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## The Giaour and “The Greek Boy”

Peter X. Accardo

Lord Byron was so famous in Greece that one might have expected several Greek translations of his works to be published in the years immediately following his death in 1824.<sup>1</sup> Instead, more than a decade passed before the first translation, of *The Bride of Abydos*, printed at Smyrna in 1836. It was reissued along with *The Curse of Minerva* in Athens the following year.<sup>2</sup> These and subsequent translations are well documented by Eugenia Kephallineou in her essay “Neohellenic Translations of Byron’s Works in the Nineteenth Century.” She points out that these translations “were primarily inspired by the impact of Byron’s talent and by his attitude toward certain topics and issues of special appeal to the Greeks, as well as by his active involvement with the Greek Independence War and his death in it. Of equally great importance was the desire of Greek translators to make accessible to their nation texts they considered to be of great value for the spiritual emancipation of a society that had no access to the English originals.”<sup>3</sup>

Kephallineou does not mention the next Greek Byron, which was not a translation at all. Rather it was an 1842 edition in English of *The Giaour*. Behind it is a tale of rescue from captivity, participation of the rescued Greek boy in New York high society, and thwarted romance with the young woman who later wrote “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” Moreover, the book also has interest as a sign of the influence of the American mission movement.

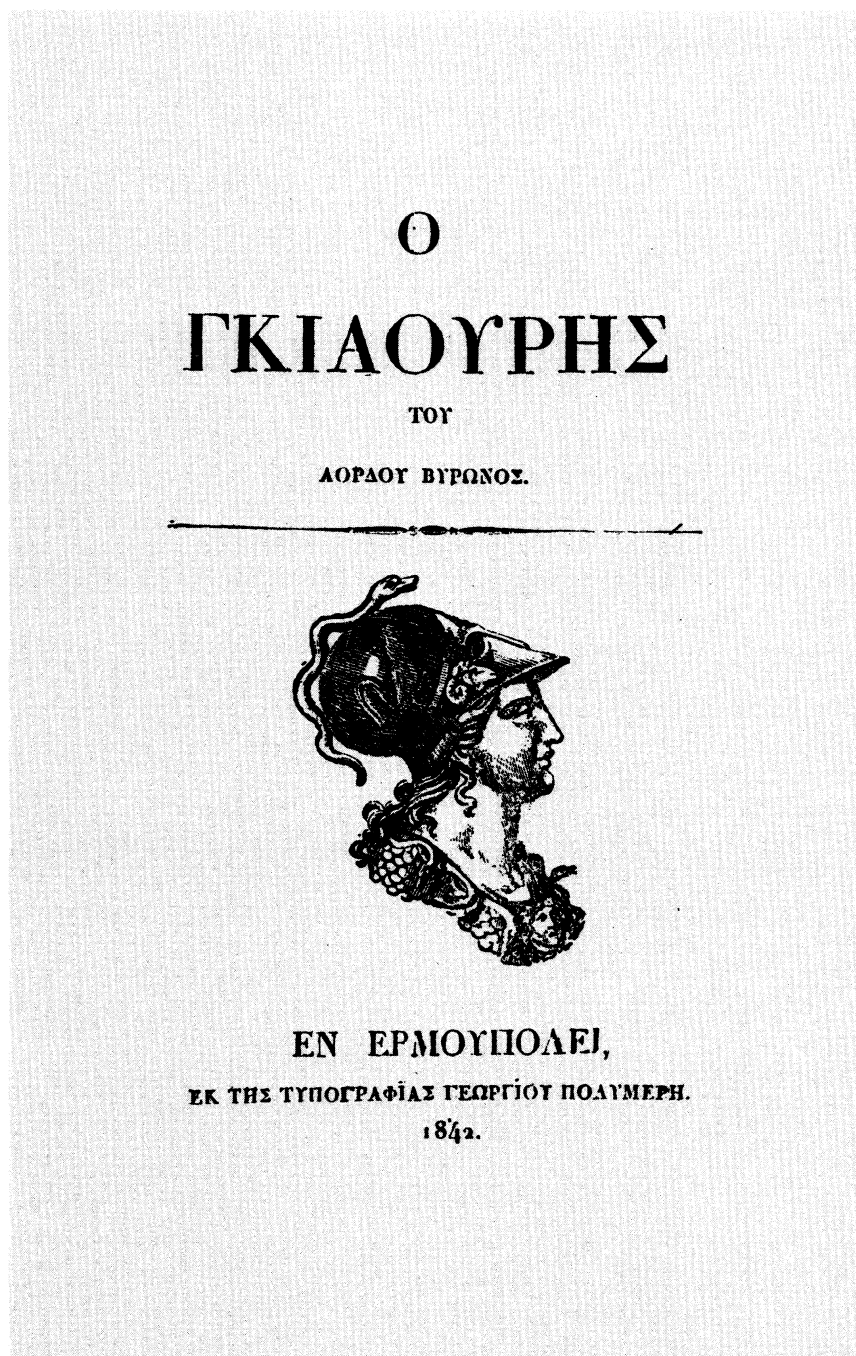
Printed at Hermoupolis on the Aegean island of Syra, the 1842 *Giaour* is recorded as being at Columbia, Harvard, and Yale. A fourth copy has recently come to light, and it is now in a private collection. Although the title page is in Greek (figure 1), the text itself is in English, to which has been added a Greek-English lexicon. The presumed compiler of the lexicon and editor of the text is Christodoulos Leonidas Miltiades Evangelides, who has added a simple printed dedication: “To My Deliverer and benefactor Russell E. Glover Esq. By his grateful and affectioned Son, C. L. M. Evangelides. Graduate of Columbia College.” In the two copies examined by the author, Evangelides has crossed out in ink the awkward phrase “and affectioned Son.” In addition, the Harvard copy contains two textual corrections in his hand.

