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# True Illusions: Early Photographs of Athens

Andrew Szegedy-Maszak

One of the most important features of the intellectual life of the mid-nineteenth century was an upsurge of interest in ancient Greece. Although there have recently been two very good books on the influence of Greek culture on Victorian life,<sup>1</sup> neither of them so much as mentions photography, and this omission inspired the present essay. The title originates in a review by William Hazlitt of some watercolors by Hugh William “Grecian” Williams: “Some splenetic travellers have pretended that Attica was dry, flat and barren. But it is not so in Mr. Williams’s authentic draughts . . . and we thank him for restoring to us our old, and as it appears, true illusions.”<sup>2</sup> The phrase “true illusions” could serve as a capsule description of the whole of photography, and it is particularly apt when we come to consider early photographs of Greek antiquities. Athens provides an excellent case study; it has a relatively small number of important monuments, with the Acropolis obviously prime among them, yet the photographers who worked there brought to their views diverse themes, approaches, and interpretations.

Extensive traditions, both pictorial and literary, underlay the nineteenth-century photographs of classical sites. This essay will first examine the cultural context for the photographic enterprise: what did the people of the time want to see in their images of the ancient world? The last part of the essay will concentrate on two artists who are particularly well represented in the

Getty’s rich assortment of nineteenth-century views of Greek antiquities: the French-born commercial photographer Félix Bonfils<sup>3</sup> and the American diplomat, author, and photographer William James Stillman.<sup>4</sup> Both men were photographing in Athens in the late 1860s and early 1870s, yet even a cursory glance at their respective treatments of the same subject (e.g., the Parthenon, figs. 4, 13) reveals how different their approaches could be. In brief, Bonfils was an accomplished commercial photographer, who made beautiful, if conventional, images to satisfy a broad audience. Stillman was an inspired amateur with a complex private vision of the Greeks and their relationship to his own times. The work of these two men illustrates the extraordinary range of true illusions made available by the photographers to their audience.

Despite the precision of renderings made by artists like Jacques Carrey in 1674<sup>5</sup> and James “Athenian” Stuart and Nicholas Revett (whose first volume of drawings was published in 1762),<sup>6</sup> most of the pre-Victorian drawings and paintings of Athenian sites were distorted by literary concerns. As Fani-Maria Tsigakou has noted, “Characteristically, written descriptions often seem to have been more accurate than pictorial representations . . . it was the formalized, literary past, not the present, that was the attraction of Greece.”<sup>7</sup>

This article was begun in the summer of 1985 during my tenure as guest scholar in the Department of Photographs of the J. Paul Getty Museum. I owe a great debt of gratitude to Weston J. Naef and the other members of the department, as well as to the staff of the Getty’s Department of Education and Academic Affairs, Photo Archive, Archives of the History of Art, and Library. My thanks also to Marguerite Waller and Ben Lifson for invaluable editorial advice.

1. Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980); Frank Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, 1981).

2. W. Hazlitt, *Essays on the Fine Arts* (London, 1873), p. 144.

3. Félix Bonfils published two albums, five years apart, that included views of Athens. *Architecture Antique* (Paris, 1872) contains eight photographs of Athens, and *Souvenirs d’Orient—Album pittoresque des Sites, Villes et Ruines les plus remarquables de la Terre Sainte* (Alais, 1877) has ten. Each set also includes pictures made in the Near East and Turkey. *Souvenirs d’Orient* was republished in 1878 in a smaller—hence presumably cheaper—edition; in this latter version,

oddly enough, Bonfils adds two pictures of Constantinople and labels them as belonging to “Grèce.”

4. William James Stillman, *The Acropolis of Athens: Illustrated Picturesquely and Architecturally in Photography* (London, 1870), with one small photograph on the title page and twenty-five full-size plates.

5. Carrey traveled to Athens with the French ambassador to the Turkish court and produced a set of drawings, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. They are the best documentation of the Parthenon before 1687, when it was being used as a powder magazine and suffered a direct hit from a Venetian shell.

6. Stuart and Revett’s travels and the publication of their *Antiquities of Athens, Measured and Delineated* were sponsored by the Society of Dilettanti, a group of British aristocrats dedicated to the study of classical culture. See Jenkyns (supra, note 1), pp. 1–12, also James Osborn, “Travel Literature and the Rise of Neo-Hellenism in England,” *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 67 (1963), pp. 279–300.

7. Fani-Maria Tsigakou, *The Rediscovery of Greece* (New Rochelle, N.Y., 1981), pp. 26, 28–29.

Painters also loved to exploit whatever exotica they could find or confect. James Stuart produced a portrait of himself, clad in turban and robes, sketching the Erechtheion, in front of which passes a small procession consisting of a Turkish pasha, his son-in-law, the son-in-law's small daughter, and the girl's black slave.<sup>8</sup> Other painters and draughtsmen often enlivened their depictions with similar imaginative additions. With the invention of photography, however, the visual record acquired a new primacy, and a new set of standards developed for documentary precision.

Where we have evidence for a photographer's intention, we generally find that he claimed accuracy as his chief contribution. Indeed, on January 7, 1839, when François Arago announced the invention of photography in the Académie des Sciences in Paris, he said that one of its most promising applications was the precise copying of antiquities, specifically the hieroglyphics of Egypt.<sup>9</sup> It was thought that photography could remain unaffected by the prejudices and preferences of the artist. William Henry Fox Talbot, the inventor of the paper negative process, wrote of the camera that "the instrument chronicles whatever it sees, and certainly would delineate a chimney-pot or a chimney-sweeper with the same impartiality as it would the Apollo of Belvedere."<sup>10</sup> Thirty years later, when William James Stillman composed the introductory note to his album, little had changed. Stillman states that his views "have been left . . . untouched . . . so that nothing should diminish their accuracy."<sup>11</sup>

Only relatively recently have we come to admit that photography is controlled by pictorial conventions like any other visual medium;<sup>12</sup> for most nineteenth-century viewers the photograph was conceived of as a transparent window onto an objective reality. Although the camera, to use Talbot's word, was impartial, the pho-

tographers were not, and to appreciate their work fully, it is necessary to sort out the influences that shaped their picture making. We must first, therefore, understand the location of Greece in the mid-nineteenth-century imagination.

The rediscovery of Greece was already well under way in 1839 when photography was invented. Within the same year an entrepreneur named N.-M. P. Lerebours sent daguerreotypists to Athens. He then had draughtsmen convert their pictures into aquatints and in 1842 published the latter in a collection whose title, *Excursions daguerriennes: Vues des monuments les plus remarquables du globe*, promised "views of the most remarkable monuments on earth."<sup>13</sup> Thirty-five years later, the photographic representation of the "most remarkable" was still a major concern, as is shown by the title of one of Bonfils' great collections, *Souvenirs d'Orient—Album pittoresque des Sites, Villes et Ruines les plus remarquables de la Terre Sainte*. From the age of Odysseus on, the prospect of seeing the world's wonders has been one of the most powerful stimuli for travelers, and the early photographers and their audience were not immune to its appeal. The lure of the marvelous, leavened with religious and cultural piety, was an original and enduring motive for the photographic exploration of ancient lands.

