

John J. Gahan

A Woman Visitor to Athens in 1687

Among the travellers passing through Athens in the second half of the seventeenth century was an interesting woman visitor by the name of Anna Akerhjelm. In the literature about travellers she has largely been ignored, because perhaps of the more significant contributions made to the *rediscovery* of Greece by those who were in the country at about the same time and who published what they found¹. They had come to learn more about classical Greece, concerning themselves primarily with the monuments, and many of the accounts of their visits are important still to the archaeological history of the city. Anna Akerhjelm visited Athens under different circumstances and was interested in different things, but what she says of the time she spent there is intriguing. Moreover, it is the earliest report on Athens under the Turks that has come down to us written by a woman.

By the seventeenth century the renewed interest in the classical world that the Renaissance had first inspired was beginning to have a

1. There appeared between 1650 and 1700, e.g., the travel accounts by the Sieur du Loir (1654), Jean de Thévenot (1665), Francis Vernon (1676), Thomas Smith (1678), Jacques Paul Babin (1674), Jacob Spon (1678), Sir George Wheler (1682), Bernard Randolph (1686 and 1687), and Cornelio Magni (1688) [not to mention the spurious work of Georges Guillet de Saint-George (published under the name of the author's brother, Guillet de la Guilletière) (1675)].

See also Léon Emmanuel Simon Laborde, Comte de, *Athènes aux XV^e, XVI^e, et XVII^e siècles* (2 vols) (Paris, 1854); H. Omont, *Athènes au XVII^e siècle* (Paris, 1898); James Morton Paton, *Chapters on Mediaeval and Renaissance Visitors to Greek Lands* (Genna-deion Monographs III) (Princeton, 1951); K. Simopoulos, *Foreign Travellers to Greece, A.D. 333-1821* (5 vols) (Athens, 1970-79) [in Greek].

In the last few years there have appeared: David Constantine, *Early Greek Travellers and the Hellenic Ideal* (Cambridge, 1984); Richard Stoneman, *Land of Lost Gods* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1987); Helen Angelomatis-Tsougarakis, *The Eve of the Greek Revival* (London, 1990); Eisner Robert, *Travelers to an Antique Land* (Ann Arbor, 1991); Molly Mackenzie, *Turkish Athens* (Reading, England, 1992).

direct effect on the number of visitors to Greece. In addition the fall of Candia (Herakleion) to the Turks in 1669 further encouraged travel. The extended conflict between Turkey and Venice over this stronghold of Crete had long made sailing in Greek waters difficult. When it was settled, visiting Greece became far easier.

Jacob Spon, the French physician, and George Wheler, the English gentlemen, were in Athens in 1676 as part of the influx of travellers after Candia. Anna Akerhjelm arrived about a decade later. An interest in supplementing the growing number of Greek inscriptions that were being published brought Spon to Greece; Wheler had met the doctor in Italy and, as he was keenly interested in natural philosophy and botany, had decided to travel with Spon out of a general curiosity. In Athens they were given a tour of the monuments by Jean Giraud, consul there from about the mid-seventeenth century on (first for the French and later the British)², and Spon compared what he saw and was told against Pausanias. The separate publication by Spon and Wheler of their travels, in 1678 and 1682 respectively, met with great acclaim on both sides of the Channel³.

In 1683, the year following the appearance of the travels by Wheler (who had now been named "Sir George" after the dedication of his work to Charles II), the armies of the Sultan suffered a set-back in Europe when they were defeated at the gates of Vienna. Among others the Venetians were quick to take advantage of this blow to the power of the Ottoman Empire, and they set their sights again on the territory they had previously lost to the Turks in Greece. By September, 1687, Francesco Morosini, the Venetian commander, having taken the Peloponnese and made extensive gains at the expense of the Turks on the Greek mainland, had landed at the Piraeus with the intention of taking Athens. It is common knowledge that on the twenty-sixth of September, 1687,

2. Giraud left an important report on Athens. See: M. Collignon, *Le Consul Jean Giraud et sa relation de l'Attique au XVII^e siècle* (Mémoires de l'Académie des inscriptions et des belles-lettres XXXIX) (Paris, 1913).