<sup>1</sup> His death at Missolonghi, Western Greece, on 18 April 1824 was first announced to the Greek people in a broadside issued from a French press set up in that besieged town; see Evro Layton, *Five Centuries of Books and Manuscripts in Modern Greek* (Cambridge: Harvard College Library, 1990), 69–70, where entry no. 43 describes the broadside and reproduces it in facsimile.

<sup>2</sup> Demetrios Gkines, *Hellenike vivliographia, 1810–1863*, 3 vols. (En Athenais: Graphieson Demosieumatou tes Akademies Athenon, 1939–1957), 1:409 (no. 2807).

<sup>3</sup> Eugenia Kephallineou, “Neohellenic Translations of Byron’s Works in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Lord Byron: Byronism—Liberalism—Philhellenism*, ed. M. Byron Raizis (Athens: Graphic Arts, 1988), 94.

The odyssey of Evangelides undoubtedly would have appealed to Byron. In 1828, toward the end of the Greek War of Independence, an American sea captain rescued the orphaned Evangelides from his Turkish captors. Thus, Evangelides knew well the word “giaour,” a scornful Turkish term meaning slave, which was particularly applied to Greeks. After his rescue, the boy secured passage on a ship bound for New York, where he “became a sort of public idol, symbolizing



*Figure 1. Title page of Ho Gkiauouras (En Ermoupolei, 1842). Widener Library*

America's feeling for the Greeks under Turkish oppression."<sup>4</sup> His story attracted the attention of the poet William Cullen Bryant, an ardent Philhellene, and found expression in his lyric "The Greek Boy," first published in *The Critic* (20 December 1828):

Gone are the glorious Greeks of old,  
Glorious in mien and mind;  
Their bones are mingled with the mould,  
Their dust is on the wind;  
The forms they hewed from living stone  
Survive the waste of years, alone,  
And, scattered with their ashes, show  
What greatness perished long ago.

Yet fresh the myrtles there—the springs  
Gush brightly as of yore;  
Flowers blossom from the dust of kings,  
As many an age before.  
There nature moulds as nobly now,  
As e'er of old, the human brow;  
And copies still the martial form  
That braved Plataea's battle storm.

Boy! thy first looks were taught to seek  
Their heaven in Hellas's skies;  
Her airs have tinged thy dusky cheek,  
Her sunshine lit thine eyes;  
Thine ears have drunk the woodland strains  
Heard by old poets, and thy veins  
Swell with the blood of demigods,  
That slumber in thy country's sods.

Now is thy nation free—though late—  
Thy elder brethren broke—  
Broke, ere thy spirit felt its weight,  
The intolerable yoke.  
And Greece, decayed, dethroned, doth see  
Her youth renewed in such as thee:  
A shoot of that old vine that made  
The nations silent in its shade.

The poem was reprinted in the 1829 issue of *The Talisman*, a gift-book annual co-edited by Bryant, with a frontispiece portrait of Evangelides in native costume (figure 2), engraved by Asher B. Durand after an oil portrait by Robert W. Weir, a prominent figure in Knickerbocker circles and a founding member of the celebrated Sketch Club.<sup>5</sup>

Peter Vandervoort of New York acted as the boy's first sponsor, and through him, Evangelides was introduced into high society. He received a particularly generous welcome at the Bond Street residence of banker and philanthropist Samuel Ward, who proposed to send him to Columbia College under the auspices of Christian missionaries. A collector of fine art, Ward purchased the Weir portrait

<sup>4</sup> Louise Hall Tharp, *Three Saints and a Sinner: Julia Ward Howe, Louisa, Annie and Sam Ward* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1956), 57.

<sup>5</sup> For more about Weir, see *Robert Weir: Artist and Teacher of West Point* (West Point: Cadet Fine Arts Forum of the United States Corps of Cadets, 1976).



Painted by John W. Wier.

Engraved by A.P. Howard.

