Five go in search of Greece

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The five in question were Francis Vernon and his travelling companion Sir Giles Eastcourt; Sir George Wheler and his travelling companion Jacob Spon, a French Protestant from Lyons; and finally an English adventurer named Bernard Randolph. They all visited Greece in 1675-76. Vernon, Wheler, Spon, and Randolph have left valuable accounts of their travels.[1] Eastcourt only left himself behind in the soil of Greece: he died in September 1675 under the slopes of Mount Parnassus at Vitrinizza. Vernon, Eastcourt, Wheler and Spon travelled together from Venice to Zante (Zakynthos). There they separated. Wheler and Spon went on by sea to Constantinople, while Vernon and Eastcourt crossed over to mainland Greece and made their way along the northern shores of the Gulf of Corinth. At some point, they met up with Bernard Randolph. He had been in the employ of the Levant Company, but was now prospecting in Greece on his own account. The three men reached Athens. There they carved their names on a wall in the Theseion.[2]

There was nothing official about their travels. They did not have the advantages of the French ambassador to the Porte, the Marquis de Nointel.[3] He made what amounted to a state visit to Athens in December 1674 and was allowed free access to the Acropolis, where he coveted the marbles: he did not believe them to be safe in Turkish hands. With him were artists who produced paintings of the Acropolis. For their part, Spon and Wheler, Vernon, Eastcourt, and Randolph were travelling in a private capacity, but they were responding to a renewed interest in Greece. All eyes were on Greece, which seemed 'more than ever a theatre of European history'. Or as Covel, the chaplain to the Levant Company, put it more pungently in his diary: 'Here are every year abundance of Whiflers in these scraps of learning.' Included in that number was 'now one Mr Vernon who is mightily eager after all such things.'[4] The interest in Greece and its antiquities was stoked up during the war of Candia (1645-69), which effectively put an end to travel in Greece, and the final defeat of Venice meant that European travellers could visit Greece once again. The insecurity of the Levant had not, however, deterred the Capuchin monks from establishing a house at Athens in 1658. There was also a Jesuit presence: Père Babin, one of their number, made a study of the topography

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of Classical Athens which Jacob Spon published at Lyons in 1674. He was upstaged by Guillet de St-George, who produced *Athènes ancienne et nouvelle* in the following year. This purported to be an authentic description of contemporary Athens based upon the travels that the author's brother undertook with an Englishman named Mr Drelingston. It enjoyed a huge success, was translated almost immediately into English, and remains highly enjoyable. Spon had a copy when he set off on his journey, but was disappointed to discover that the book was a fraud in the sense that neither Guillet de St-George nor his brother had ever been to Greece, while Mr Drelingston, I presume, was quite fictitious. Spon must have discussed it with Vernon, because the latter was outraged by the book's presumption and fired off a letter to the Royal Society, warning the Fellows not to be 'deceived by that Book which is wide from the truth; as will appear to anybody who sees the reality, though to one who hath not seen it, it seems plausibly written.'[5] As indeed it does! Quite unabashed, Guillet de St-George produced *Lacédemon ancienne et nouvelle* in 1676. The success of his two books on Athens and Sparta testifies to the intense interest in Greece that there was in France and England when our travellers set off. It is this that endows their accounts with such importance. Moreover, their different emphases and interests bring out the complexity of the European involvement with Greece at this time.

The French and the English had similar interests, if conducted in different ways: both displayed the same mixture of cultural imperialism and commerce. I shall, however, concentrate on the English interest in Greece, leaving Jacob Spon and the French connection to the end. English interest in Greece reached an early peak in the 1620s, when Thomas, Earl of Arundel, had his agents plunder the Aegean islands for classical statuary and inscriptions. His collection, known as the Arundel Marbles, was among the most impressive in the Europe of his time, including as it did the so-called Parian chronicle. Its publication with other early Greek inscriptions by John Selden in 1628 created a sensation.[6]

Arundel's work was justified by a contemporary on the grounds that he was 'transplanting Old Greece into England and civilised safekeeping.'[7] Thomas Smith expressed approval in the preface to his *Remarks upon the Manners, Religion and Government of the Turks*, the fruit of his stay at Constantinople as chaplain to the Levant Company from 1668-70.[8] From this and others of Smith's writings it is possible to extract a programme. He wanted to appropriate the Greek past, advocating a collection of statues along the lines of the Arundel Marbles and urging scholars to record classical inscriptions and to collect manuscripts. Smith

regretted that he had neither time nor money to visit Mount Athos with a view to 'looking after Greek manuscripts' but trusted that others would be more fortunate.[9] His interest in Mount Athos was perhaps not as altruistic as his choice of words might suggest, but he was deeply concerned about the condition of the Orthodox Church and wished to see it restored to its rightful place. 'What a glorious design would it be', he mused, 'and how much for the honour of our religion, if the Christian princes would unite and enter upon a Holy War, and redeem the Oriental Christians from the burden of this intolerable tyranny and slavery.'[10] This was old- fashioned nostalgia for the crusade, which produced certain problems for an Anglican priest and did not quite fit the Church of England's interest in the Orthodox church. The Church of England hoped to find in a reinvigorated Orthodox church a suitable ally against Rome.

Thomas Smith was the historian of what Sir Steven Runciman has dubbed 'the Anglican Experiment'[11] – that effort made by churchmen on both sides to bring the Anglican and Orthodox churches together. It was associated with the Patriarchate of Cyril Lucaris (1620/1623-1638). Smith was responsible for assembling the documents on his Patriarchate.[12] The possibilities of a reconciliation were once again being reviewed as Orthodox divines debated the question of Transubstantiation: the official line favoured the notion of the real presence and therefore was moving away from the agnostic position the Orthodox Church had maintained at the Council of Florence. No Anglican could accept the real presence. Our travellers probably did not have a chance to consult Smith's writings before they set out. On the other hand, Smith was articulating views that were circulating among the English intelligentsia.

