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THE AGE OF PERICLES IN THE MODERN ATHENS: GREEK HISTORY, SCOTTISH POLITICS, AND THE FADING OF ENLIGHTENMENT

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ABSTRACT. *This article explores changing responses among late Georgian Scots towards Greek history in general and classical Athens in particular. Tracing the early study of Greece through some of the more innovative Scottish Enlightenment scholars, it argues that Periclean Athens long remained a difficult and controversial topic, mainly because eighteenth-century authors found it hard to offer a fully sympathetic treatment of a historical subject strongly associated with radical political democracy. With the defeat of Napoleon, however, and as new ways were sought to celebrate Scotland's own recent imperial, economic, and intellectual achievements, Athenianism gained in credibility, assisted by the rising tide of cultural Hellenism and political Hellenophilia throughout Britain. Plans were laid for a national monument in Edinburgh, modelled on the Athenian Parthenon. Nevertheless, insufficient support was forthcoming and by 1830 the project had stalled. Not least among the causes of this* debacle *– popularly known as 'Scotland's Disgrace' – were the contradictions involved in Athenian symbolism: the abandoned monument ultimately served to represent only the failings of Scotland's tory establishment.*

[...] the Frith of Forth outstretched and outshone the Egean or the Hellespont; the kingdom of Fife beat beyond all competition Ionia and the Troad; Ida and Athos were mere mole-hills compared with North Berwick Law and the Lomonds; Plataea and Marathon had nothing in them at all comparable with Pinkie and Preston Pans; Sir George Mackenzie of Coull excelled both Aeschylus and Aristophanes; Macvey Napier was an Aristotle; Lord Hermond a Diogenes; Macqueen of Braxfield had been a Draco; the Lord President was a Solon; a Demosthenes could be found anywhere; and Lord Macconachie was even more than Plato.[1]

Few educated British contemporaries could have been entirely unfamiliar with this historical allusion, extended beyond the verge of ridicule by a London journalist in the aftermath of George IV's famous visit to Edinburgh in 1822. His work satirized a self-perception then widespread among the Scots, as well as a wider British public, that Scotland's capital, its culture, its institutional fabric – indeed its civilization – bore serious comparison with classical Athens. Yet Robert Mudie's *The modern Athens* (1825), worthy of attention simply as an

[1] Robert Mudie, *The modern Athens: a dissection and demonstration of men and things in the Scotch capital. By a modern Greek* (London, 1825), pp. 128–9.

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accomplished parody, also raises questions about the complex relationship between historiography, political ideology, and cultural identity which had emerged during the Scottish Enlightenment. How had late Georgian Edinburgh's apparently self-assured Athenianism evolved out of the much more hostile attitude among late eighteenth-century scholars towards the turbulent example of Periclean democracy? What was the connection between changing attitudes in Scotland towards classical Greece and the ill-fated decision to erect a grandiose national monument, or 'Scottish Acropolis', which by Mudie's day was taking fitful shape on Edinburgh's Calton Hill? And what had led a radical metropolitan hack, an opponent of Lord Liverpool's tory administration, to make the seemingly harmless Hellenic pretensions of the northern British capital his central rhetorical target? These are the intertwined problems with which this article is concerned.

I

The first eighteenth-century Scot to venture an explicit comparison between contemporary activities and ancient Greece was probably Robert Wodrow, minister of Eastwood near Glasgow.[2] In a letter of 1706 to his correspondent Lachlan Campbell, minister of Campbeltown in Argyllshire, Wodrow referred to his 'oun curiosity and Athenian Spirit' which had led him to begin compiling a record of the 'remarkables of Providence'.[3] Wodrow's Athenianism, however, consisted simply in borrowing the comments of St Paul after his visit to the Areopagus, where the apostle had noticed the insatiable curiosity of the local citizens who 'spent their time to nothing else, but either to tell, or hear some thing new'.[4] This pious and conservative Scottish minister had unintentionally revealed just how multi-faceted could be latter-day Athenianism, the process of association and self-identification by which modern men of very different kinds saw in ancient Greece what they took to be significant reflections of their own values and endeavours. Writing privately to a colleague about his scriptural and hagiographical scholarship, Wodrow presumably intended no wider comparison between his own world and that of the ancient Greeks.

By the 1730s and 1740s, however, a few had begun to perceive a more far-reaching relevance for ancient Greece in a modern Scottish context. Early

[2] W. J. Couper, 'Robert Wodrow', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 3 (1929), pp. 112–34; A. M. Starkey, 'Robert Wodrow and *The history of the sufferings of the Church of Scotland*', *Church History*, 43 (1974), pp. 488–98.