3. Jacob Spon, *Voyage d'Italie, de Dalmatie, de Grèce, et du Levant, fait aux années 1675 et 1676* (2 vols) (Lyon, 1678); George Wheler, *A Journey in Greece* (London, 1682). Spon had included Wheler's name in his publication. When the "Voyage" was about to be translated into English, Wheler seems to have rushed into print himself. In doing so he made liberal use of Spon, who had sent him a copy of the French publication: Laborde (above, n. 1) II, 42, n. 1.

at seven o'clock in the evening, one of Morosini's gunners fired the shot that was to give the Venetians their Pyrrhic victory on the Acropolis⁴. Spon and Wheler, it is generally held, were the last of the travellers, whose accounts we possess, to see the Parthenon intact⁵. Were they really?

In early September, 1687, a ship arrived at the Piraeus (or Porto Leone, as it was then commonly called, after the marble lion there that Morosini was to remove to Venice) with Catharina-Charlotta de la Gardie, the Countess of Königsmark, and her party aboard. She had set out in 1686 with her husband, the field-marshal, Count Otto Wilhelm Königsmark, from Venice to Greece, where he had assumed command under Morosini of the Venetian army. With her was her Swedish lady-in-waiting, Anna Akerhjelm, who, in five letters to her brother and a fragmentary journal, has left an account of her visit to Greece during the time of the siege of the Acropolis⁶.

Anna Månsdotter Agriconia Akerhjelm was born to Magnus Jonas Agriconius, a clergyman, and his wife, Sophia Kempe, in Sweden in

4. They took the Acropolis of course but lost the Parthenon to Turkish gunpowder. Further, the citadel was theirs for only about six months because they gave it up again in April, 1688, but not before the additional damage inflicted by Morosini on the west pediment of the Parthenon by his unsuccessful attempt at removing some of its sculptures.

There is a large and long body of material on the Venetian siege of the Acropolis. See, most importantly, James Morton Paton, ed., *The Venetians in Athens, 1687-1688* (based on the *Istoria* of Cristoforo Ivanovich) (Gennadeion Monographs I) (Cambridge, Mass., 1940); Th. E. Mommson, "The Venetians in Athens and the Destruction of the Parthenon in 1687", *American Journal of Archaeology* 45, 1941, 544-566; Theodore Robert Bowie and Diether Thimme, eds., *The Carrey Drawings of the Parthenon Sculptures* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1971); Vincent J. Bruno, ed., *The Parthenon* (New York, 1974).

5. E.g., R. Barber, *Blue Guide: Greece*⁵ (London, 1987), 101. Vincenzo Coronelli, the geographer for Venice, published in Venice in 1686 *Memorie istoriografiche del Regno della Morea racquistato dall' Armi della Serenissima Repubblica de Venezia*. This edition, however, does not mention Athens. When that city is eventually treated in later editions, Coronelli's account is based on Spon. Cf. James Morton Paton (above, note 4), 74 (his note 18).

6. Laborde (above, n. 1), "Documents concernant Mademoiselle Anna Akerhjelm", Vol. II, 256 ff. (text in Swedish with French translation on facing page). The "Documents" include in addition to the letters (264 ff.) (of which only one, that dated October 18, 1687, is pertinent to the present study) and journal (September 1686 - March 1689) (298-349) a biography of Anna Akerhjelm (256 ff.). As the author of this paper has only enough Swedish to check it against the French translation when the latter seemed problematic (rarely), the references (below) are to (and the citations from) the translation.

1642⁷. Left an orphan at sixteen, she and her two sisters saw to the education of their only brother Samuel. He eventually rose to prominence in the government of Sweden and was appointed to several important positions, including director-general of the Swedish post office and secretary of state. As a student herself Anna studied Latin, history, and literature, and in time she also mastered many of the major languages of Europe. Through her brother she was introduced to the family of Catharina-Charlotta de la Gardie, whom she attended for the rest of her life⁸.

According to the journal, the Countess, Anna, and the rest of the party, numbering about a dozen, set off by boat on the afternoon of their arrival (September 6 according to the account) to see the statue of the lion that gave Porto Leone its name, but the tourists were hailed by Jean Giraud, consul then for the British, who happened to be on board a small English ship in the harbour; they were asked to join him⁹. Giraud chose his words carefully but brought them up to date on the state of affairs in Athens. In anticipation of the arrival of the Venetian forces, about four hundred Turkish soldiers had vacated the city and were occupying the Acropolis; however, the Athenians had not turned to the Venetians en masse for their salvation because of the payment of tribute that the latter were demanding of them¹⁰. The language of the conversation is not acknowledged, but Giraud warned them to switch to German when he suspected they were being eavesdropped on by some of the ship's crew. Later the same day Anna, the consul, and their party did indeed get ashore to view the stone lion, but when the group was approached by some Greeks on horseback, Giraud again cautioned them to pretend to understand only German¹¹.