Randolph had no intellectual pretensions.[13] He had come to Greece as an agent of the Levant Company. This was a rather different side to English interests in the Ottoman Empire. The Company's main centres of operation were Constantinople, Smyrna, and Aleppo. It expanded rapidly in the first half of the seventeenth century, and its turnover matched that of the East India Company.[14] The War of Candia crippled Venetian trade in the Levant. English merchants were keenly aware of the opportunities that this opened up. Their particular interest was in currants, for which there was huge demand in England: Spon opined 'that the English consume more currants in their ragouts than Germany and France together.'[15] The main area of currant production was the Peloponnese, but the centre for trade was the Venetian island of Zante. Currants were a lucrative source of revenue for the Venetians. Sir George Wheler noted that it amounted to 'the

ordinary charge of their Armada at sea'.[16] There were fears in Venice that the English might bypass Zante and obtain currants directly from the Morea. In 1668 the Venetian ambassador to the Court of St James reported that this was exactly what English merchants were proposing to do, and that this was to be prevented at all costs.[17] In 1672 the ambassador was warning that a merchant called Doddington had plans to create a company based in London to take over the currant trade: this might be disastrous for Zante.[18] The next year another scheme was being mooted in London: Morea currants were to be given preferential treatment as a way of depriving the Zante market of its supplies. This was a serious enough proposal for the English consul Clement Harby to shift his residence to Patras on the mainland. The Venetian senate wrote back to its ambassador in alarm: it was essential to get the English back to Zante. This was to be done 'without committing the state'.[19] Relations between the English and Venetians were so bad at this juncture that the provveditore of Zante tried to murder the agent of the Levant Company resident on the island.[20] The Venetians would have been further alarmed by the intelligence that the Maniots had sent an emissary to Charles II urging him to annex the Peloponnese; they had suggested that an expeditionary force of 15,000-20,000 men would be sufficient.[21] This was recognition that England was now a major Mediterranean seapower. When our travellers set out in 1675, an English fleet under Sir John Narborough was operating in the Mediterranean, its main task dealing with the pirates of the Barbary coast. It launched a successful attack on Tripoli[22] – an event important enough for Vernon to note it in his Journal.[23] This was followed by a demonstration off the island of Zante, a warning to the Venetians not to mistreat English merchants.

Our travellers arrived in Zante at a difficult moment. Wheler provides a fairly detailed description of the organization of the currant trade. The English had a consul at Zante and five or six merchants operating there – rather more than the Dutch and French, who only had one or two. Wheler went to look at the graves of the English merchants and found that there was no proper church. This, he felt, reflected badly on the English community. His main concern was the currant trade. His own view was that transferring operations to Patras would not be a profitable venture.[24] But it was exactly this possibility that Bernard Randolph was investigating. The latter is a mysterious character. He was attached to the Levant Company and had worked for Richard Langley, treasurer of the English factory at Smyrna. He was in Greece off and on from 1671-79, but in what capacity he

does not reveal. The fruit of his stay was a tract published in 1686: *The Present State of the Morea called Anciently the Peloponnesus which hath been Two Hundred Years under the Dominion of the Turks and is now very much Depopulated.*[25] He could just as easily have concluded his title *and is now ripe for improvement.* In many ways, this was the most interesting of the writings on Greece produced at the time, but it does not have much in common with the others. Randolph had little or no interest in the classical past, nor was he concerned about the state of the Orthodox church. He was on the look-out for commercial opportunities and appraised the state of the Peloponnese with the steady eye of a merchant. It is not likely that he was actively advocating an English annexation of the Peloponnese. He was thinking more in terms of obtaining favourable commercial conditions, but he kept an eye out for the strength of fortifications and harbour facilities.

Randolph provides a critical description. He notes that there were only some three thousand Turks resident in the whole of the Peloponnese. Most lived in a few towns: those that stayed on their estates lived in tower houses with a drawbridge for safety's sake. The bulk of the population were Orthodox Christians, divided between the Greeks who were settled and the Albanians who were nomads. Randolph dismisses the Greeks as very superstitious. Most of the resident merchants and shopkeepers were Jews, 'living but poorly'. The bulk of the commerce was in the hands of travelling Athenian merchants, who imported finished goods, mostly from Venice. Agriculture was primitive; the unwheeled scratch plough was still in use; there was no manuring of the soil; many fields were choked with weeds, and the liquorice root was a particular problem. Randolph noted that there was much grass, but nobody bothered to make hay. The poverty of the population was reflected in the poor housing.[26] The lesson was plain: the Peloponnese was potentially very rich, but backward and underpopulated. It was certainly ripe for improvement. Randolph does not suggest how the English might exploit the opportunities there were, but his tract does reflect English interest in the area – evident from the decision implemented in 1678 to appoint an Englishman as consul at Athens.

Randolph supplies no autobiographical details. We only know that he met up with Vernon and Eastcourt because he devoted a few lines to the latter's death in September 1675.[27] Vernon is scarcely more forthcoming: he kept a journal of his travels, but did not record his first meeting with Randolph, which took place somewhere between Zante and Athens. Falling in with Randolph must have been

a boon to two travellers just out from England: here was somebody who knew the country, manners and language well. Vernon was good enough to mention that Randolph and Sir Giles held his measuring tape when he was surveying the Theseion.[28] Vernon relied more heavily on Randolph's company when he returned to Athens in the autumn of 1675 after the death of Eastcourt.[29] Vernon's Journal casts little light on his relationship with the latter. Even Eastcourt's death only merits a few words in Vernon's Journal. Vernon noted that he suddenly fell ill and goes on: 'Afternoon 2 cl. Sir Giles in sound; fetcht again with cold water; sleep 2 hours; wake; take jelly; dye 4 cl.; buried by 9 cl.' [30]