Set apart by its location, language, customs, and political circumstances, Greece seemed to belong both to Europe and to the Near East.<sup>14</sup> We have already noted the Orientalism in Stuart's painting, but to repeat, the "Orientals" are Turks, not Greeks.<sup>15</sup> It was this ambiguity that allowed for the inclusion of Greece in photographic documentation of the Holy Land. For the British travel photographer Francis Frith the fact that

8. Ibid., p. 32, fig. II.

9. See Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography* (New York, 1974), pp. 25–26; see also Louis Vaczek and Gail Buckland, *Travelers in Ancient Lands: A Portrait of the Middle East 1839–1919* (Boston, 1981), p. 34, and more generally on photography and archaeology in the Middle East, pp. 76–77. The French calotypist Eugène Piot is credited with being the first actually to use photography to provide precise documentation of antiquities; he worked in Italy in the late 1840s (publishing a selection entitled *L'Italie Monumentale* in 1851) and then in Greece a few years later. On Piot, see André Jammes and Eugenia Parry Janis, *The Art of French Calotype* (Princeton, 1983), pp. 46–48, 234–235.

10. The remark is made in Talbot's introduction to his *Pencil of Nature* (London, 1844–1846), a collection of twenty-four calotypes (salt prints from paper negatives).

11. In the case of Stillman's album, as with many nineteenth-century albums, lack of pagination makes an exact reference impossible. Unless otherwise indicated, this is also the case with excerpts from additional photographic albums quoted throughout the present article.

12. On this subject in general, the indispensable discussion is by Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 3rd ed. (London, 1968).

13. N.-M. P. Lerebours, ed., *Excursions daguerriennes: Vues des monuments les plus remarquables du globe* (Paris, 1840–1842). In addition to Athens, Lerebours dispatched his artists to Egypt, Nubia, the Holy Land, and most countries in Europe.

14. As Jenkins observes, Greece "was near enough to be accessible, remote enough to be exotic, with a soupçon of danger to add spice to the adventure" (supra, note 1), p. 4.

15. A similar phenomenon appears a century later in the Shaw album, which was compiled in the late 1860s or early 1870s by a wealthy and knowledgeable traveler, whose name is all that is known of him. It includes photos taken in Greece and the Near East. It contains many ethnographic portraits of Turks—warriors, dervishes, members of the royal harem—but none of Greeks, who presumably were not sufficiently "exotic" to warrant that kind of attention on the part of a collector. Moreover, the Shaw album is not unique in this regard. The Getty owns an anonymous travel album (see infra, note 39) that has exactly the same balance, or rather imbalance, between

Paul preached on the Areopagus (Acts 17:22) was reason enough to put views of Athens into a collection entitled *Photo-Pictures from the Lands of the Bible*.<sup>16</sup> In the same way, as noted above, Greece forms part of Félix Bonfils' *Terre Sainte*. The paradox is that Greece is neither assimilated into Christian Europe nor portrayed in its Orthodox reality. Instead it is liminal, identified as a hybrid that combines the best of paganism with early Christianity.

Greece was unusual in other ways as well. Dr. Johnson had declared "a man who has not been in Italy is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see."<sup>17</sup> Unlike Italy, however, Greece had never become a requisite stop on the Grand Tour. A small but telling sign of the initial dominance of Rome over Greece in the Western European perception of the ancient world is the fact that, at least for the British and the French, the names of the Olympian gods were always Latinized: Athena's Parthenon is the temple of Minerva, Zeus Olympios is Jupiter, Ares is Mars, Demeter is Ceres, and so on.

More importantly, much of Western Europe's contact with classical antiquity had sprung from the use of classical canons in buildings like Palladian villas or the great public edifices in major cities. Students of architecture, such as the winners of the Prix de Rome, went to Italy for their classical models. Greece was too far away and too wild.<sup>18</sup> It is true enough that in the early part of the nineteenth century, travel in the Aegean was more hazardous than in other parts of Europe. In 1812, William Gell, a member of the Society of Dilettanti, wrote to the secretary of the society that he and his companion wished to make the voyage from Athens to Turkey but were forced to postpone their trip because of the threat from pirates and privateers.<sup>19</sup> Even after such dangers had abated, some uncertainty lingered on. Although

the Prix de Rome had been in existence since before the French Revolution, it was not until 1845 that a winner was permitted to go to Greece. The Ecole Française d'Athènes was founded in 1846, yet it was almost thirty years before its students were allowed to investigate any sites outside the city itself. Gradually, though, from the 1820s on Greece did overtake Rome, and its attraction was made manifest by the large number of painters, architects, and photographers who chose to work there.<sup>20</sup>

Henry Cook, a painter and writer, traveled through Greece in 1849/50 recording his impressions in a series of short articles.<sup>21</sup> He reports that seeing the monuments inspired two feelings of almost equal power, "the first, an overwhelming impression of beauty and grandeur, the other (succeeding immediately), a sense of utter and irrepressible sadness."<sup>22</sup> The monuments thus became part of the sublime, inspiring philosophical or sentimental reflection on the depredations of time. Here, in the direct tradition of Romantic philhellenism, we find the sense of the ruins as evocative survivals of the "classical." Byron had expressed the same feelings in "The Giaour" (1813): "Such is the aspect of this shore;/ 'Tis Greece, but living Greece no more!.../ Shrine of the mighty! can it be,/ That this is all remains of thee?"<sup>23</sup>

Most of the photographs from Athens are general views rather than fragments, whole buildings rather than architectural or sculptural details, possibly because they were meant for the armchair traveler rather than the specialist.<sup>24</sup> While photographers could emphasize either the archaeological or the picturesque, all those who made architectural views in Greece were aware that they were dealing with the scantiest remnants of what had actually existed. The comparison was drawn be-

ethnographic studies from Turkey and unpopulated views of the Greek monuments. This is not to say that there were no genre scenes made in Greece—many are reproduced in a recent catalogue from the Benaki Museum, *Athens 1839–1900—A Photographic Record* (Athens, 1985)—but they do not seem to have interested the typical western traveler. The Shaw album is in the collection of Daniel Wolf, and I am grateful to him for having given me the opportunity to examine it.

16. This is a portfolio of views selected from the larger series called *Frith's Europe and the East: Photo Pictures* (Reigate, n.d.); in the portfolio each picture is captioned with a biblical verse.

17. James Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson LL.D.*, ed. C. Shorter (New York, 1922), vol. 5, pp. 63–64.

18. It was thought of as "an exotic Oriental country, which presented physical danger and sensual seduction better avoided by the serious student"; see The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, et al., *Paris-Rome-Athens: Travels in Greece by French Architects in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ex. cat. (Houston, 1982), p. xviii. I owe to this publication all my information about the French studies in Greece. See also the

review by Bernard Knox, "Visions of the Grand Prize," *New York Review of Books* 31, no. 14 (1984), pp. 21–28.

19. The letter is in the Archives of the History of Art of the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities (#840199).