Figure 2. Portrait of Evangelides,  
from *The Talisman* (1828).  
Widener Library

of Evangelides for his private gallery. Sometime in 1835 Captain Russell E. Glover, the same captain who rescued Evangelides and was evidently a friend of the Ward family, presented Ward's daughter Julia his calling card upon which he had written, "Russel E. Glover's heart is yours," but his suit was rejected.<sup>6</sup> A romance subsequently developed between Julia and "Christy," as Evangelides was known in the family, but it too was discouraged, this time by an inquisitive aunt. Julia eventually married a gentleman nearly twenty years her senior, Samuel Gridley Howe (M.D. Harvard, 1824), who in 1824 had volunteered as a surgeon in the Greek navy; four years later he wrote *An Historical Sketch of the Greek Revolution*. Julia Ward Howe would herself achieve lasting fame as a reformer and author of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Ironically, Julia had presented Evangelides a copy of Howe's book during their brief courtship.<sup>7</sup>

Upon completing his studies at Columbia in 1836, Evangelides returned to his homeland Syra. Hermoupolis, the capital city, was founded in 1821 as a base for Greek refugees during the revolution and became an important center of missionary activity. Josiah Brewer, an American clergyman, established a school there in 1827, but was forced in the following year to sail home due to rumors that Russia had declared war on Turkey. Among those who accompanied Brewer on the voyage was twenty-year-old E. A. Sophocles, who would become the first

<sup>6</sup> Tharp, *Three Saints*, 57.

<sup>7</sup> Tharp, *Three Saints*, 58.

professor of Modern Greek at Harvard and the author of popular Greek grammars and anthologies.<sup>8</sup>

Inspired by his American benefactors, Evangelides devoted the remainder of his life in Hermoupolis to missionary work and teaching. In 1842 he founded the Greek Lyceum for boys, serving as its first principal. He was proud of the school, sufficiently so to send a copy of the school's regulations to the Harvard College Library in 1851. It may be that his edition of *The Giaour*, published the same year that the school was founded, was intended as a textbook. At some point Evangelides was appointed American vice-consul at Syra, and, according to Stephen A. Larrabee, "enjoyed circumstances affluent enough to make him known throughout the Aegean and Athens itself as 'The Greek Yankee.'"<sup>9</sup>

In later years Evangelides had at least two occasions to renew his American acquaintances. Bryant, travelling throughout Europe in 1852 and 1853, met Evangelides on board a ship off Syra, and inquired about the state of Greek schools and education. In *Letters from the East* (1869), a collection written for the New York *Evening Post*, Bryant reports Evangelides's observations:

"I am satisfied," said he, "with regard to Greece. Her people are making the greatest sacrifices to acquire knowledge, and when this is the case, I expect everything. You see our town: those houses on the conical hill are Syra proper, those which cover the shore at its base form another city called Hermopolis. The place was a little village in the time of the Greek revolution: it now has a population of twenty thousand. Of these, three thousand are pupils in the different schools. In my own school are thirty-one boarders, of whom seventeen pay for their board and instruction: the rest are poor boys. In twenty years it will hardly be possible to find a Greek who cannot read."<sup>10</sup>

Later in June 1867, Julia Ward Howe, joining her husband on a tour of Greece, called on her former "brother," now a respectable middle-aged man "full of affectionate remembrance of the family at 16 Bond Street, and of gratitude to 'dear Mr. Ward.'"<sup>11</sup>

A touching letter dated 25 July 1875 to Bryant epitomizes Evangelides's devotion to America and to the spirit of American Philhellenism:

DEAR, GOOD MAN, AND MUCH-BELOVED MR. BRYANT: I have no words in which to express my gratitude to you for the good you have done to Greece and to 'The Greek Boy.' I owe to the Americans and to you my education and present happiness. My country is free and I am free, and what is more, I am a believer in Christ, thanks to those who taught me. I tried to make best use of the talent I received from our Heavenly Father through the American schools and the examples of their noble men. My remaining days are few; I am trying to spend them in the service of my Redeemer by doing all the good that I know and can do. It is not likely that we shall ever meet on earth: let us meet in heaven. I am the old man now who was once 'The Greek boy,' and have the pleasure to be your grateful and sincere friend, 'C. EVANGELIDES.'<sup>12</sup>

Evangelides died in 1881, three years after the author of "The Greek Boy."

<sup>8</sup> Stephen A. Larrabee, *Hellas Observed: The American Experience of Greece 1775-1865* (New York: New York University Press, 1957), 181.

<sup>9</sup> Larrabee, *Hellas Observed*, 267.

<sup>10</sup> William Cullen Bryant, *Letters from the East* (New York: G. P. Putnam & Son, 1869), 220.

<sup>11</sup> Laura E. Richards and Maud Howe Elliot, *Julia Ward Howe 1819-1910*, 2 vols. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), 2:272.

<sup>12</sup> *The Poetical Works of William Cullen Bryant*, ed. Parke Godwin, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1883), 1:348.