The next day Vernon climbed Parnassus to do a little botanizing. He was a serious man, and his travels had a high scientific purpose. His journal was intended as a record of scientific data rather than a story of the inconveniences of travel. Vernon's ascent of Parnassus must be the first recorded in modern times. It is worth quoting in full, if only to provide a taste of his Journal:

> Goe out [of Salona (modern Amphissa)] by mosche. Up hill. Foote of Parnassus all rocke. Come to fountaine. Goates, cowes, horses. Hence up hill. All cragge. Come up Parnassus. All lentiscus & shrub ilex, wild sage, terebinthus & algarba. Goe up path. Small stones. Leave horses. Up path higher. Leave gun. Come to wood of firres. Chips of firre cross way and two sparres. Goe up higher. Rouleing stones, rockes, rootes of firres. Hence out to naked place. Bare rocke. See two hares gray. Vitex stachys. A sedenty. Plants of Mount Parnassus: hellebore, gramen parnassius, mountaine pinke, a starry shrub like genista, beare a bell flowre. Come to rocke. Clamber the top crag. All naked, ragged. 2 round pillars like tempiette. In one 3 seates of stones. Opera congestitia by some sheperd. The winde peircingly cold blow through a borra. Veiw hades. See sea, Chrisò, the mountaine of Morea, Mount Eliachora, all the mountaines round Salona.[31]

Vernon was a significant figure in the intellectual world of his time. He had been elected FRS in 1672.[32] His travels to Greece and beyond were intended to crown his reputation. Anthony à Wood in his *Athenae Oxonienses* casts him in a slightly different – more neurotic – light:

> At length being possess'd with an insatiable desire of seeing, he travelled

> into various parts of the world, was taken by pyrates, sold, and endured much misery. Afterwards, being let loose, he retired to his native country with intentions to spend his time there, but having got the itch of rambling ventured again, tho' dissuaded to the contrary, and was afterwards hack'd to pieces in Persia.[33]

Vernon was born in 1637 into a prosperous family of London silversmiths. He was educated at Westminster and Christ Church, Oxford and then went into the diplomatic service. He was secretary to the Earl of Carlisle on a mission to Sweden in 1668 and then to the Duke of Montagu in Paris from 1669-71, when he spent his time exchanging ideas with French scientists. Vernon was a new kind of traveller to Greece, for whom a pocket edition of Pausanias was not quite enough. He did have a copy of Pausanias with him, but he preferred to consult Vitruvius, an author who fitted better with the prevailing climate of empiricism which underlay Vernon's work. This was most clearly articulated by Thomas Sprat, later Bishop of Rochester, in his history (the first: 1667) of the Royal Society. Sprat urged that its Fellows had a duty to correct the misapprehensions of the past. They were 'to make faithful records of all the works of nature, or art, which can come within their reach; that so the present age, and posterity, may be able to put a mark on the Errors, which have been strengthened by long prescriptions: to restore the Truths that have lain neglected: to push on those which are already known.'[34] Vernon's journal reflects the empirical programme. There is a search for exactitude: Vernon gives times, distances, and measurements of buildings; he regularly takes the altitude and the meridian as though he were a mapmaker; he records inscriptions and compiles long lists of plants; he also provides minute descriptions of the costume of local people. The language of his Journal is objective and factual; the personal and impressionistic are kept to a minimum. Vernon realized that words did not always suffice as a descriptive instrument: in keeping with the empirical tradition, his journal is full of plans and sketches, often to scale. It represents a process of scientific appropriation.

Vernon's main scientific interest was botany. In this he was following the example of some of the founding fathers of the Royal Society. The microscope was beginning to have an impact: Vernon wanted to provide a systematic description of Greek flora in much the same way that John Ray was doing for the British Isles. Ray had already extended his work to the continent and had climbed both Vesuvius and Etna in his search for specimens.[35] Vernon's journal is full of

long lists of flora. He normally gives the Latin names, but for the more common varieties he uses English. But more striking is the page after page of inscriptions which he recorded. We have already seen that recording inscriptions was high on the agenda of the intellectual community of the time. Modern scholars have yet to subject to systematic examination those that Vernon collected. They were mostly classical, with a scattering of early Christian and Byzantine examples. Meritt gives Vernon very high marks for the accuracy of the classical inscriptions he recorded when he visited Delphi.[36] The copies of Byzantine inscriptions from Mistra are similarly accurate. Interestingly, Vernon entered them in his journal in an approximation of the Byzantine lettering.[37]

Vernon's chief claim to fame was his survey of the Parthenon, the Theseion and other monuments at Athens. He worked on these on two separate occasions. He arrived in Athens with his companions for the first time on 25 August 1675; he then departed with Eastcourt for a tour of the Peloponnese on 2 September; he was back in Athens on 2 October, but without Sir Giles, who had died on the way. He remained in Athens until 5 December 1675, when he left by boat for Smyrna. It was during his second stay in Athens that he carried out the bulk of his researches; the raw material of which was entered in his journal. He wrote this up in a letter from Smyrna dated 10 January 1676, which he sent to the Royal Society. It was promptly printed in the eleventh volume of its Philosophical Transactions.[38] Vernon judged Athens 'next to Rome . . . the most worthy to be seen for Antiquities of any I have yet been at.' He noted that the Parthenon – or the Temple of Minerva, as he called it – was as entire as the Rotunda at Rome. He had only managed to visit it on three occasions because the Turks were reluctant to admit foreigners to the Acropolis, particularly foreigners who took measurements. It was after all a fortress with a garrison. Vernon was one of the last generation of travellers to see the Parthenon in its undamaged state. Some ten years later in 1687 it would suffer at the hands of the Venetian artillery. This adds to the importance of his description of the building.