20. Turner (supra, note 1) discusses the reasons behind the shift in interest from Rome to Greece and ascribes it to the combination of a search for new cultural patterns, the influence of the new German philology—which revolutionized the understanding of the ancient world—and "the stirring of liberal democracy that began with the American Revolution" (p. 3).

21. "The Present State of the Monuments of Greece," *The Art Journal* 13 (1851), pp. 130–132, 187–188, 228–229.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

23. "The Giaour: A Fragment of a Turkish Tale," *The Works of Lord Byron*, ed. E. H. Coleridge (New York, 1904), vol. 3, pp. 90–91, lines 90–91, 106–107. Tsigakou (supra, note 7), p. 41, reproduces a watercolor of 1822 by Turner, which uses Byron's lines as an epigraph.

24. A very different approach is exemplified by the work of Auguste Salzmann, who photographed in Jerusalem in the early 1850s





Figure 1. *The Parthenon in Athens*, 1842. Aquatint by Frédéric Martens from a daguerreotype. H: 15 cm (5<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"); W: 20.3 cm (7<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XB.1187.24.

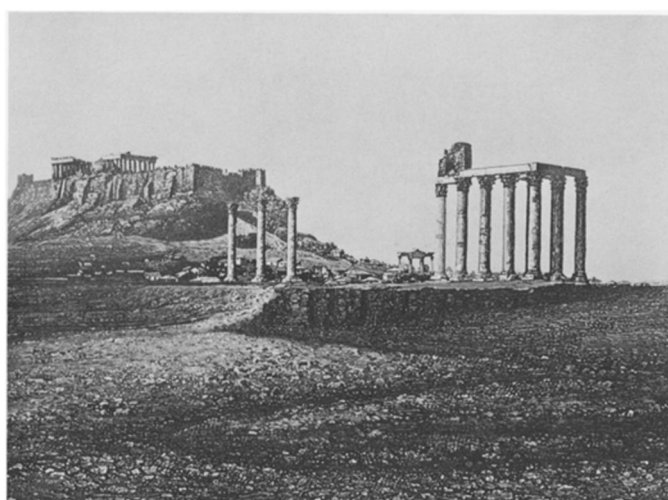


Figure 2. *The Acropolis in Athens*, 1842. Aquatint by A. Appert from a daguerreotype. H: 14.1 cm (5<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"); W: 19.2 cm (7<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XB.1187.23.

tween the physical ruins and the fact that we have only a fraction of ancient literary production.<sup>25</sup> The pictures, therefore, serve both to preserve the treasures that survive and to elegize vanished glories. In the note accompanying the view of the Parthenon in *Excursions daguerriennes* (fig. 1), Joly de Lotbinière gives voice to the pride and excitement aroused by the new invention: "This view was made in the autumn of 1839; I mention this fact because it was the first time the image of the Parthenon was fixed on a plate by Daguerre's brilliant invention, and because each year can bring new changes in the appearance of these famous ruins." De Lotbinière mentions the damages the building had sustained, modern efforts to restore it, and then significantly links the archaeologists (and by implication, the photographers) to the ancient Greeks: "What glory, what pleasure, for the one who can bring back this work, the masterpiece of Pheidias, of Pericles; his name would thus be joined to theirs." From this perspective, even overall views of, for example, the Acropolis, can themselves be seen as

synecdochic fragments of some larger entity, the "Antique."<sup>26</sup> Like their literary counterparts, both the ruins and the photographs reflect the entire social and artistic complex within which they were created.

Another powerful impetus behind this kind of photography was the medium's struggle to establish itself as a legitimate expression of high culture. It had to escape the stigma of being, in Peter Galassi's memorable phrase, "a bastard left by science on the doorstep of art."<sup>27</sup> By photographing the acknowledged masterpieces of the western tradition, photographers staked a claim for themselves within that tradition and confirmed the seriousness of their own activity.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, their ostensible superiority as literal documents, the photographs—like the drawings and paintings that preceded them—were made under the spell of the ancient texts. Photographs offered a new opportunity to gratify the desire for first-hand experience of the places that had been immortalized in the masterpieces of classical literature.<sup>28</sup> Like

and shortly afterward published two large selections of architectural studies. As noted in the study by Jammes and Janis, "Salzmann's photographs of details are selectively arranged like collages of masonry, architectural ornament and shadow which defy reference to a larger context" (supra, note 9), pp. 246–248. See also Richard Bretell et al., *Paper and Light: The Calotype in France and Great Britain 1839–1870* (Boston, 1984), pp. 168–172.

25. Commenting on the views of antiquities made by Eugène Piot, the critic Philippe Burty wrote that they were "Comme ces lambeaux de manuscrit dont nous retrouvons par hasard une scène, un monologue, un choeur interrompu au vers le plus pathétique." (Like those scraps of manuscript in which we chance to find a scene, a monologue, a chorus, cut off at the most touching verse.) "Exposition de la Société française de photographie," *Gazette des beaux arts* 1, no. 2

(1859), p. 217.

26. Peter Galassi has commented that "the sense of a picture as a detail, carved from a greater, more complex whole, is a characteristic, original feature of nineteenth-century art. Perhaps most symptomatic is the phenomenon of close variant views of the same site." See Peter Galassi, *Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography* (New York, 1981), p. 26.

27. Ibid., p. 12.

28. Tsigakou comments, "European artists and their clients shared the belief that certain places which had been dignified by past glory possessed such powers of suggestion that their successful depiction could stimulate the imagination and make more vivid the impression of what had happened there" (supra, note 7), p. 27. See also Timothy Webb, *English Romantic Hellenism 1720–1824* (Manchester, 1982), es-

de Lotbinière, Paul de La Garenne wrote an essay for *Excursions daguerriennes*, in conjunction with the long view of the Acropolis (fig. 2): "When I open the history of Athens in the time of Pericles, the most brilliant spectacle unfolds before my eyes: the whole city is full of orators, artists, renowned warriors." Likewise, it was believed that one could not, for example, thoroughly understand Homer until one had stood on the plain outside Troy, for, in the words of Robert Wood, "the *Iliad* has new beauty on the banks of the Scamander."<sup>29</sup>

In their absorption in all things Greek, the photographers and their audience seem to have been little troubled by the difference between history and mythology. The locations made famous in epic and tragedy shared an appeal equal to those of ancient military campaigns or political debates as subjects of photographs. Delphi, Mycenae, Corinth, Argos, and, of course, Athens were all depicted by numerous photographers both foreign and domestic.<sup>30</sup> Indeed an allusion to the greatness of times past occasionally compensates for some mediocre imagery. In the world of Victorian photography, and even for us today, an undistinguished seascape takes on new resonance with the information that it is Salamis, and a dull picture of an empty field is transformed into a telling cultural and historical document with the simple caption "Marathon."<sup>31</sup>

Included in the Getty collection is a splendid copy of Lerebours' *Excursions daguerriennes*. The daguerreotypists' original plates have long since disappeared, yet one gets a sense of "photographic seeing," particularly in the view of the Parthenon, which includes a decidedly non-classical shed directly in front of the temple (fig. 1). In many of the other pictures in the book, Lerebours' craftsmen added figures when copying the daguerreotypes and translating them into engravings, yet there are no such additions in any of the pictures from Athens.