[3] *Early letters of Robert Wodrow, 1698–1709*, ed. L. W. Sharp (Edinburgh, 1937), p. 285. For the editor's discussion of this usage, see p. xxvii. Another Scottish reference to classical Greece is the title to *An account of the Fair Intellectual Club in Edinburgh in a letter to a honourable member of an Athenian society there* (Edinburgh, 1720) – where Athenian is synonymous again with a learned and cultivated disposition.

[4] Acts, xvii, 21. The Pauline remark, and perhaps Wodrow's allusion to it, echoes earlier observations on the famed intellectual curiosity of the Athenians, as in Demosthenes' *First Philippic*, 10, 'Are you content to run round and ask one another, "Is there any news today?".'

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attempts at Greek scholarship in enlightened Scotland are usually seen as having been led by Thomas Blackwell, professor of Greek at Marischal College, Aberdeen, and author of the *Essay on the life and writings of Homer* (1735), an influential reflection upon Greek literature before and during the eighth century BC.[5] Yet it is significant that Blackwell addressed himself not to Periclean Athens but to the heroic civilization of which the epic poets had sung. The reason for Blackwell's preference for this remoter epoch, underlined in a second publication, *Letters concerning mythology* (1748), may be hinted at in the manuscript work of an anonymous Aberdeen historian who must have been Blackwell's contemporary. *Historical notes to 1748* confirms that fifth-century Athens had the most alarming ideological connotations for mid-Hanoverian Britons: this scholar noted that Pericles, by availing himself of the city's political laxity, had secured 'tyranical power' over the state, thereby revealing the hidden perils of a system of mass democracy.[6] Twenty years later a better-known conservative whig, Adam Ferguson, professor of moral philosophy at Edinburgh and a classicist whose sympathies lay rather with the austere muscularity of the oligarchic Spartans, if not with senatorial Rome itself, would reiterate this point in his own fleeting engagement with ancient Athenian affairs: Pericles, he noted severely in the *Essay on the history of civil society* (1767), 'possessed a species of princely authority' which proved how, under a participatory constitution, the people were 'ready to resign themselves entirely to the influence of some popular leader, who flattered their passions, and wrought on their fears'.[7]

Probably influenced by such anxieties, Blackwell's writings of the 1730s and 1740s diplomatically skirted around the historical realities of fifth-century Athens. His Greek inquiries focused instead on the vaguer and less ideologically threatening materials provided by earlier epic and mythological literature, from which stirring but essentially safe moral truisms could be derived. In search of concrete exemplars for modern emulation, Blackwell, like most of his Hanoverian contemporaries elsewhere in Britain, looked instinctively to republican Rome, an orderly and enduring polity in which had appeared 'the greatest Men in these capacities in which the best and worthiest of Mankind chiefly strive to excell: LETTERS, ARTS, and ARMS'.[8] His interpretation,

[5] See K. Simonsuuri, *Homer's original genius: eighteenth-century notions of the early Greek epic, 1688–1798* (Cambridge, 1979), and her 'Blackwell and the myth of Orpheus', in J. J. Carter and J. H. Pittock, eds., *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment* (Aberdeen, 1987), pp. 199–206; D. Coltharp, 'History and the primitive: Homer, Blackwell and the Scottish Enlightenment', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 19 (1995), pp. 57–69.

[6] *Historical notes to 1748*: Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Library, MS 614, fo. x(v).

[7] Adam Ferguson, *An essay on the history of civil society*, ed. Fania Oz-Salzberger (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 178–9. On contemporary Scottish admiration for Sparta's military organization and highly restrictive form of government, evinced in the writings of Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun at the beginning of the century and then of Ferguson himself, see John Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the militia issue* (Edinburgh, 1985).

[8] Thomas Blackwell, *Memoirs of the court of Augustus* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1753–5), I, p. 3.