Vernon was mostly interested in the Parthenon, but he also mentions the 'pallace'. This must be the Propylaion, which served in the Middle Ages as the palace of the archbishops of Athens. Now it was the residence of the Turkish Aga or governor of Athens. Here is Vernon's succinct description:

> The pallace: frontspeice dorique; the pillars dorique; 3 rowes wthin Corinthian. two toweres on side. Struck with lightening severall yeares

> agoe. Blowne up Aga, wife, children; all but daughter who married to present Aga.[39]

Vernon's journal has not been edited and has been little used, though long known.[40] As far as basic information about the antiquities of Greece goes, the letter to the Royal Society distilled the significant contents of his journal. There was not room to provide inscriptions or lists of flora or full measurements of all the buildings he surveyed; their proper study would have to wait until his travels were at an end. It is unlikely that his Journal contains any important information that has been overlooked. What still impresses is the systematic way in which Vernon set about collecting evidence and arranging it in his Journal. During his second stay at Athens he took the measurements of buildings once again and entered them into his Journal with sketches.[41] He also set aside a large number of pages for a collection of Athenian inscriptions, some of which he had earlier noted in the entries he made.[42] This was a way of double checking, allowing him to know when and where he had seen the inscription.

Vernon expected his reputation to rest on the systematic record of matters of scientific and scholarly interest. For the modern reader, however, his Journal has more to offer: its attention to detail allows an insight into the day-to- day business of travelling. This is an area it is often impossible to penetrate. Travel writers will mention spectacular or amusing incidents, but getting from A to B hardly merits comment, and who wants to know what you had for supper each evening? Vernon recorded all this trivial detail. The result is a recreation of the tedium and occasional excitement of travel. Nothing is more tedious than packing up to leave. This is how Vernon describes his preparations for departure from Athens at the beginning of September 1675 for his trip round the Peloponnese:

> Afternoone order powder bags. Put up letters, plants. Order portmantle; cut paper; rowle up waxe measure. Order bagges. Shave. Put up things; fitt cloathes. Account pay. Transcribe paper of Medailles; make bag for sundiall.[43]

Vernon travelled at speed and in some style. His porters Dede and Janni were often left trailing miles behind with the baggage. Money was not a problem, thanks to the network of the Levant Company. Vernon noted that Eastcourt had credit of

$500 on Gabriel Smith of Smyrna and $400 on Adrian Goodyeare of Aleppo. Vernon had credit on English merchants at Smyrna and Aleppo, including one of his own relatives.[44]

The establishment of European consuls throughout the Levant eased the problems of travel. After Greece Vernon stayed with the English consul at Smyrna. There was even an English consul at Erzerum, who remembered Vernon as he passed through on his way to Persia, describing him as a 'man of admirable vivacity but too cholerick'.[45] This observation was borne out by one of the few personal comments Vernon allowed himself in his Journal. At Coron, for reasons that he did not disclose, he became Dαμνχros.[46] It was typical of him to combine the Latin and Greek alphabets in this way.

In Greece he spent more time in Athens than elsewhere. In charge of English interests at the time of his stay was the former French consul Jean Giraud; it is not clear that he was ever officially appointed English consul.[47] Giraud had been resident in Athens since 1658 and had married into an important local family which bore the imperial name of Palaiologos.[48] He helped the western visitors staying in Athens; despite being out of favour with the French he acted as the Count of Nointel's guide during his stay in Athens. A little guidebook to the antiquities of Athens was the result.[49] It was to this man that Vernon immediately went when he first arrived in Athens. He records in his Journal how he 'Come to towne through streets crooked; light at Mons^{r} Giraudes just at shuting in evening.'[50] Vernon's debt of gratitude to Giraud did not preclude visiting the French consul Chastagnier. As he noted for the 27 October 1675, 'dine at ffrench consuls. Lamb garavancas. Goose. wine. almonds. Vecchio strong. bread.'[51] This was one of the more substantial meals he had in Greece. There was also a Venetian consul at Athens, whom Vernon visited from time to time. He was something of a dandy with his 'red sattin Shakespeares, waistcoate. Neapolitan long haire. Blacke fleck cloth long. Linen wrought.'[52] Vernon spent much of his time with the Capuchin brothers, who in 1669 had established their convent around the Monument of Lysicrates. He gives a succinct description: ' In convent Laboures of Hercules & Paris & Elene. Cornish one stone. Top with leaves & pennashe. The little chapel garden. Chambers and library. Collation figs wine.'[53]

The same combination of consuls and Capuchins eased his trip around the Peloponnese. At Nauplion he went to see the Capuchins, who had a house there too.[54] At Coron he went at once to the French consul, who sent him on to the Papas, who provided him with a room.[55] At Patras he made straight for what he calls 'the

English house', presumably occupied by the English consul. He also contacted the Capuchins, who had a house at Patras, and the Venetian consul.[56] He had a series of introductions to Athenian merchants; these he may well have owed to Giraud. It would not be true to say that Greece was becoming part of the Grand Tour – that would have to wait for a century or more – but Vernon reveals that there were already various western networks.

But there were always the Turkish authorities who had to be placated. A passport – as rarely in that epoch – was essential. When crossing the entrance to the Gulf of Corinth from Rhion to Antirrhion the Turkish customs officers demanded a toll of two zecchini. Vernon produced what he calls his patent; the officers were then content to charge a nominal two tumins instead.[57] Access to monuments in Athens depended on obtaining permission from the Turkish authorities. Athens came under the authority of the Chislar Aga, the chief eunuch of the imperial harem, who sent a voivode to represent him. Vernon went to introduce himself once he arrived in Athens.