In fact, the whole issue of the inclusion of people in nineteenth-century landscape photographs deserves more attention. The standard explanations that they are

meant to recall the conventions of painting or to indicate scale seem true but insufficient. A more expansive interpretation has to take into account the rhetoric of photography itself and its peculiar relation to the objects it depicts. Although paintings by an artist like Gérôme, for example, contain a stunning amount of detail, the viewer is always aware that the scene depicted is a product of the imagination and the hand of the artist. There did not have to be an actual event that corresponded to the painted image. In the presence of most photographs, on the other hand, the viewer believes in the literal veracity of the rendering, or at least in the existence "out there" of the objects recorded. Paintings and drawings, no matter how accurate, always have the character of illustration, but photographs serve both as illustration and as evidence. Although we have become less credulous about the factual status of the photographic image, the nineteenth-century viewer did not share such skepticism.<sup>32</sup>

All this has a particular point when photographs have been taken in a land as little known as Greece. When the figures in a photograph were identifiably western and middle class (hence able to afford the expense of the trip), their presence created a sense of identification on the part of would-be travelers and promoted the acquisition of first-hand acquaintance with classical culture. Figures in local costume were participating in another kind of historical romance, one that both emphasized cultural difference and privileged the mystique of continuity within change. In either case, the sites become stage sets, and the presence of actors is simultaneously provocative and reassuring. Without robbing the land of its unusual qualities, photographs nonetheless domesticated it and conveyed the message that it was a safe place to go.

In general the nineteenth-century photographs from Greece tend to have fewer figures in them than views from Rome, the Holy Land, or elsewhere in the Mediterranean. Part of the reason, as discussed above, is that contemporary Greeks were not thought to be as exotic

pecially pp. 1–6.

29. *The Ruins of Palmyra* (London, 1753), preface, unpaginated. The remark is quoted by Jenkyns (*supra*, note 1), p. 7. Jenkyns' silence on the topic of photography is all the more difficult to understand in view of his compelling account of the importance accorded by the Victorians to seeing the original sites connected with Greek literature.

30. Among the earliest photographers in Greece were the daguerreotypists included in Lerebours' *Excursions daguerriennes* (1840–1842) and Baron Gros (1850). Early calotypists included George Bridges (1850), Alfred Normand (1851), Eugène Piot (1851–1852), Jean Walther (1851), and Claudius Wheelhouse (1850–1851). See Gary Edwards, "Foreign Photographers in Greece," in the Benaki Museum catalogue (*supra*, note 15), pp. 16–24.

31. G. Charvet makes explicit this function of the photographs in

his preface to Bonfils' *Souvenirs d'Orient*: "Le philosophe et le penseur voudront eux-mêmes se recueillir devant ces vieux témoins des âges écoulés qui racontent l'histoire mieux que l'histoire elle-même." (The philosopher and the intellectual will wish to stop and reflect before these old traces of vanished ages, which relate history better than history itself.) Photographs of Salamis and Marathon are included in the Shaw album (*supra*, note 15).

32. Again we may cite Charvet's remarks on Bonfils (*cf.* note 31): "Devant ces tableaux prestigieux, l'illusion est complète, et l'on croirait se trouver en présence de la nature elle-même, tellement l'artiste a su mettre d'intelligence et de goût au service de son art." (Before these illustrious pictures, the illusion is complete; one could believe that one was in the presence of nature herself, so well has the artist put intelligence and taste in the service of his art.)

as the inhabitants of the Near East. In addition, the cultural importance of the Greek monuments gave rise to a kind of deference, or even reverence. It is as if the photographers wished to present the classical ruins as relatively free from intrusion by the modern world.

To summarize, photography played two seemingly contradictory but actually complementary roles in making Greece more accessible to the world. It afforded vicarious gratification of the need to see extraordinary places and at the same time encouraged travel to those very places. Of course, photographs also came to serve as the most common trophies and souvenirs of the voyage. The medium that began by promising the remarkable eventually brought its subjects into the realm of the ordinary.

It is worth repeating that the early photographers of Greece were heirs to a long pictorial tradition. Jacob Spon, a French physician, and George Wheler, a British naturalist, made a tour through Italy, Greece, and the Levant in the mid-1670s. In 1678 Spon published an account of their journey illustrated with engravings made on the basis of his own drawings.<sup>33</sup> When the two men were in Athens in 1676, they saw the Acropolis with the Propylaea, Erechtheion, Parthenon, and temple of Athena Nike; the Theseion;<sup>34</sup> the choregic monument of Lysicrates; the Tower of the Winds; and the Arch of Hadrian. Marie-Christine Hellmann and Philippe Fraicse note: "Along with Philopappos's Monument, this group of buildings formed, at the time, 'the ruins of Athens,' without any clear distinction being made between the Greek and Roman periods."<sup>35</sup> The nineteenth-century audience identified ancient architecture solely with the public and monumental, and the Acropolis—with some allowance for the Olympeion, the Theseion, and one or two other sites—was believed to represent the pinnacle of the Greek accomplishment.<sup>36</sup> As noted above, most of the photographic images are

"unitary" views, that is, of an entire building or at least an entire side. Moreover, there was a fairly restricted canon of buildings and even of views of these buildings.

The earliest photographic views of the "ruins of Athens" are the same as those of Spon and Wheler, and the set does not change appreciably for the next quarter century.<sup>37</sup> An excellent example is afforded by the temple of Zeus Olympios, almost always shot from the east so as to emphasize the enormous height of its columns and highlight the Acropolis hovering behind it. Such conventions were established as early as the *Excursions daguerriennes* (fig. 2). Some of them were "self-evident," while others were borrowed from painting.<sup>38</sup> We might compare this with the impulse of nineteenth-century landscape photography in the United States, where there was, for example, a universally accepted "best general view" of Yosemite.<sup>39</sup>

Félix Bonfils and William James Stillman were working largely in the two decades from 1860 to 1880, when photography had reached its maturity, and their pictures exhibit almost all the features that have been described earlier. Bonfils was born in France on March 6, 1831. In 1866 he moved to Beirut and established a photography studio, specializing in architectural and ethnographic views of the Middle East.<sup>40</sup> Later, he was joined by his son, Adrien, who continued the operation after his father's retirement in 1878. Their oeuvre represents commercial work of high quality and is thus a valuable indicator for popular taste of the time.

Félix Bonfils published two albums, five years apart, that included views of Athens: *Architecture Antique* (1872—eight photographs of Athens) and *Souvenirs d'Orient* (his last work, 1877—ten photographs of Athens).<sup>41</sup> Both sets are more or less standard collections of professionally made travel scenes, although presented in the form of lavish folio volumes with near-imperial size plates. Once again we see the power of the canon; both sets contain views of the Parthenon, the Erechtheion (two each, one a more general depiction

33. Jacob Spon, *Voyage d'Italie, de Dalmatie, de Grèce et du Levant* (Lyons, 1678). Tsigakou remarks that "Spon and Wheler were, in fact, the first travellers to write about Greece in a way that combined scholarship with accurate observation" (supra, note 7), p. 18, see also p. 192, and Osborn (supra, note 6), and David Constantine, *Early Greek Travellers and the Hellenic Ideal* (Cambridge, 1984), especially pp. 7–33.