The next day (September 7) the party sailed for the Isthmus, where Count Königsmark, stationed at Corinth, could occasionally visit them

7. The King of Sweden honoured Anna (as he had done her brother before her) with the name Akerhjelm, a title of Swedish nobility (*ibid.*, 263).

8. *Ibid.*, 257-263 (passim).

9. *Ibid.*, 313. Giraud is not referred to by name in the September 6 entry to the journal but only as "*le consul d'Angleterre à Athènes*" or "*le consul*". He is called "*le consul Giraud*" in Anna's letter (279) of the middle of October 1687 to her brother (in text below).

10. *Loc.cit.* For further instances of Greek suspicions about the Venetians, see below in the text and C. M. Woodhouse, *Modern Greece*⁴ (London, 1986), 112.

11. *Loc.cit.*

aboard their ship. On September 15 Anna paid a visit to Corinth's antiquities in the company of Königsmark, Morosini (who, she says, had arrived at the Isthmus two days earlier), and others. On the night of the twentieth, however, everyone went aboard Morosini's ship¹², arriving back at the Piraeus the next day¹³. The entry in her journal under this date, September 21, also mentions viewing antiquities, but in all likelihood this should not be taken literally, especially when we consider the advanced state of preparations for war that must now have been under way. That is, we need not imagine that Anna went on a sightseeing tour that very day. Moreover, no details are given about which sights were seen or precisely how or when they were visited. A final remark is revealing. Anna says that attending the Countess, who had come down about that time with a nasty case of the measles, prevented her from making fuller notations. Besides, she goes on, several accounts of the antiquities of Athens were already available:

Tout ce qui s'est passé ici et tout ce que j'y ai vu en fait d'antiquités n'a pas été noté dans ce journal, à cause de la forte rougeole dont a été atteinte la comtesse. Il en existe d'ailleurs plusieurs descriptions¹⁴.

On the other hand she does specifically mention in this same entry "finding" (but again without really saying how or when) a Lutheran Church of the Trinity in Athens ("*...nous y avons trouvé une église luthérienne désignée sous le nom de l'église de la Trinité*")¹⁵. We do know that the first Protestant Church in Greece was set up in the "Mosque of

12. *Ibid.*, 315. In the journal Morosini is referred to only as "*le capitain général*".

13. *Ibid.*, 317. Cf. Morosini in Laborde (above, n. 1) II, 157 (note) for September 21 as the date of arrival of the Venetian fleet and army at the Piraeus. Why, though, the Countess and her party had called in there some two weeks earlier is not clear from Akerhjelm's accounts.

14. *Loc.cit.* In the letter to her brother (in the text below) Anna is more specific than here (the vague "*plusieurs descriptions*") about accounts of Athens' antiquities and mentions "*un livre français... par Jacob Spon et un Anglais [Wheler]*" though she uses the same excuse that since the remains of the ancient city had already been described she would not go into any great detail about them herself. On the authorship by Spon and Wheler, cf. above, n. 3.

15. *Loc.cit.*

the Column" on a site now at the corner of Adhrianou and Flessa streets in the Plaka, where a Demotic School stands today. This must be the church to which Anna refers, but her mention of its dedication to the Trinity gives us an otherwise previously unknown detail. It became for Morosini's Lutheran gunners a place of worship while they were in Athens¹⁶.

At this point, however, five days before the explosion on the Acropolis, the journal breaks off and does not begin again until some seven months later, in April, 1688, when Anna was en route with her party to Euboea, where Count Königsmark was to die of malaria the following autumn during the siege of Chalkis.

On the other hand we do have a letter by Anna Akerhjelm to her brother, written on October 18, 1687, from Athens, which fills in some of the details left out of the journal. Towards the beginning mention is made of the Venetian victory over the Turks and, almost in passing, of the damage done to the Parthenon:

Combien il répugnait à Son Excellence [i.e., Königsmark] de détruire le beau temple qui a existé trois mille ans [sic], et qui

16. Barber (above, n. 5) says that Morosini's gunners used the mosque "for a short time in 1687" (155). As the Venetians did not abandon Athens until early April of 1688, I presume worship services could have also been conducted in the church for a time in the new year.