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shaped by staunch whig commitments and a bristling attachment to Ciceronianism, stressed the moral and political failings of Augustus' imperial government (of which he nevertheless managed to write the definitive eighteenth-century survey), contrasting the autocratic empire unfavourably with the virtues of republican Rome under the wise rule of a patrician Senate. The latter, eventually brought down only by the dictatorship of Caesar and then by Octavian (themselves in whig eyes totemic of contemporary toryism), was a very far remove from the chaotic and short-lived mass democracy developed in fifth-century Athens. Its tightly managed but benign elite libertarianism, neither absolutist nor anarchic, meant that Blackwell's Roman republic (of which, not coincidentally, Ferguson would later contribute an important specialist study) was a robust ideological vessel which trimmed to the prevailing political winds of the mid-eighteenth century, marked by the hegemony of the court whigs in the face of both subversive Jacobitism and anti-establishmentarian country whiggery.[9]

Similar Greek interests to Blackwell's, emphatically Archaic by period and Ionian rather than Attic in location, were responsible for a second early contribution to the Scottish understanding of ancient Greece: *The history of Croesus, king of Lydia* (1755), the work, though unacknowledged on the title page, of Walter Anderson, minister of Chirnside in Berwickshire. Allegedly suggested by David Hume as a joke, it discussed the provenance of oracular foresight, achieving a certain notoriety for its gameness in attempting to subject the Delphic tradition to serious critical appraisal. For Anderson as for Blackwell, richly metaphorical materials such as these deserved the close attention of the modern Greek scholar. Similiar benefits would also spring from the study of the allusive epic literature of the heroic age, which he believed had been 'carried to perfection in Greece, before its rules were known'.[10]

Meanwhile the historical events of Croesus' Lydian reign, in so far as they had been recorded by Herodotus, remained apposite for those seeking to reflect upon more recent events in Britain: 'By carrying our thoughts back into antient times', Anderson suggested, 'we may see reason for abating much of the amazement or dislike which is apt to arise in our minds, when we read the religious or political violences marked out in modern history'.[11] In other words, Greek scholarship could make its own contribution to calming the confessional turbulence and party rancour which often seemed likely to overwhelm

[9] M. A. Stewart, 'The origins of the Scottish Greek chairs', in E. M. Craik, ed., '*Owls to Athens*': *essays on classical subjects presented to Sir Kenneth Dover* (Oxford, 1990), esp. p. 399; Frank M. Turner, 'Why the Greeks and not the Romans in Victorian Britain', in G. W. Clarke, ed., *Rediscovering Hellenism: the Hellenic inheritance and the English imagination* (Cambridge, 1989), esp. pp. 65–9, and his 'British politics and the demise of the Roman republic', *Historical Journal*, 29 (1986), pp. 577–99; Addison Ward, 'The tory view of Roman history', *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900*, 4 (1964), pp. 413–56. Ferguson's other work was *The history of the progress and termination of the Roman republic* (3 vols., London, 1783).

[10] [Walter Anderson], *The history of Croesus, king of Lydia* (Edinburgh, 1755), p. iii.

[11] Ibid., p. xxiii.

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Hanoverian Britain – and about which the more famous historians of the Scottish Enlightenment, and Hume not least, were themselves often greatly concerned. It would be substantially reduced in particular by encouraging an educated public to ponder on the sobering spectacle of disorder, excessive ambitions and cruel misfortune which was Archaic Greece.

If serious Scottish interest in the pre-classical period was perceptibly kindling by mid-century – monarchical Greece being conceived with a certain ambivalence, sometimes as a heroic society with an impressive poetic culture, sometimes as a turbulent world reminding Hanoverian Scots of the instability from which the Union had rescued them – then it was to be further fanned by the Ossianic craze.[12] Provoked by James Macpherson's *Fingal* (1762), a text which ingeniously supplied a nervous community of Edinburgh-based scholars and readers with the heroic epic which they felt to be their national due, this controversy stimulated an increased sense that the Scots had joined the first rank of European peoples by recovering the fragmentary remnants of their very own 'Caledonian Homer'.[13] It is important to note again, however, that the Ossian phenomenon nurtured a form of Hellenism associated very much with heroic Greek civilization rather than with classical Athens. This should not be entirely surprising, for the increasing aesthetic indulgence in sentiment and savagery to which Macpherson so skilfully catered merely fuelled a burgeoning cult of primitive heroism, inevitably leading Scottish minds to wander less to the bustling streets of democratic Athens than to the ringing plains of windy Troy.