34. This is the nineteenth-century name for the temple overlooking the west side of the Athenian Agora. Scholars now unanimously identify it as a temple of Hephaistos and call it the Hephaisteion. In this paper I will use the older appellation because that is how it appears in the photographers' captions. On the controversy, see R. E. Wycherley, *The Stones of Athens* (Princeton, 1978), pp. 68, 97.

35. *Paris-Rome-Athens* catalogue (supra, note 18), p. 25.

36. "The Athenian Acropolis and its different buildings [were]

thought to contain the very essence of Greek architecture." Ibid., p. 34.

37. Among the pictures in the Getty collection there are three views attributed to P. Margaritis, a local Athenian photographer. There is a general view of the Acropolis from the south, a frontal study of the temple of Athena Nike, and the interior (east) side of the Propylaea with the Venetian tower beyond. Interestingly, there is nothing within the images themselves that would identify their maker as Greek. I began this study with the impression that there might be discernible variations in the "national character" of the views by photographers from different countries. Now, however, it seems to me that the canon was strong enough to override any such variations that might have existed.

38. Henry Cook (cf. note 21) painted Athens from the road to Eleusis and described this view as giving "perhaps the most beautiful





Figure 3. Félix Bonfils (French, 1831–1885). *The Parthenon As Seen from the Propylaea—Athens*, circa 1872. Albumen print. H: 22.5 cm (8<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"); W: 29.2 cm (11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XM.422.37.



Figure 4. Félix Bonfils (French, 1831–1885). *Greece: The Parthenon in Athens*, circa 1877. Albumen print. H: 23.1 cm (9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"); W: 28.4 cm (11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.1167.41.

and the other a close-up of the caryatids), the Theseion, the theater of Dionysus, and the choregic monument of Lysicrates. Bonfils, however, did not reuse his old negatives but made new pictures for each site, and so we are provided with a revealing glimpse into the development of his working methods.

Sometimes the differences are minor. For example, the views of the Theseion are taken from slightly different angles, with the later one including somewhat more of the surrounding landscape. The Parthenon is seen from almost exactly the same vantage point in both versions, but the foreground of the later picture is occupied by an assortment of architectural and sculptural fragments uncovered by recent excavations (figs. 3, 4). In the first study of the theater of Dionysus (fig. 5), Bonfils is at ground level, so that the picture becomes almost an abstract study of the curving rows of seats

with a young boy placed in the front row as a sample spectator. In reworking this view (fig. 6), Bonfils moves his camera up into the seating area and makes the central element of the picture the shed erected in the middle of the orchestra to house the workmen's tools. The spectator is still included, but his presence is now much less important as a pictorial element.

Perhaps even more striking is Bonfils' reinterpretation of the Erechtheion. As noted above, both albums contain two views of this edifice, one more general and the other a close-up. In *Architecture Antique*, however, the general view contains only a bit of the south wall and the famous caryatid porch (fig. 7). In *Souvenirs d'Orient*, the general view is taken from the west, completely downplaying the caryatids and emphasizing the Erechtheion's blend of heterogeneous elements (fig. 8).<sup>42</sup> This later photograph makes more demands

as well as the most explanatory idea of the position of the Acropolis." Quoted in Tsigakou (supra, note 7), p. 120.

39. The Shaw album contains several Athenian views, possibly by the firm of Constantin, which are identified by numbers on the negative. The Getty Museum owns another travel album (84.XA.1499) that also has scenes from Athens of a much lower quality both artistically and technically (see supra, note 15). Curiously, several of the views from the Getty album are of the same sites, taken from the same angle, and marked with the same numbers as their counterparts in the Shaw album, although they are unmistakably from different negatives. I assume that, like Bonfils (supra, note 3), the photographer made both "deluxe" and "economy" versions of his images. It is also possible that a less-skilled photographer got hold of the Constantin catalogue and produced his own pictures, perhaps to sell at a lower price. No matter what the motive, this illustrates again that there was

a limited scope for what was considered acceptable or desirable in scenes from Athens.

40. See Ritchie Thomas, "Bonfils and Son, Egypt, Greece and the Levant: 1867–1894," *History of Photography* 3, no. 1 (1979), pp. 33–46, with correspondence from Paul Chevedden, *History of Photography* 5, no. 1 (1981), p. 82. See also Carney E. S. Gavin, *The Image of the East: Nineteenth Century Near Eastern Photographs by Bonfils from the Collection of the Harvard Semitic Museum* (Chicago, 1982).

41. See supra, note 3.

42. The Erechtheion was home to a number of very old cults, and it incorporated several different structures from different periods. Its western end has been described by R. E. Wycherley as a "peculiar and ill-balanced conglomeration" (supra, note 34), p. 147.





Figure 5. Félix Bonfils (French, 1831–1885). *Interior of the Theater of Bacchus—Athens*, circa 1872. Albumen print. H: 22 cm (8<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"); W: 28 cm (11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XM.422.42.



Figure 6. Félix Bonfils (French, 1831–1885). *Greece: Temple [Theater] of Bacchus in Athens*, circa 1877. Albumen print. H: 23.1 cm (9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"); W: 28.6 cm (11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.1167.45.

on the viewer's concentration, and although less immediately appealing than its predecessor, it is more informative about the actual structure. In fact, most of the pictures from the later series are both more complex visually and evince a more developed interest in the archaeological, as opposed to the picturesque, details of the buildings. It is as if the self-described souvenirs are now directed at a more sophisticated audience that can appreciate a more austere and scholarly approach to the sites. In the mid-1870s a major campaign of excavation on the Acropolis and its environs began under the sponsorship of the Greek Archaeological Society, and it is tempting to see Bonfils' re-vision as at least in part a response to the new discoveries.

Bonfils' work consistently shows visual intelligence and technical skill. As a commercial photographer, he had to be attuned to the requirements of his clients and adept at providing images that would satisfy them. We must also remember that he sold most of his pictures through catalogues, from which his clients would make their choice by number on the basis of a cursory description along the lines of "Parthenon, West Face." As a result, he had to limit his views to those that were most canonical and keep his approach determinedly neutral. He remains outside the buildings he is pho-

tographing, and he is almost always at a middle distance that gives some sense of the location and allows for correct perspective. His method seems to embody the disinterested impartiality that the early partisans of photography had proclaimed as its chief virtue. The apparent absence of interpretation, however, in itself indicates what he was trying to accomplish. His pictures are not intended to be personal revelations but documents accessible to a broad audience. His photographs are visual corollaries of the standard guidebooks of the time. The buyer of a Bonfils print could be confident of receiving the most widely accepted version of whatever view he had chosen. Those wealthy enough to afford an album got collections that would allow them to feel that they possessed a representative image of any subject that deserved their attention, whether the rubric was "Ancient Architecture" or "Memories of the Orient."