On October 18 Anna writes (in the letter to her brother in the text below): "*Nous avons obtenu une jolie mosquée pour en faire une église luthérienne;...*" (279). Because of the problems (above in the text) with the journal entry of September 21, this statement in the letter may perhaps still refer to the "Mosque of the Column". We might then suppose that the entry for September 21 was written largely ex post facto, perhaps sometime after October 18 but before the journal begins again in April, 1688, as a kind of summary for Anna's stay at the Piraeus and Athens. Alternatively she may be referring in the letter to the conversion of a second mosque for those of the Lutheran faith (about which there is, to the best of my knowledge, no further mention anywhere). Unlikely as this may seem, she does add after the semicolon (following *luthérienne* above): "*deux autres ont été converties en églises catholiques*". This last statement at least explains the designation: "main Catholic church" for a mosque on the map in Bowie and Thimme (above, n. 4), p. 34, illus. 20, entitled "Athens from the Northwest during the Bombardment", by an engraver who signed himself "Ferdin. Haarsch. A.M.C.". That is, if there is a *main* church, there must also be at least one other. This same map can also be found reproduced in Omont (above, n. 1), pl. xxxii (commentary and key pp. 10-11). (I acknowledge an anonymous reader of this paper for alerting me to the possibility of such a map.)

est appelé temple de Minerve! mais en vain; les bombes firent leur effet, ainsi jamais dans ce monde le temple ne pourra être remplacé¹⁷.

The plight of the Turks is not, however, ignored. Anna says that by agreement those on the Acropolis were allowed to keep as much as each of them could carry to the ships waiting to deport them but that many were unable to carry their load that far (*"une distance d'environ six milles"*) and left their possessions, including delicately embroidered, fine linen garments (*"vêtements supérieurement brodés du linge fin"*) along the way¹⁸. Further, Anna refers again here, but in more detail, to Greek reaction to the arrival of the Venetians. The Greeks capitulated, she says, but not before burying all their belongings: *"Dès que l'armata se présenta devant la ville, les Grecs se soumirent à la république, mais ils ont enfoui tous leurs effets"*¹⁹.

At this point Anna moves on in her letter to the subject of the antiquities of Athens, a topic no sooner taken up than dismissed in the journal entry of September 21. In the letter her remarks in this regard are also initially disappointing because she almost immediately defers to Spon and *"un Anglais"* (i.e., Wheler):

Il m'est impossible de décrire toutes les antiquités qui se trouvent ici. Il semble qu'il en a été écrit d'une manière très-juste dans un livre français par Jacob Spon et un Anglais²⁰.

She does not, however, dismiss the topic entirely but says that in the company of the Countess she was taken on a tour of the city by Giraud himself (*"le consul Giraud"*) despite a problem he was then having with his legs. One of the highlights for her was a visit to a monk who used for his cell what was long called the Lantern of Demosthenes²¹. As his guests

17. Laborde (above, n. 6) 277.

18. *Loc.cit.*

19. *Ibid.*, 277-279; cf. above, n. 10.

20. *Ibid.*, 279; cf. above, n. 14.

21. *Loc.cit.* In 1669 three of the six marble panels between the columns of the Choregic Monument of Lysikrates were removed, and the structure was built into the library of a French Capuchin convent. The Monument became known as the Lantern (in the archi-

the party enjoyed bread and wine, apples, figs, and pomegranates. She also writes that during the outing the Countess won the admiration of the Greeks, several of whom invited her into their homes. There she was offered orange- and lemonade, fresh almonds, marmalades, and the like²². What of Athens as a whole? She says that it was superior to other Greek towns with very attractive houses belonging to both Greeks and Turks²³.