> Afternoone to Waiavoda Mohamet. His habit. Dulamens of linen to ancles, shatbegoares, stockings, red cloth wth markes yellow; Cordavan shoes downe at heeles. Shash wth Knife and bodikin. Turban white wreath wth cap flatt & round, red. A vest scarlett lined with taffeta, scarlet. On right hand little finger seale ring round with Arab letters. On left hand seale ring square. Sometymes on thumb a shooting ring of bone, broad behind, narrow before. His beard come round downe his chin. In hand chaplet des perles, att end a love knot on each side; knots not soe big with ends hanging long of broade green.[58]

This is a description that catches Ottoman officialdom almost as well as a Victorian watercolour. Vernon's contacts had the desired effect. He obtained permission to visit the Acropolis.

Vernon's journey through the Peloponnese was so hurried that he had little opportunity to learn about the local people. His contacts were not always productive. Beyond Corinth he fell in with three Albanians and asked how long their fathers and grandfathers had been settled there. They could not tell him. Vernon then asked if they had converted to Islam. He gives their reply in a funny mixture of Greek and Italian, "*polloi* si fanno merda della sua anima",[59] which suggests he got a dusty answer. During his second stay in Athens in the autumn

of 1675 he seems to have made more headway with the locals. Preparations to depart at the beginning of December were interspersed with adieus to his friends.[60]

From Athens Vernon made his way to Smyrna, an adventurous winter journey. He was once more captured by pirates, who abandoned him on Melos. At Smyrna he stayed with the English consul Sir Paul Rycaut, famous for his history of the Turks. He had the run of Rycaut's library and read voraciously. He formed the project of an overland journey to China, and set out in January 1676, going by sea to Trebizond and then striking out for Erzerum.[61] He had his journal with him, but no longer made regular entries. The last were simple inventories: he was convinced his servants were stealing from him. The last entry of all is 'penknife, penknife' written over and over again. He was slowly going mad, and was murdered outside Isfahan in 1677 in a quarrel over the penknife that had come to obsess him. Well could Spon write that Vernon was born 'sous quelque méchante étoile'.[62]

This could hardly have been said of Spon's travelling companion Sir George Wheler.[63] He was rather younger than Vernon, born in 1650 at Breda into an exiled royalist family of Kent. For reasons never disclosed, he did not hit it off with Vernon; they quarrelled at Zante, each going his own way. Wheler occasionally mentions Vernon in passing, but only once in detail, with reference to an incident designed to show the latter's inconsiderate and unstable character. One day Vernon went a-simpling on Mount Hymettus 'on foot and without a Guide'. He stayed out so late that by the time he got back to Athens the gates were shut; Giraud was put to a great deal of inconvenience before he managed to have the gates opened to Vernon.[64] I have not been able to trace this episode in Vernon's Journal. He does describe an expedition to the slopes of Mount Hymettus in November 1675, but says nothing about being shut out of Athens.[65] On a quite different occasion he mentions the guards on the gates of Athens; this was on his return from his journey around the Peloponnese.[66] It may be that Wheler was correct, but he could have confused two different episodes.

Mistaken or not, Wheler tells the story with a relish that sets in relief the more serious side of travelling. His humour is also evident in the story he tells of the Maniots. After Zante, Wheler sailed to the Mani, where their ship put in. He describes the inhabitants as 'famous pirates by sea and pestilent robbers by land'. Some of the crew went ashore and stayed in the house of an old woman. She started crying, and they thought this was in admiration for the bella figura they cut

– in contrast, no doubt, to the miserable Maniots. They asked her if this was so. 'No' was the reply. It was merely that her son was away from home and so could not help her rob them of their baggage.[67] It was touches like this that ensured the success of Wheler's *A Journey into Greece* , published in London in 1682. The book was informed by curiosity and a generous humour, but, as Wheler tells us in his Preface, he 'design'd to write as Christian Traveller and Philosopher'. There was indeed an underlying seriousness of purpose to his work.

Wheler, like Vernon, went botanizing and collected specimens for botanists including Ray. He may even have had a microscope in his baggage, remarking of *Equisetum frutescens* – a jasmine-like plant – that 'in a microscope it looketh something like a Hop'.[68] He introduced to English gardens the *hypericum calycinium*, which came to be known as 'Sir George Wheler's Tutsan'; it was something like St John's wort. But there is no sign that Wheler had any project for a systematic description of the Greek flora in the manner of Vernon: botany was for him more a fashionable interest.

Wheler equally shared Vernon's classical interests. He too copied inscriptions, but there is no sign that he collected them in the systematic way of Vernon, though the notes or journal he kept during his travels have not survived. Like the cultivated gentleman he was, Wheler seems more at home with classical texts, which he deploys with scrupulous care. He might remark of Patras that it was not in the condition it enjoyed in Pausanias' day, but he is soon comparing the information provided by Pausanias with that supplied by Strabo and Ptolemy.[69]

Wheler did not limit himself to academic interests. He was alert to the present condition of the country. We have seen how he gives a detailed analysis of the currant trade at Zante. He also provides a list of prices at Athens, offering the following explanation to justify its inclusion:'I was willing to be thus particular upon the Account of the *consul*; who desired me to encourage our merchants to send ships thither.'[70] This interest in the commercial potential of the region was complemented by his exact descriptions of the people and the condition of the countryside and towns. He provides estimates of the population and of the number of houses in various towns, and like Vernon furnishes descriptions of local costumes.