An exception, in this as in so much else, was David Hume. Significantly Hume was brave enough to resist the pressure to endorse Ossian's literal authenticity; and he was also prepared, unusually among Scotland's leading mid-century literati, to explore with freedom and imagination the problematical wider canvas of ancient Greek history.[14] Thus it was that Athens became a frequent point of reference in the *Political essays*, its economic fortunes, its approach to the balance of power in the Greek world, and its political arrangements providing useful comparisons (invariably unfavourable to the ancients) with the circumstances of eighteenth-century Britain.[15] Hume, for

[12] For Macpherson's ideological significance, see Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's past: Scottish whig historians and the creation of an Anglo-British identity, 1689–c.1830* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 219–35. Other recent studies shedding light on the Scottish background to the Ossianic craze include H. Gaskill, ed., *Ossian revisited* (Edinburgh, 1991); M. M. Rubel, *Savage and barbarian: historical attitudes in the criticism of Homer and Ossian in Britain, 1760–1800* (Amsterdam, 1978); Fiona Stafford, *The sublime savage* (Edinburgh, 1988); Richard B. Sher, '"Those Scotch imposters and their cabal": Ossian and the Scottish Enlightenment', *Proceedings of the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 1 (1982), pp. 55–63.

[13] Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's past*, p. 229.

[14] Hume as a student of classical Greece has received no great attention, but for background on his historiography see Duncan Forbes, *Hume's philosophical politics* (Cambridge, 1975); D. F. Norton and R. H. Popkin, eds., *David Hume, philosophical historian* (Indianapolis, 1965); V. Wexler, *David Hume and the* History of England (Philadelphia, 1979).

[15] See, for example, David Hume, *Political essays*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 146–7, 154–5, 179–82. Another rare early attempt to see the economic development of fifth-

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example, easily surpassed Anderson's cautious foray into Greek political history, in 1752 blithely substituting the famous Periclean democracy for the Lydian monarchy as the obvious example to be avoided: it was 'such a tumultuous government as we can scarcely form a notion of in the present age of the world'.[16] Indeed, he explicitly considered classical Athens to have been governed 'without regard to order, justice, or prudence', its unstable and ultimately dysfunctional system of participatory popular politics a powerful argument for the restricted form of mixed government found in modern Britain and an implicit rebuff to the sort of country whiggery which demanded radical constitutional reform.[17]

Hume was also prepared to employ the dialogue, made famous by Plato, as a vehicle for his philosophical work. His *Dialogues concerning natural religion*, published posthumously in 1779 and cast as an intricate discussion between three classical Athenians (Philo, Cleanthes, and Demea), take a literary form whose undogmatic presentation of the argument – leaving modern scholars still perplexed as to which, if any, of the Greek participants represents Hume's own views – was the very opposite of the precisely signalled didactic monologue usually preferred by Scottish authors.[18] One might even speculate that the *Dialogues*, with a self-contradictory turn typical of Hume, exploit for their own tacit purposes the democratic and participatory ethos of classical Athens which his *Political essays* had explicitly undermined.[19] But to explain Hume's precociously close encounter with the Periclean era, which he appears to have found philosophically congenial if still essentially politically suspect, is to return once again to his unique status in eighteenth-century thought. He was, more than any other Scottish author, pitching his work towards the metropolitan market. England, a long-established colonial power, more commercially advanced, more secure in its parliamentary traditions, and more comfortable with its place in the wider world than post-Union Scotland, may simply have been better prepared for Hume's flattering comparisons with Pericles' Athens than the citizenry of mid-century Edinburgh, still experiencing the first flush of commerce, liberty, and empire.

This ideological explanation for one Scot's unusually early engagement with classical Athens is strengthened by the literary successes of another, a good friend of Hume's, who arrived in London in 1725. As old as the century on his

century Athens as an analogue of eighteenth-century Scottish commercial progress may be the Foulis publication of a translation of what was then still believed to be Xenophon's work, the *Discourse upon improving the revenue of the state of Athens* (Glasgow, 1751).

[16] Hume, 'Of some remarkable customs', in *Political essays*, p. 181. [17] Ibid., p. 181.

[18] Hume's motives in problematizing interpretation with bluff and irony have been discussed in S. Manning, 'Eloquence and evasion: Hume's elusive wit', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 267 (1989), pp. 343–53, and S. Copley, 'The philosopher and the polite reader in commercial society: Hume, Ferguson and Smith', ibid., 263 (1989), pp. 47–9.

[19] On the ideological implications of the dialogue, see Jennifer Wallace, *Shelley and Greece: rethinking romantic Hellenism* (London, 1997), pp. 60–2.