This then concludes those parts of the journal and correspondence of Anna Akerhjelm that pertain to Athens. What is interesting about the letter in particular is the account of the destruction of the Parthenon from a woman's perspective. Anna would have no doubt been sympathetic to a degree to Königsmark and, from the words she wrote to her brother, seems even to try to remove some of the blame from his shoulders (*Combien il répugnait à Son Excellence de détruire le beau temple...*). She can, however, still lament the ruin of the temple and the futility of its destruction (*...les bombes firent leur effet, ainsi jamais dans ce monde le temple ne pourra être remplacé*). The Turks are also treated with a degree of sympathy, when Anna writes in the letter that the length of their trek to the shore (*"une distance d'environ six milles"*) caused many to drop, for example, the very clothes (*"vêtements supérieurement brodés du linge fin"*) that they were carrying. Further, her remarks, brief though they are, on Greek hospitality and what Athens was like give us the kinds of details often overlooked by her contemporaries. Subsequent visitors were to read the inscription on the architrave of the so-called Lantern of Demosthenes that associates it with the choregos Lysikrates and to identify and describe more precisely Athens' other monuments²⁴. This business Anna Akerhjelm by her own admis-

tectural sense of the word) of Demosthenes from the belief that this was where the orator had composed his speeches.

22. *Loc.cit.*

23. *Ibid.*, 277.

24. E.g., James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens Measured and Delineated* (London, 1762-1830) [reprinted in 3 vols (London, 1968)]; Richard Chandler, *Travels in Greece* (Oxford, 1776) (Chandler, as group leader—the group included Revett, who had dissociated himself from Stuart and was now in charge of architectural drawings—was initially sponsored in his research by the Society of Dilettanti); Marie-Gabriel-Florente-Auguste Choiseul-Gouffier, *Compte de, Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce* (2 vols) (Paris, 1782-1822) (Choiseul-Gouffier was the patron of the painter Louis François Sébastien Fauvel); G. A. Olivier, *Voyage dans l'Empire Othoman, l'Egypte, et la Perse, ...* (Paris, 1801-

sion, as we have now seen, left to others, but in so doing she has given us instead a document that makes an important contribution to the social history of Athens in the late seventeenth century.

There is, however, one question left unanswered: Did Anna Akerhjelm, after Spon and Wheler, see the Parthenon when it was still virtually intact? She most certainly did—in the sense that every visitor arriving by ship at the Piraeus was afforded a splendid view of the Parthenon on the Acropolis in Athens from the 430s B.C., when it was completed, until as recently as the middle of the present century, when the *véρος* began to obscure at times that famous vista. The real question, though, is whether Anna Akerhjelm saw the undamaged Parthenon from close up, from, e.g., the town below. Then, unfortunately, the answer must be no. When could she have done so?

What Anna writes in concluding her journal entry for September 6 shows that already in early September the time was not right for visiting Athens. She notes there that Giraud had offered to supply the Countess Königsmark's ship with whatever provisions were needed, as it was uncertain that anyone from that vessel would be going into town ("*...il n'était pas sûr que quelqu'un des nôtres irait en ville, ...*")²⁵. Moreover, the next day, as we know, the party left for the Isthmus, not to return until September 21. On the other hand we also know that Anna did tour Athens from the entry in her journal of the twenty-first and the letter to her brother of October 18. Again, though, she never really says when the visit (or visits) took place, but even if tensions could perhaps have died down some between September 7 and 21, the arrival of Morosini, Königsmark, and their troops could only have brought the crisis to a head and made the question of sightseeing virtually impossible after that. Moreover, we know that the Countess was on the tour led by Giraud (the letter) but also that she had come down with the measles around the twenty-first of September and required Anna's considerable assistance for some time after that (the journal). Surely the visit to Athens would have been made after the Turks surrendered the Acropolis, which the

1807) [3 vols and an atlas containing (no. 49) Fauvel's famous plan of Athens]; Edward Dodwell, *A Classical and Topographical Tour through Greece during the years 1801, 1805, and 1806* (2 vols) (London, 1819) (generally recognized as one of the best and most authoritative accounts).

25. Laborde (above, n. 6) 313.

letter says they in fact did do, eight days after the explosion²⁶. We are looking at a date then of sometime between October 3 and 18, 1687, for that excursion.

At any rate Anna Akerhjelm was certainly among the first visitors back to the Acropolis after the Parthenon's destruction because we know that she found an Arabic manuscript among its ruins. This she took back to Sweden with her and presented to the library of the Academy of Uppsala in 1693²⁷. After Count Königsmark's death in September 1688, she had returned to Venice with the Countess and continued to attend here there and on subsequent travels. Anna Akerhjelm died in the year 1698.

26. *Ibid.*, 277.

27. *Ibid.*, 261. In the biography it is further noted that her brother was thanked for this gift in May of that year. I suppose that this would have been soon after its donation.