These interests suggest that Wheler was another product of the new empiricism, more urbane and less driven perhaps than Vernon. But Wheler's inspiration lay elsewhere. It was the vestiges of the early Church and the present condition of the Orthodox Church that moved him and constituted the lasting meaning of his

Journey into Greece. Wheler and Spon did not go directly to Greece from Zante: instead they sailed to Constantinople with the new British ambassador to the Porte. Thence they travelled through western Turkey to Smyrna. They visited the Seven Churches of Asia, which much moved Wheler. He paid particular attention during his subsequent travels in Greece to the Orthodox Church, providing a scrupulous description of the churches of Athens and an account of the Maundy Thursday ceremony that he witnessed at Athens.[71] At Patras he noted a miracle that was alleged to occur in the church of St Andrew, the patron saint of the city. The threshold gave off a bituminous smell, supposedly because the judge who condemned St Andrew had sat on it.[72] It is most unlikely that Wheler believed this story, but he does not use it to condemn the Greeks for superstition: he has a great deal of sympathy for the Orthodox Church. The highpoint of his visit to Greece was not the Acropolis, as it had been for Vernon and would be for countless travellers in the years to come. It was instead his stay in the monastery of Osios Loukas. This culminated in a visit to a hermitage in the hills above the monastery. Wheler confessed that it 'so charmed my melancholick Fancy for a time, that I had almost made a Resolution never to part with so great a Happiness, for whatever the rest of the World could present me with.'[73]

While staying at Osios Loukas he learnt that the previous year the French ambassador De Nointel – 'a great zealot for the Roman Church' – had tried to have the Roman mass celebrated in the monastery. This the monks had refused point blank.[74] Wheler contrasted this with the respect that Orthodox and Protestants had for each other. He admitted, however, that 'the only thing they seemed to dislike in us and our Religion was, that I would not make any Reverance to the Pictures that are in their Churches; which they always do, when they come to their Devotions.'[75] De Nointel was also responsible for raising the question of transubstantiation. Wheler was indignant at the thought that the Catholic Church was trying to impose its doctrine 'upon the gross Ignorance of that poor depressed Nation'. He could only wish 'that the Protestant Princes had been as diligent to have informed them in the Truth'. Wheler carried out his own investigation into what the Orthodox clergy in Greece believed on transubstantiation. He questioned the archbishop of Athens. The latter clearly thought that transubstantiation occured σωματικῶς (bodily) and not spiritually. The bishop of Salona, on the other hand, understood it to be a spiritual transformation. The latter wanted to ordain Wheler a priest there and then. Wheler explained: 'I had much adoe to excuse myself by acknowledging my Unworthiness of so great an Honour.'[76] But

his experience of the Orthodox Church hastened his resolve to take holy orders in the Church of England once he returned home.

Wheler died in 1723 full of years and much revered, the father of many children and Dean of Durham. The Cathedral has his annotated copy of his Travels which was published in 1682. The dedication to Charles II is revealing. Wheler sees Greece as a cautionary tale: an example of how a great civilization can be destroyed. He sees England as the chosen nation to continue the glory that was Greece and thanks God 'that He had placed the lot of mine inheritance in a land that He had blessed and rendered me into the bosom of a Church that I had often heard but now knew to be the most refined pure and Orthodox Church.'

Wheler brought together the various strands that gave English interest in Greece in the seventeenth century its particular resonance – one that continued into the nineteenth century and beyond. That interest was proprietorial. Like Randolph, Wheler saw the commercial advantages that Greece offered English merchants; he does not mention Randolph, but the latter was still in Greece during Wheler's stay. The appropriation of Greece's classical past through study and description are common to both Wheler and Vernon. They also shared the same scientific interest in Greece, evident not only in a description of the flora, but also in establishing the exact latitude and altitude of places in Greece. As we shall see, accurate mapping of the Peloponnese was one of Wheler's main concerns. What distinguished Wheler from most other travellers to Greece at the time was his concern for the Orthodox Church. He clearly thought the Church of England had superseded the Greek Orthodox Church as the true seat of Orthodoxy. This gave the Church of England a duty to provide protection against the barbarous Turk. Here are the seeds of Philhellenism: Wheler blames, as others did, the miserable condition of the Greeks on Turkish rule. But neither he nor Randolph openly suggested that the English government had a duty to intervene in Greece either to save the Greeks from Turkish tyranny or for commercial benefits.

The success of Wheler's *Travels into Greece* was not rewarded by election to the Royal Society. He was thought to have plagiarized from his travelling companion Jacob Spon's account of their travels, which had been published in 1678. This may well be true over his treatment of the classical past: Spon was a noted antiquarian, Wheler still a comparatively young man. It was a problem that Wheler addressed in his Preface. Generously, Spon had included Wheler as co-author of his account, which, Wheler heard, was about to be translated into English. He explained that 'I thought it better to publish my own sence in my own

words, than to suffer his words and particular sence to pass in my name. And in short, comparing notes, I found I had many useful Observations omitted by him, which I thought very fit to be communicated to the curious among the rest of our Remarks.'[77] Wheler thought correctly that there were areas where he had something to add to Spon's work. Spon was not interested in botany; Wheler was. But pride of place went to his map of Achaea 'which I made out of my own particular Observations'. Wheler thought that it was 'so different from all the Maps on those parts we have extant' that it was necessary to outline his method. He was an early exponent of triangulation. He explains: 'The Observations I had made, being taken by the help of a Mariners Needle, from several stations on divers Mountains and eminent places of that Country, I thereby easily reduced their positions into Triangles.' He had the advantage of access to the latitudes of places in Greece established by Vernon: 'By adding which to the Observations made with the Needle, I found I could not miss of much more exactness than ever could yet be arrived at by conjectural Longitudes, whether of the ancient or modern Geographers.'[78] Wheler displayed a thoroughly practical streak in keeping with the empirical climate of the time. By comparison Spon's antiquarianism seems slightly old-fashioned.

It is unfair to judge *Travels into Greece* on narrowly academic or antiquarian grounds. Its merits are its breadth of interest and its engagement with the contemporary world. Wheler was concerned about the people he met on his travels. It is this that makes *Travels into Greece* a classic of travel literature.