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departure for England and never again to see his native Borders, James Thomson was a gifted poet whose work perfectly captured the burgeoning self-confidence of Hanoverian Britain, most famously, of course, in his enduring lyric 'Rule Britannia' (1740).[20] It was the whig paean *Liberty* (1735–6), however, which contained the most thought-provoking comparisons between George II's Britain (by which, characteristically, Thomson seems mainly to have meant England) and classical Athens. In Attica, he claimed, the personified Liberty had once had her natural home:

Wrapt in a soul-attenuating clime,
Between Ilissus and Cephissus glowed
This hive of science, shedding sweets divine
Of active arts and animated arms.
There, passionate for me, an easy-moved,
A quick, refined, a delicate, humane,
Enlightened people reigned.[21]

But thereafter Liberty had been banished from Athens. Ultimately she had left Greece, reappearing first in the republican Rome of Cicero and then in Renaissance Italy. Following the Glorious Revolution she had been successfully transplanted to the British Isles, where she could now be hailed by the thankful poet – 'O blest Britannia! in thy presence blest, Thou guardian of mankind' – secure in the knowledge that, in a political sense, Britain had effectively become classical Athens.[22]

Thomson's Anglo-British ideological context reinforces the earlier point. Scotland's post-Union circumstances, with economic development accelerating and the nation's cultural advancement increasingly recognized, were by mid-century leading some Scots to begin exploring the largely unfamiliar terrain of ancient Greece. The works which resulted, however, still dwelled on anodyne (and often distinctly cryptic) Homeric, Delphic, or Lydian examples dealing in widely acceptable mythic or heroic themes. Few yet dared tackle the concrete historicality of Periclean Athens – and when the most forward-looking Scots did so, their observations were largely directed at a more self-confident British audience, more accustomed to its growing pre-eminence on the European stage. Even when Hugh Blair in the early 1780s saw in Demosthenes as well as Cicero one of the 'most renowned Orators ... no less distinguished for some of the high virtues, as Public Spirit and zeal for their country, than for Eloquence', the observation was intended more to massage the self-esteem of Britain's cultivated political elite, increasingly used to seeing their own reflection in senatorial Rome, than to advance any specific comparison of modern Scotland with classical Greece.[23]

[20] J. Sambrook, *James Thomson, 1700–1748* (Oxford, 1990).

[21] 'Liberty', *The complete poetical works of James Thomson*, ed., J. Logie Robertson (London, 1908), p. 328; Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's past*, p. 120n.

[22] 'Liberty', p. 392.

[23] Hugh Blair, *Lectures on rhetoric and belles lettres* (3 vols., London, 1783), II, p. 231. Indeed, specific admiration for Athenian eloquence, notwithstanding reservations about the city's

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Thus in relation to the high period of the Scottish Enlightenment, which may roughly be defined by Hume's and Blair's publications, Ferguson's *Civil society*, William Robertson's *Scotland* (1759), *Charles V* (1769), and *America* (1777), and one last great work in the year of Hume's death, Smith's *Wealth of nations* (1776), Edinburgh's Athenianism was largely a retrospective transposition.[24] It was chiefly a favourite image bestowed upon the age by admiring later commentators, increasingly transfixed by the achievements of enlightened Scotland yet largely unaware of the distance which appreciation of Greek civilization had yet to travel.[25] For classical Greece to receive more concerted attention from the Scots and successfully to challenge the understandable obsession with Ciceronian Rome which had characterized Hanoverian classicism for most of the eighteenth century, cultural and ideological

turbulent politics, was a commonplace in eighteenth-century British discourse. See, for example, Shaftesbury's observation, bursting with unspoken warnings to his contemporary Britons: 'With their Liberty they lost not only their Force of Eloquence, but even their Stile and Language it-self': *Characteristicks of men, manners, opinions, times*, (3 vols., n.p., 1714), I, p. 219. In Scotland Lord Kames had made more explicit use of this precise comparison: 'Eloquence triumphs in a popular assembly ... [it] flourished in the republics of Athens and Rome; and makes some figure at present in the British house of Commons', *Sketches of the history of man* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1774), I, p. 140. William Wight, professor at Glasgow, had by the late 1760s also incorporated a general appreciation of Greek eloquence, 'its power and effect', into his undergraduate history curriculum: *Heads of a course of lectures on the study of history* (Glasgow, 1767), p. 5. Robert Henry, a Scottish minister and historian, also returned to this theme, arguing of Greece as well as Rome that 'While these illustrious nations enjoyed their liberties, their greatest Orators were esteemed great men, had the chiefest sway in all their public councils, and were advanced to the highest honours in their respective states': *History of Great Britain* (6 vols., London, 1771–93), I, p. 296.

[24] One contemporary usage does occur in a letter from Allan Ramsay to Sir Alexander Dick, dated 31 Jan. 1762, though its rather narrow meaning seems not to relate to the wider sense which later emerged that Edinburgh's Athenianism rested on a range of intellectual, political, and military achievements: 'The setting up of an Academy for Riding is an excellent design. A few more of such institutions will render Edinburgh the Athens of the North', *Curiosities of a Scots charter chest, 1600–1800*, ed. Hon. Mrs A. Forbes (Edinburgh, 1897), p. 198. I am grateful to an anonymous referee of this journal for the reference.