Bonfils' photography is a public art. In Athens, it is directed at the public face of the ancient Greeks and the timeless perfection of their architecture. Given all these constraints, it is all the more impressive that he strove to keep his images fresh. As pointed out above, he did not simply keep reprinting old negatives but returned to the sites to revise his view, sometimes radically. A skeptic

43. By contrast, Francis Frith (*supra*, note 16) regularly repackaged his pictures in different combinations and with different titles for the various collections.

44. By the end of the century, the Bonfils atelier received a laudatory note in the Baedeker guide to the region: "good photographs, a

large stock." Their catalogue at the time offered, among other things, a choice of more than three hundred "costumes, scenes and types from Egypt, Palestine, and Syria." This information is from Thomas (*supra*, note 40), p. 41.

45. The details of Stillman's life are recounted in his *Autobiography*



Figure 7. Félix Bonfils (French, 1831–1885). *Caryatids from the Temple of the Erechtheion—Athens*, circa 1872. Albumen print. H: 22.4 cm (8<sup>13</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"); W: 28.9 cm (11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XM.422.38.



Figure 8. Félix Bonfils (French, 1831–1885). *Greece: Temple of the Erechtheion in Athens*, circa 1877. Albumen print. H: 23.2 cm (9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"); W: 28.5 cm (11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.1167.42.

might suggest that this is just a response to the public's demand for novelty, while a cynic could call it a photographer's version of planned obsolescence. Since Bonfils made his living from selling photographs, commercial considerations must have played some part in his decision to make new pictures of old sites, but they are not enough to justify all the expense and effort involved.<sup>43</sup> Rather, his revisions, like his self-effacement, are another sign of the conscientiousness that informs all his work. In their own time the pictures were highly regarded,<sup>44</sup> and taken on their own terms, they are still successful today.

William James Stillman was born in Schenectady in 1828 and educated there at Union College.<sup>45</sup> After graduation he went to study painting in England, where he became friendly with Ruskin. He returned to the United States and in 1855 he founded *The Crayon*, the first serious American journal of the arts, for which he served as editor during the first year of publication.<sup>46</sup> Shortly afterward, while recovering from an illness, he learned the basics of photography. Stillman then embarked on a career as a diplomat and in 1862 became American consul in Rome. Three years later, he was posted to Crete, again as American consul, but his support for the Cretan rebellion against Turkish rule made

him persona non grata with the local authorities and finally led him to take a leave of absence—which proved to be permanent—and move to Athens in 1868. Once there, as he notes in his autobiography, he set about photographing the ruins of Athens; he had “everything necessary to correct architectural work,” and moreover “the ruins . . . had never been treated intelligently by the local photographers.”<sup>47</sup>

This was a grim time for Stillman. His wife, Laura, had been growing increasingly despondent, first because of the trials of living in war-torn Crete and then because of a debilitating illness that had struck their son, Russie. Shortly after their arrival in Athens, she committed suicide. The pain of her death, anxiety about the health of his son, and an increasingly desperate lack of money led Stillman to the edge of a breakdown: “I was myself nearly prostrated mentally and physically, and unfit for anything but my photography.”<sup>48</sup>

Stillman's life is indissolubly linked to his art, and despite his own assertions of improved accuracy, the real importance of his views of the Acropolis lies in the vivid personal vision he imposed on his material. For him, photographing the antiquities of Athens was a process that encompassed the exorcism of his wife's suicide, the hope—not trivial—of alleviating his financial

of a Journalist (Boston, 1901). See also Richard Pare, *Photography and Architecture 1839–1939* (Montreal, 1982), pp. 241–242.

46. See Elizabeth Lindquist-Cock, “Stillman, Ruskin, and Rossetti: The Struggle between Nature and Art,” *History of Photography* 3, no. 1 (1979), pp. 1–14.

47. Stillman (supra, note 45), p. 454.

48. Ibid., p. 457.



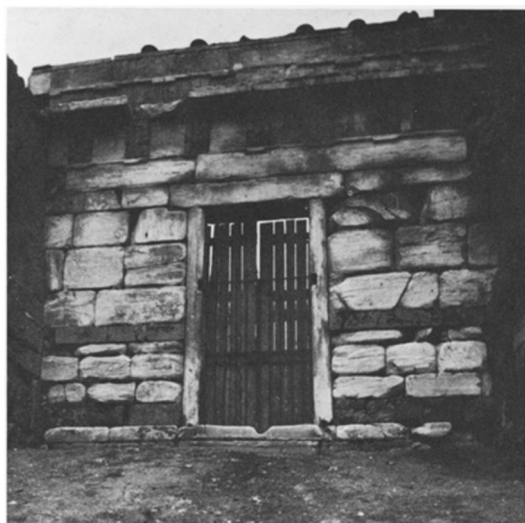


Figure 9. William James Stillman (American, 1828–1901). *Ancient Gate of the Acropolis* (detail of title page), 1869. Carbon print. H: 14.5 cm (5<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"); W: 14.4 cm (5<sup>11</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.766.4.1.



Figure 10. William James Stillman (American, 1828–1901). *View of the Acropolis from the Musaeum Hill*, 1869. Carbon print. H: 18.5 cm (7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"); W: 23.5 cm (9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.766.4.2.



Figure 11. William James Stillman (American, 1828–1901). *The Acropolis with the Theatre of Bacchus*, 1869. Carbon print. H: 19 cm (7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"); W: 23.7 cm (9<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.766.4.3.

worries, and a celebration of Hellenic independence. While there is no way to gauge the therapeutic aspect of his activity, his life did eventually become more stable. He met and later married Marie Spartali, a woman of Greek ancestry, with whom he lived happily until his death in 1901.<sup>49</sup> As for the financial rewards, the album of twenty-five views,<sup>50</sup> dedicated to the family of his wife-to-be, yielded him a profit of about one thousand dollars, the equivalent of a year's consular salary.<sup>51</sup>

The album is called *The Acropolis of Athens: Illustrated Picturesquely and Architecturally in Photography*; both adverbs are significant as indicators of Stillman's intention. In a brief preface he strikes the note of documentary precision that has already been mentioned: "The negatives from which the following Autotypes have been printed have been, with one exception, left untouched . . . so that nothing should injure the outlines or diminish the Architectural accuracy of the views."<sup>52</sup> He also says that while photographing the buildings, he tried whenever possible to stand so that the views would be completely frontal and symmetrical. Such comments, combined with references to technical data,

49. Spartali modeled for several of the pre-Raphaelite painters, as well as for the photographer Julia-Margaret Cameron; see Lindquist-Cock (supra, note 46), pp. 12–14.

