned Athens.<sup>77</sup>

The misfortunes of the storks had begun in 1821 as soon as the Greek Revolutionaries took over Athens. As one witness reported, the Greeks: 'commenced a terrible persecution of the storks, driving them from the chimney-tops and old ruined columns, where they had enjoyed, under Mahometan protection, so many centuries of hereditary security. The sight of this barbarity is believed to have enraged the Turks even more than the destruction of their houses and the violation of their mosques'.<sup>78</sup> According to Muslim lore, every autumn the storks went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, returning in the spring, hence their name 'Baba Hadji' ['father pilgrim'].<sup>79</sup> In Siphnos, the philhellene colonel Jourdain recorded a local story that swallows were carried across the sea to Africa on the backs of storks, who also carried food for their journey.<sup>80</sup> In what was to become independent Greece, although the ruins of the ancient buildings were now carefully preserved, the untidy and smelly piles of sticks with which many had been crowned, and which feature in many picturesque engravings of the landscape, had no future.<sup>81</sup> Although some of the former feeding grounds, such as the marshy land in front of the Acropolis and on the way to Piraeus, were drained or filled in, there were plenty of frogs and snakes elsewhere.

All over the territory of newly independent Greece, the storks suffered the same fate. Any returning birds that attempted to build their nests on the broken stumps of destroyed minarets had been forced to

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

78 Waddington *Visit*, 58, footnote. As noted earlier he was able to draw on reports by Gropius who had been present.

79 Garnett and Stuart-Glennie, *Greek folk poesy; annotated translations from the whole cycle of Romaic folk-verse and folk-prose by Lucy M.J. Garnett. Edited, with essays on The science of folklore, Greek folkspeech, and The survival of paganism*, by J.S. Stuart-Glennie (Guildford for the authors, 1896), i, 402.

80 Jourdain, ii, 100.

81 The storks' nests on the Doric portico in Athens, with their old and the young birds, had been described as 'filthy' by Craven, Lady, *A Journey through the Crimea to Constantinople. In a series of letters from the Right Honourable Elizabeth Lady Craven to His Serene Highness the Margrave of Brandebourg, Anspach, and Bareith. Written in the year MDCCCLXXXVI* (London: G.G.J. & J. Robinson, 1789), 258.

give up.<sup>82</sup> As John Hartley, a Christian missionary, wrote in apocalyptic terms during his visit to the desolated Peloponnese in 1828: 'The fowl of the heavens are fled: I do not recollect to have seen a single stork all the time I was in the Morea.'<sup>83</sup> 'The Greeks have carried their antipathy to the Turks to such a pitch', he wrote, 'that they have destroyed all the storks in the country. On inquiring the reason, I was informed, "The stork is a Turkish bird: it never used to build its nest on the house of a Greek, but always on that of a Turk!"'<sup>84</sup> The storks were as thoroughly cleansed as the minarets, the cemeteries, and the human populations.<sup>85</sup>

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82 Noted by Bowden, John Edward, *The Life And Letters of Frederick William Faber, D.D. Priest of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri* (Baltimore: Murphy, 1869), 122; Faber *Sights and Thoughts*, 446, and by others.

83 Hartley, 25.

84 *Ibid.*, 366.

85 'In [independent] Greece, where they once abounded, scarce a solitary straggler is to be seen'. *The militiaman at home and abroad ... with sketches of the Ionian Islands, Malta, and Gibraltar by Emeritus, with illustrations by John Leech* (London: Smith Elder, 1857), 215. The author noted that, in Ottoman territory, the storks roosted fearlessly within touching distance of the humans, as 'strange silent sentries.'