[25] The later nineteenth century happily overdosed on the notion of Edinburgh's Athenian status, as, for example, in John Britton, *Modern Athens, displayed in a series of views* (London, 1829); Benjamin W. Crombie, *Men of modern Athens: being portraits of eminent personages, existing or supposed to exist in the metropolis of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1839); also, James Ballantine's verse

Then flourishing, and nourishing,
Art, science, love, and peace,
Our north home shall forth come,
And rival ancient Greece.

in *The gaberlunzie's wallet* (Edinburgh, 1843). In the last century, H. W. Thompson has argued that, 'to discover comparable achievements by so small a nation in so short a time we should need to go back from the Age of Mackenzie to the Age of Pericles': *A Scottish man of feeling* (London, 1931), p. 1. David Daiches, in an influential survey of eighteenth-century endeavour, describes the *milieu* of Hume, Smith, and Robertson as 'the Athens of the North': *The paradox of Scottish culture: the eighteenth-century experience* (London, 1964), p. 73. More widely, the sense that the Enlightenment was founded on a revival of the ancient Greek and Roman spirit has found important expression in Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: an interpretation* (2 vols., New York, 1967).

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conditions would need to change markedly from those which had prevailed in the age of Hume.

II

In order to begin the appropriation of fifth-century Athens for their own purposes, it was obviously important for Scots to be reasonably familiar with the city and its heritage. This meant having at their disposal not just adequate historical information but the necessary literary and linguistic skills to interpret it, as well as reasonably accurate impressions of a now largely unknown city, stranded on the margins of the European world within the embrace of an alien and often antagonistic Ottoman empire. Expertise in ancient Greek, which the Scottish universities had fitfully encouraged since the sixteenth century (essentially for scriptural purposes), had already been strengthened by the formation of specialist chairs during the first twenty years of the eighteenth century: Blackwell was in fact the outstanding example of this new breed.[26] But Scottish familiarity with Athens, especially with the physical character of ancient Greece itself, lagged far behind that of Rome and Italy, which had long been incorporated into the itineraries of the elite Grand Tour.

Intimate knowledge of the city of Athens itself, its peculiar geography and its visual appearance, only became possible after that momentous day of 17 March 1751, when two young and ambitious English scholars, James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, disembarked at Piraeus. Despite the difficulties which these path-breaking travellers were to encounter from the Turkish authorities, and the prolonged delay in the publication of their work, the appearance of the first volume of their *The antiquities of Athens* (1762) was, as Richard Jenkyns has suggested, nothing less than 'a landmark in the history of taste'.[27] Probably the single most important text for the modern British appreciation of Greece, Stuart's and Revett's *Antiquities* not only stimulated a raging fashion (as they had hoped) for Hellenic architecture, and especially for the hitherto mysterious Doric which, at least in England if not yet in Scotland, began almost immediately to challenge the aesthetic dominance of Palladianism and ornate Rococco. It also provided late eighteenth-century readers and other scholars with their first detailed picture of what remained of classical Athens, allowing Britons for the first time to visualize the city of Solon and Pericles, of Themistocles and Alcibiades, and so to bathe in a rising tide of warmly affectionate and increasingly well-informed Hellenism.

Yet the continuing difficulties in co-opting classical Greek history for use in

[26] Stewart, 'Scottish Greek chairs', pp. 398–9.

[27] Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and ancient Greece* (Oxford, 1980), p. 5; evidence of Scottish eagerness for details of Athenian topography exists for Monday 15 Oct. 1759, when George Ridpath, minister of Stitchill in Berwickshire, 'Read some pieces of Spon's *Travels* [an existing French source], particularly his account of Minerva's Temple in the Athenian Acropolis, which is one of the finest remains of antiquity now extant': *Diary of George Ridpath, 1755–1761*, ed. Sir James Balfour Paul (Edinburgh, 1922), p. 277.

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a modern Scottish or British ideological environment were to be clearly seen in the next decade in the work of William Robertson – not the principal of the University of Edinburgh but his namesake and near-contemporary, the deputy keeper of the Scottish records. The political dangers of the Athenian constitutional experiment, already perceived by his eighteenth-century precursors, had merely increased with the passage of time, obliging Robertson to temper his broadly sympathetic Hellenism with hard-headed circumspection. Indeed, his *History of Greece* (1778), which would reach an eighth edition by 1821, prospered both by daring to tackle the thorny issue of classical Athenian politics and by taking a jaundiced view of the Periclean democracy as a functioning polity.