50. See supra, note 4.

51. Stillman (supra, note 45), p. 465.

52. The Getty's album is a presentation copy signed by Stillman, and this phrase has been emended in his hand to "with four exceptions."



such as his use of Dallmeyer's rectilinear lenses, create an atmosphere of scientific objectivity. We might be led, therefore, to expect a systematic, or even schematic, treatment of the site. Instead, we find ourselves in the hands of a brilliantly idiosyncratic tour guide, both expert and passionate about his material. Stillman's album does not conform to standard nineteenth-century practice, either architectural or archaeological.<sup>53</sup> His conception depends almost as much on the sequence of images as on their individual content, as the visual arrangement moves back and forth between far and near, inside and outside, high and low. To do full justice to his ideas, it is necessary to go through the album plate by plate. For the purposes of this essay it will suffice to concentrate on two of the most important subsets, the introduction and the studies of the Parthenon, and demonstrate how they fit into the larger pattern.

The first plate, located on the title page, shows the *Ancient Gate of the Acropolis*, through which we enter to begin our exploration of the site (fig. 9). Stillman takes care to show that, for all its venerability, the Acropolis is not a static diorama from a museum of cultural history. The first full-size picture establishes its presence as a dominant feature in a living landscape, even when its structures are almost invisible (fig. 10). The caption specifies that this long view is taken from the Hill of the Muses, and the subtle but unmistakable insistence on artistry is continued with the next image. We suddenly find ourselves in the theater of Dionysus, which is cut into the south slope of the Acropolis (fig. 11). The theatricality of the setting is highlighted by the statue in the extreme right foreground. This sculpture was doubtless put where it stands at Stillman's behest, and it functions as a substitute for the conventional figure in a landscape and for all spectators past and present.

After passing through the Propylaea, Stillman's first view of the Parthenon is completely frontal, recalling both the more conventional pictures of contemporaries like Bonfils and his own claims to greater accuracy (fig. 12). We might expect him to provide a matching view from the east end or possibly a tour around the other three sides, but he is not bound by such mechanical notions of symmetry. The next plate is a dramatic perspectival study of the western portico (fig. 13). Unlike



Figure 12. William James Stillman (American, 1828–1901). *Western Facade of the Parthenon*, 1869. Carbon print. H: 17.9 cm (7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"); W: 23.1 cm (9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.766.4.10.

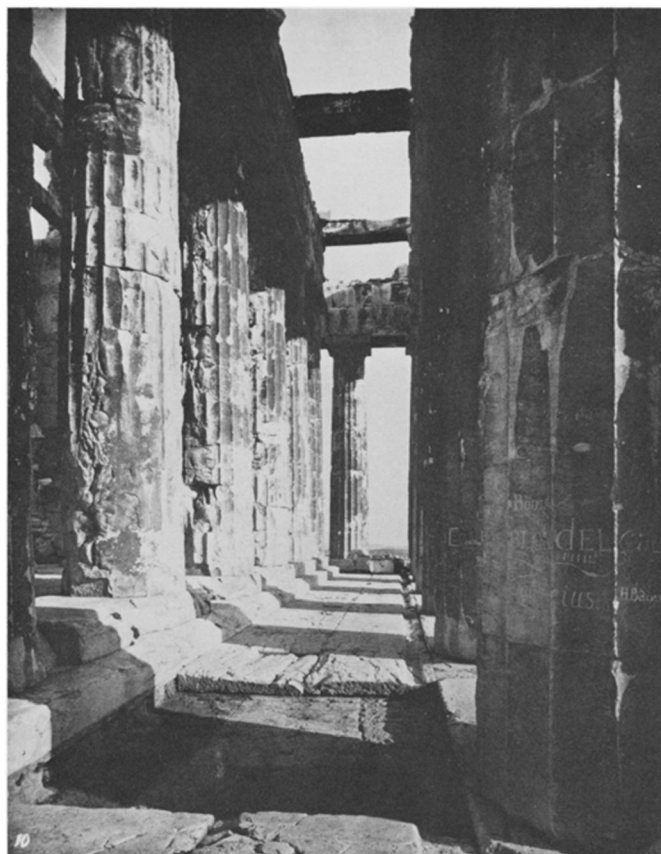


Figure 13. William James Stillman (American, 1828–1901). *Western Portico of the Parthenon*, 1869. Carbon print. H: 24.2 cm (9<sup>9</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"); W: 19.1 cm (7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.766.4.11.

53. For example, in the early 1860s the gifted French photographer Edouard-Denis Baldus documented the rebuilding of the Louvre and the Tuilleries. He went seriatim from pavilion to pavilion. With unfailing regularity, each section of his monumental album begins with a general view, proceeds to a series of closer views from roof level to ground level, and ends with a systematic presentation of the decorative and sculptural programs.

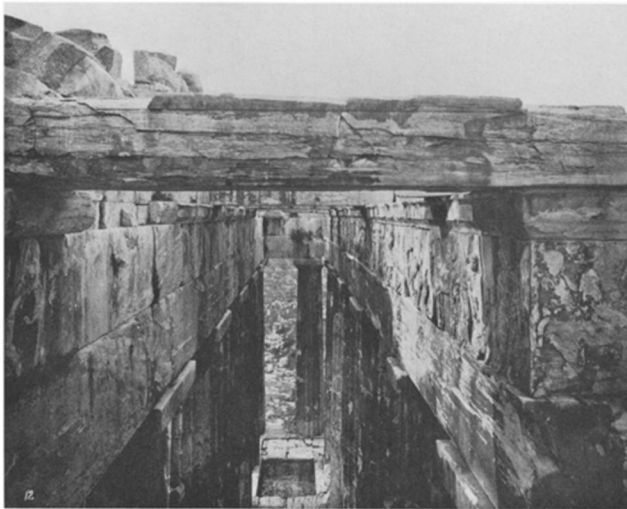


Figure 14. William James Stillman (American, 1828–1901). *Western Portico of the Parthenon, from Above, Showing the Frieze in Its Original Position*, 1869. Carbon print. H: 18.9 cm (7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"); W: 23.4 cm (9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.766.4.13.



Figure 15. William James Stillman (American, 1828–1901). *View Taken from the Same Point as No. 12 [fig. 14] and Looking Eastward over the Ruin of the Parthenon*, 1869. Carbon print. H: 17.7 cm (6<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"); W: 23.5 cm (9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.766.4.14.