At this juncture, however, the French displayed an even greater interest in Greece than the English. They had certain advantages. Their remarkable ex-consul Jean Giraud had been resident in Athens since 1658. It was thanks to him that French scholars and writers, such as Jacob Spon (1647-85), were able to exploit the antiquarian knowledge of the Capuchins and the Jesuits. Spon comes across as a most attractive and likeable man. He was a loyal Frenchman, but he was also a Protestant. He was the most scholarly of the travellers, and his account is informed with a genuine interest in the topography of ancient Athens. Before setting out he had received notes on the subject from the Jesuit J.P. Babin; these he published together with his own notes and comments. This scholarly enterprise was challenged by Guillet de St-George's semi-fictionalized account of *Athènes ancienne et nouvelle*. Spon was incensed by what he saw as a fraud. What is more, he thought that it slandered Giraud – a fellow Lyonnais.[79] The desire to expose a fraud gives a polemical edge to his *Voyage d'Italie, de Dalmatie, de Grèce, et*

du Levant fait aux années 1675 et 1675 par Jacob Spon et George Wheler. This was obviously the work of a classical scholar: Spon was delighted to be able to prove that Salona was not Delphi but Amphissa, on the basis of a Latin inscription which he deciphered in the monastery of the Metamorphosis. Spon was inspired by the classical past: as he approached Greece he thought that his joy as great as 'Aeneas's pain when he passed through these parts, for he considered the Greeks as the destroyers of his country, but we regarded them as people to whose ancestors we owed science and the Arts.' He did not have much time for the Orthodox Church. At Athens by the Ilissus a temple of Ceres had been turned into a church dedicated to the Panagia; Spon noted that it was filled 'with frescoes in their manner which is very miserable'. Osios Loukas did not make the impression on Spon that it did on Wheler; he described the practice of incubation in the space linking the two churches where people waited in the hope of a miraculous cure. Spon remembered a fellow doctor back in Lyons who used to complain that he did not like saints meddling in his business and commented: 'It is true that there is no other place where it is more necessary that the saints perform miracles curing the sick than Greece, since its people know so little about medicine, even though we have learnt it from the books of their ancestors.'[80]

Spon and Wheler's accounts of their travels in Greece would be an inspiration for later travellers. They were among the last travellers to leave a description of the Parthenon when it was still more or less intact. They crystallized an archaeological approach to the classical past, which entailed examining the remains of classical antiquity on the spot; identifying sites and measuring them accurately; and copying classical inscriptions. More so even than Spon and Wheler Vernon embodied this approach, but he was not to be an influential force. All he left behind for a general public was his letter published in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society. His journal remains unpublished: somehow it was conveyed from Isfahan to the safekeeping of the Royal Society in London. Contemporaries did not think it worth publishing. They were wrong, but many of the entries are cryptic to the point of unintelligibility.

Why did the obsession with Greece reflected in the works of our travellers not produce more concrete results? It was partly that the Levant Company was not strong enough. English interests in many parts of the world were furthered by joint stock companies of this kind. However, soon after our travellers had left Greece, the Levant Company started to retreat from its Greek interests. In 1690 the establishment of new consuls and factories was described 'as suckers that draw

sap from their main body'.[81] This was in response to a dramatic change in the political configuration of the Levant. Venice joined the Holy League against the Ottoman Empire and decided on a conquest of the Peloponnese in order to make good the loss of Crete. The evident English and French interest in the area was a contributory factor: the French grasped the importance of the Venetian conquest of the Peloponnese, completed in 1690, more quickly than the English. They allied with the Ottomans and used this alliance in order to weaken the hold of the English and the Dutch on the internal trade of the Ottoman Empire. The Levant Company was pushed onto the defensive. It was one of those decisive moments. The Levant Company would thereafter never be in a position to emulate the success of the East India Company. English commercial interest in the Levant started to fall away; it was channelled elsewhere. It may or may not be symptomatic that Bernard Randolph ended his *Present State of the Islands in the Archipelago* – a companion volume to his *Present State of the Morea* – with an account of his Atlantic experience entitled 'A Relation of a Storm and great Deliverance at sea, in a voyage from New England'.[82] He had abandoned his Levantine connections for the greater opportunities of the New World. Instead of ending his days, say, in Smyrna or even in Rhodes, he was last heard of at the end of the century in Rhode Island. His brother Edward just happened to be governor.

NOTES

1 Good recent accounts of early travellers to Greece are to be found in: T. Spencer, *Fair Greece, Sad Relic* (London 1954) 111-39; D. Constantine, *Early Greek Travellers and the Hellenic Ideal* (Cambridge 1984) 7-33; R. Stoneman, *Land of Lost Gods. The Search for Classical Greece* (London 1987) 56-83.

2 Theseion signatures: W.B. Dinsmoor, *Observations on the Hephaisteion* (Athens 1941) 16.

3 A. Vandal, *L'Odyssée d'un Ambassadeur. Les Voyages du Marquis de Nointel (1670-1680)* (Paris 1900) 162-76; Th. Homolle, 'Vue d'Athènes 1674', *Bulletin de Correspondance hellénique*, 18 (1894) 509-28, Plates I-IV.