Dedicating his work to the prince of Wales, Robertson might have appeared initially to side-step the troublesome history of the radically democratic Athenian state, following Blackwell and Anderson in a more diffuse endorsement of Greek civilization as a whole, which, significantly, and an indication of the growing ubiquity of Hellenism, he compared directly with his own society: 'You are to be the Sovereign of a People, who, by their Love of the Sciences and of the Fine Arts, but chiefly by their generous manly independent Spirit, bear a more striking Resemblance to the ancient Inhabitants of Greece, than any other People, as far as I know, now on Earth.'[28] But Robertson was not to be deflected from a critical analysis of fifth-century Athens, whose constitution and political conduct he was determined to show had been deficient. Pericles, for example, 'became so absolute in Athens, that under this republican government he possest a power almost despotic'.[29] Indeed, 'by lavishing the public money in the most profuse and ostentatious manner, Pericles succeeded in seducing the people to his side'.[30] The consequences of this licentious and disorderly political system were as predictable as they were alarming: under the influence of the mob and at the beck and call of unscrupulous demagogues, the Athenians cast off their prudence, self-control, and discipline, they 'disgusted the other states by their haughtiness and insolence', and their terminal decline followed in the Peloponnesian War.[31]

Even stronger reservations about classical Greek politics underpinned another Scottish contribution which followed hot on Robertson's heels. Hailing from Brechin in Forfarshire and educated at the University of Glasgow, John Gillies was a tutor and private scholar who became a corresponding member of the French Institute and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. *The history of Greece* (1786), however, was the masterwork which earned Gillies his appointment as historiographer-royal for Scotland, on the death of principal Robertson in 1793. The public recognition implicit in the appointment of Gillies was richly deserved, for his text had deliberately sought to make the

[28] William Robertson, *The history of ancient Greece, from the earliest times till it became a Roman province* (Edinburgh, 1821 edn), p. v. [29] Ibid., p. 156. [30] Ibid., p. 155.
[31] Ibid., p. 108.

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affairs of ancient Greece, and particularly of fifth-century Athens, directly relevant to late eighteenth-century British experiences.

Gillies was certain that the juxtaposition of ancient and modern would be advantageous, seeing in Greece, and most of all in the age of Pericles, a remote but pertinent anticipation of more recent controversies. This new-found ideological interest in the use of Greek history suffuses the dedication to the 1786 edition (and retained in all later editions), which Gillies, significantly in the light of the central public role he had conceived for his work, effectively trumped Robertson by offering directly to George III himself: 'sir, The History of Greece exposes the dangerous turbulence of Democracy, and arraigns the despotism of Tyrants. By describing the incurable evils inherent in every form of Republican policy, it evinces the inestimable benefits, resulting to Liberty itself, from the lawful dominion of hereditary Kings, and the steady operation of a well-regulated Monarchy.'[32] As Gillies was at pains to make clear, sensitivity to the politics of late Georgian Britain impinged strongly upon his approach to Greek history, as it had on Robertson – in effect, the irrepressible ideological tremors which had contributed to Blackwell's and Anderson's cautious avoidance of classical Athenian history, reinforcing their preference for Roman subjects, had begun to be seen as the single most important reason for engaging with Greece. Indeed, Gillies believed that it would serve to teach the virtues of stability vested in the institution of monarchy. And especially in view of the ultimate downfall of Athens, it strongly implied the contrary dangers of demagoguery and populism. Greece thus carried important cautionary lessons for readers concerned – or tempted – by calls for constitutional reform from the recent Wilkites or the Yorkshire Association Movement, or by America's successful rebellion against the crown.[33]

Gillies was sufficiently keen to seize control of the modern appropriation of classical Athens that he even challenged some of the less controversial aspects of received opinion about fifth-century history. In a passage in a preparatory work which also represents the application to ancient Greece of the theory of unintended consequences for which the historiography of the Scottish Enlightenment has achieved recent celebrity, he argued that the patriotism, the *amor patriae*, for which the Athenians and other contemporary Greeks were famed, was in fact largely illusory.[34] Their political successes, Gillies believed, arose not from public-spirited endeavour by prudent politicians, and certainly not from rational decision-making inspired by disinterested orators. The classical city-states had prospered only as the unforeseen product of men 'with no other object in view in all their civil contests, but private interest and

[32] John Gillies, *The history of Greece* (London, 1825), p. iii.
[33] Turner, 'Why the Greeks', esp. p. 68.
[34] Ronald Hamowy, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the theory of spontaneous order* (Carbondale, IL, 1987).