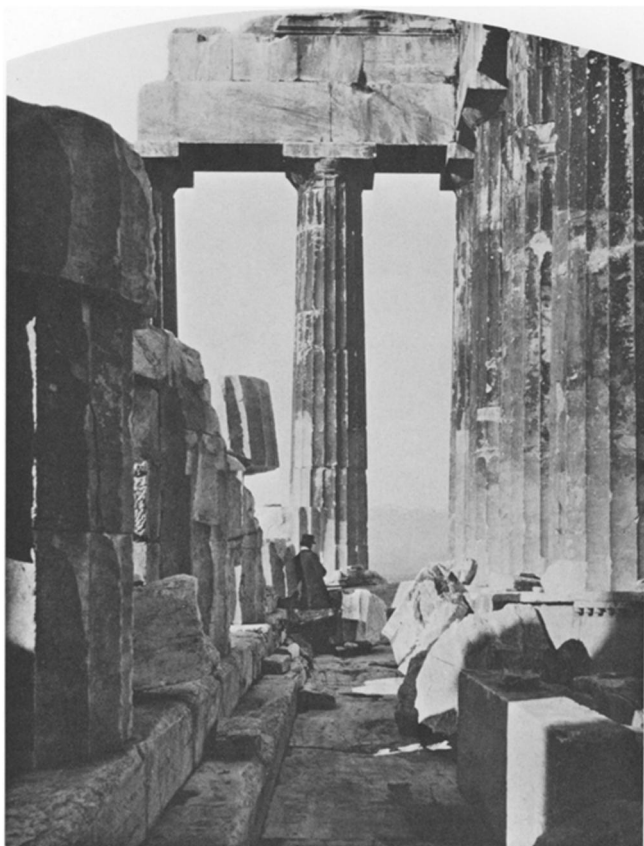


Figure 16. William James Stillman (American, 1828–1901). *Eastern Portico of the Parthenon, View Looking Northward*, 1869. Carbon print. H: 24.2 cm (9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"); W: 18.4 cm (7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.766.4.16.

Bonfils and most other photographers of the time, Stillman has gone inside the Parthenon, and this image makes explicit the album's political agenda: "The names scratched on the columns are those of Philhellenes, who fought here in the war of Greek independence."<sup>54</sup> Here Stillman's earlier support of the Cretan uprising against Ottoman rule finds a complex double reflection in the palimpsest created by the graffiti on the ancient marble. Despite the aforementioned stance of correctness and objectivity, his album is an allegory whose hero is the Greek spirit, specifically in its artistic and political manifestations. Stillman presents the buildings and their decorative elements iconographically to express what he saw as the Hellenic ideal. This would serve, at least in part, to explain the oscillation between long view and detail as well as the startling novelty of some of the visualizations.

Not content with the usual pedestrian point of view, Stillman took his camera up to the very top of the Parthenon to capture the last bits of the frieze in situ (fig. 14). This long sculpture in high relief depicted the great Panathenaic procession—in which all residents of the city took part—and thereby celebrated Athenian civic unity.<sup>55</sup> In the context of the album, it is another

54. This is Stillman's own caption. The abbreviation *Philh[elle]ne* is clearly visible inscribed under the signature of one Blondel. Given the difficulty of the exposure, Stillman might have retouched the negative to make the graffiti more vivid.

55. See Martin Robertson and Alison Frantz, *The Parthenon Frieze*





Figure 17. William James Stillman (American, 1828–1901). *Eastern Facade, or Front, of the Parthenon*, 1869. Carbon print. H: 18.5 cm (7<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"); W: 24 cm (9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.766.4.17.



Figure 18. William James Stillman (American, 1828–1901). *Profile of the Eastern Facade, Showing the Curvature of the Stylobate*, 1869. Carbon print. H: 18.4 cm (7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"); W: 23.7 cm (9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.766.4.18.

example of the Greeks' ability to blend the aesthetic and the political. Having climbed to the top of the Parthenon, Stillman also took note of the practical problems involved in the production of the frieze, and the next plate is a dizzying view of the panorama the original craftsmen would have seen (fig. 15). When he returns to the ground, it is to find an unknown man—this might be a self-portrait<sup>56</sup>—within the eastern portico (fig. 16). In an unusual gesture, the man is turned away from the camera, and his posture is studiously introspective under the column drum that seems so precariously balanced above him. Stillman seems to have placed special importance on this image, since it is the only picture in the album to include a figure in western dress, as well as the only one to be cropped with an arched top. Such features support the suggestion that it is a portrait of the artist.

There follows yet another example of oscillation; the next shot is the long-postponed, yet unexceptional, frontal view of the eastern facade (fig. 17). The penultimate view of the Parthenon is quite literally at ground level (fig. 18). It is accompanied by an erudite caption explaining the architectural refinements of the stone courses,<sup>57</sup> but the picture's visual components belie, or



Figure 19. William James Stillman (American, 1828–1901). *General View of the Summit of the Acropolis, from the Extreme Eastern Point, Showing the Erechtheum [Erechtheion] at the Right*, 1869. Carbon print. H: 17.7 cm (6<sup>15</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"); W: 24 cm (9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.766.4.19.

(Oxford, 1975). See also John Boardman and David Finn, *The Parthenon and Its Sculpture* (Austin, Tex., 1985).

56. The suggestion is made in Pare (supra, note 45), p. 242.

57. The following is excerpted from the caption: "Profile of the Eastern facade showing the curvature of the stylobate. This system of

curvature of the Greek temples . . . seems, taken in conjunction with the diminution of the extreme intercolumniations of the facade . . . to indicate, as its purpose, the exaggeration of . . . the apparent size of the building. It is common to the Greek temples of the best epoch."





Figure 20. William James Stillman (American, 1828–1901). *Figure of Victory, from the Temple of Victory, High Relief*, 1869. Carbon print. H: 23.8 cm (9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"); W: 18.3 cm (7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.766.4.25.



Figure 21. William James Stillman (American, 1828–1901). *Fragment of Frieze from the Parthenon*, 1869. Carbon print. H: 18.9 cm (7<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"); W: 23.9 cm (9<sup>7</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"). Malibu, The J. Paul Getty Museum 84.XO.766.4.26.

at least qualify, its ostensible scientific purpose. As in the earlier study of the theater of Dionysus, a piece of sculpture—here a small square votive relief showing a group of four men—has been placed in the scene to give it some narrative content. On a much reduced scale, it recalls the procession on the Parthenon frieze. Stillman ends his examination of Athena's temple by returning to the eastern facade but from a much greater distance than before (fig. 19). By using a second negative, the retouching he disclaimed in the preface, Stillman has filled the sky with lowering clouds that are more Ruskinian than Sophoclean. The dramatization of the site reaches its climax in this apotheosis of the Parthenon.

There follow several studies of the Erechtheion, and finally the last two images in the album depict details of the sculptural program: a winged victory from the parapet of Athena Nike, goddess of victory (fig. 20) and a panel from the Parthenon's Panathenaic frieze (fig. 21). With such an understated coda, Stillman returns to Greek art to summarize his themes of Hellenic triumph and democratic unity.

*The Acropolis of Athens* is unique in several respects. Stillman is aware of the traditional documentary approach and sometimes adopts its style, but he also uses the special properties of photography to convey his private vision of what has been called "the Greek miracle." In its combination of the personal, the epic, and the scientific, Stillman's work goes far beyond the conventional architectural photography of his time. It embodies both Romantic philhellenism and the nineteenth-century optimism that allied the moderns with the ancients in a bond of enlightened understanding.

In their different ways, the works of Stillman and Bonfils mark the end of the most creative period in the photography of classical sites in Athens.<sup>58</sup> Exploration and discovery were being transformed into something more routine. In photography, the field was left to the many small local studios that had sprung up to service the growing tourist industry. To the extent that they too were in the business of supplying true illusions, they were the descendants and beneficiaries of their predecessors.

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58. See Gary Edwards in the Benaki Museum catalogue (supra, note 15), pp. 23–24.