4 J.T. Bent, *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant* (London 1893) 279.

5 In *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 11 (1676) 579.

6 D.E.L. Haynes, *The Arundel Marbles* (Oxford 1975); D. Howarth, *Lord Arundel and his Circle* (New Haven 1985) 77-96.

7 Henry Peacham, *The Complete Gentleman*, ed. V.B. Heltzel (Ithaca, NY 1962) 120.

8 Thomas Smith, *Remarks upon the Manners, Religion, and Government of the Turks* (London 1677), Preface.

9 Thomas Smith, *An Account of the Greek Church* (London 1680), Preface.

10 Smith, *An Account of the Greek Church*, 13.

11 S. Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity* (Cambridge 1968) 289-319.

12 Runciman, *The Great Church*, 292-3.

13 On Bernard Randolph see *DNB*; also under his brother Edward. In his *Present State of the Islands in the Archipelago*, 2, Randolph reveals his connection with Richard Langley, the treasurer of the English factory at Smyrna. It had brought him into contact with one of the Turkish notables of Negroponte, Muzlee Aga. The latter had been sold into slavery at Leghorn and had been ransomed by an English merchant who had sent him to the safekeeping of Richard Langley, where Randolph met him. The friendship of Muzlee Aga was of great value to Randolph during his stay in Greece. Sir George Wheler, *Journey into Greece* (London 1682) 245-6, has a good account of the kind of apprenticeship to which Randolph would have been bound. See S.P. Anderson, *An English Consul in Turkey. Paul Rycaut at Smyrna, 1667-1678* (Oxford 1989) 28-9, 66-76, 197.
14 A.C. Wood, *A History of the Levant Company* (London 1935) 95-113.
15 J. Spon, *Voyage d'Italie, de Dalmatie, de Grèce et du Levant*, I. 86.
16 Wheler, *A Journey into Greece*, 30.
17 *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts relating to ... Venice: 1666-1668* (London 1935) 304.
18 *Calendar*, 1671-72 (1939), 28-9, 81, 166.
19 *Calendar*, 1673-75 (1940), 101-2, 285.
20 *Calendar*, 1671-72 (1939), 126; 1673-75 (1940), 136.
21 *Calendar*, 1661-64 (1932), 207, 215, 221.
22 R.C. Anderson, *Naval Wars in the Levant 1559-1853* (Liverpool 1952) 188; Anderson, *An English Consul in Turkey*, 191-4.
23 Vernon's Journal: Royal Society L.V. III. c. 12, f.17r.
24 Wheler, *Journey*, 41-2.
25 The success of this tract is evident from the fact that by 1689 it had gone into a third edition. Citations are from the third edition.
26 Randolph, *Morea*, 15.
27 Randolph, *Morea*, 14.
28 Vernon, f.5r.
29 Vernon, f.23r, 30v, 31r.
30 Vernon, f.19r. *Sound* means swoon; *fetch* has the meaning of bring back to consciousness.
31 Vernon, f.18r.
32 *DNB*; Thomas Birch, *History of the Royal Society of London for Improving of Natural Knowledge*, III (London 1757) 357-8.
33 A. à Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, III (London 1817), c.1133.
34 Quoted in B.M. Stafford, *Voyage into Substance. Art, Science, Nature, and the Illustrated Travel Account* (Cambridge, Mass. 1984) 37.
35 A.G. Morton, *History of Botanical Science* (London 1981) 165-231; C.E. Raven, *John Ray. Naturalist* (2nd ed., Cambridge 1950), esp. 134-5.
36 B.D. Meritt, 'Epigraphic Notes of Francis Vernon', *Hesperia*, Suppl. VIII (1949), 213-27.
37 Vernon, f.14r.
38 *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 11(1676) 575-82.
39 Vernon, f.7v.
40 L. Navari, 'Francis Vernon. A little known traveller in the Morea', in *Travellers and Officials in the Peloponnese*, ed. H.A. Kalliga (Monemvasia 1994) 223-9.
41 Vernon, f.26r, 32r, 34r, 36v-38r, 39r-40r.
42 Vernon, f.23v-25r, 27r-29r, 36v.
43 Vernon, f.8r.
44 Vernon, f.25v.
45 Quoted by Constantine, *Early Greek Travellers*, 24, from Tournefort's *Travels*.
46 Vernon, f.15v.
47 In 1678 Lancelot Hobson was appointed English consul.

48 Guillet de St-George, *Athènes ancienne et nouvelle*, 84.
49 M. Collignon, 'Documents du XVIIe siècle relatifs aux antiquités d'Athènes', *Comptes-rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, ser. iv. 25 (1897), 56-71.
50 Vernon, f.4r.
51 Vernon, f.27r.
52 Vernon, f.4v.
53 Vernon, f.4v. *Pennashe* was a way of spelling panache – an accurate description of the decorative flourish which tops the monument of Lysicrates. Vernon was wrong about the frieze, which shows Dionysus turning pirates into dolphins. Given his own experience he may have thought this too good a fate for pirates.
54 Vernon, f.11v.
55 Vernon, f.15v.
56 Vernon, f.17v.
57 Vernon, f.18v.
58 Vernon, f.4r-v.
59 Vernon, f.11r.
60 Vernon,f.40v-41v.
61 Anderson, *An English Consul in Turkey*, 104, 223-4.
62 Spon, *Voyage*, I, 155.
63 *DNB*; R.W. Ramsey, 'Sir George Wheler and his Travels in Greece', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*, 19 (1942) 1-38.
64 Wheler, *Journey*, 411.
65 Vernon, f.30v, 35v.
66 Vernon, f.23r: 'come to *Lykodemos*. guards at gates. passe through towne to Signre Consoles. Arrive 7 1/2 Cl. Come 4 leagues.'
67 Wheler, *Journey*, 47.
68 Wheler, *Journey*, 22.
69 Wheler, *Journey*, 308.
70 Wheler, *Journey*, 353.
71 Wheler, *Journey*, 350-1.
72 Wheler, *Journey,* 294. Vernon's comment was laconic: La pietra che puzza.
73 Wheler, *Journey*, 324-6.
74 Wheler, *Journey*, 324.
75 Wheler, *Journey*, 199.
76 Wheler, *Journey*, 197-8.
77 Wheler, *Journey*, Preface.
78 Wheler, *Journey*, Preface.
79 Guillet de St-George, 84.
80 Spon, *Voyage*, II, 28; I, 71-2; II, 122; II, 45.
81 Wood, *Levant Company,* 121-2.
82 Randolph, *The Present State of the Islands in the Archipelago*, 98-108.