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ambition'.[35] In other words, with eloquence re-cast as demagoguery and Greek patriotism as a cunningly disguised form of Greek selfishness, the attractions of Athenian democracy to modern Scots and Britons should in Gillies's eyes be greatly reduced.

Shortly after the works of Robertson and Gillies were published, with their explicit warnings to readers who might misinterpret the Periclean legacy and choose republican over monarchical government, not just dramatic political events in Continental Europe but a further scholarly intervention confirmed the ideological direction in which the contemporary Scottish approach to Athenian history – much more inquisitive but also still largely defensive – was now moving. For the outbreak of the French Revolution transformed the political landscape. Within a couple of years, as the revolutionaries grew more ambitious and Britain found itself once again at war with France, calls for domestic constitutional reform, already carped at by Hume in the 1750s and by Gillies more acerbically in the 1780s, took on an even more subversive, unpatriotically Jacobin tinge.[36] It was at this point that Walter Anderson, erstwhile student of Croesus and the oracles and now an elderly churchman, re-entered the fray with a new work, *The philosophy of ancient Greece* (1791). Although largely concerned with Greek intellectual culture, Anderson could no longer resist the temptation to offer an interpretation of the political character of fifth-century Athens, the historical society in which Socrates himself had lived and died.

Anderson was clear that, despite the achievement involved in the victories at Marathon and Plataea, fifth-century Athens had rapidly and inevitably succumbed to a deeper malaise. Socrates' society, he believed, suffered from moral decay as well as from political turbulence. These processes had fatally undermined Athenian efforts in the Peloponnesian War against Sparta – a conflict which, in any case, because of the Athenians' peculiar constitutional arrangements, had been fought both unjustifiably and incompetently: 'From the high prosperity of the republic before the Peloponnesian war, undertaken from vanity, and injudiciously conducted, the way to this general depravation of manners had been paved.'[37] From the time of Pericles' death, moreover, Athenian fortunes had declined still further, to the point where the inherent weaknesses of the democratic form of government had overwhelmed the state: 'the public disorders increased, to that heighth [sic], that both the ties, and the sense, of justice and equity seemed, from the prevalence of faction, and the ferocity engendered by a long war, to be nearly obliterated'.[38] The result, for

[35] John Gillies, *The orations of Lysias and Isocrates* (London, 1778), p. lxxii.

[36] John Brims, 'The Scottish "Jacobins", Scottish nationalism and the British union', in Roger A. Mason, ed., *Scotland and England, 1286–1815* (Edinburgh, 1987), pp. 247–65; Emma Vincent, 'The responses of Scottish churchmen to the French Revolution', *Scottish Historical Review*, 73 (1994), pp. 191–215; H. W. Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution* (Glasgow, 1912); H. T. Dickinson, *British radicalism and the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1985).

[37] Walter Anderson, *The philosophy of ancient Greece* (Edinburgh, 1791), p. 149.

[38] Ibid., p. 149.

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Anderson, was inevitable, and a standing rebuke to those of his contemporaries, among them doubtless the Scottish Association of the Friends of the People, who would import French libertarianism into the stable, prosperous, and powerful polity of late eighteenth-century Britain.[39] Democracy spelt disorder and, for a proud commercial empire, was likely to engender internal dissension and, ultimately, military defeat. So far from recommending participatory politics, fifth-century Athens taught George III's subjects the virtues of their own hierarchical and monarchical constitution.

Robertson, Gillies, and Anderson were not alone in developing such a tendentious, ideologically charged, criticism of classical Athens. In 1794 'a comparison arising from the subject of the republicks of Athens and France' gave John Ogilvie, an elderly Aberdeenshire minister, in his *Religious institutions and principles*, published by Creech in Edinburgh, the perfect opportunity to assail the shameless paganism of Europe's latter-day democrats.[40] And a crucial English source for an effective critique of Periclean Athens was also republished in Edinburgh both in 1808 and in 1832: John Potter's *Archaeologica Graeca*. Very much a man of the Hanoverian middle ground, Potter had been an early eighteenth-century archbishop of Canterbury, both whig in politics and a high churchman suspicious of religious toleration. His picture of classical Greece, redirected to a respectable late Georgian audience increasingly able to decipher the ideological messages encoded in the narrative of fifth-century Athenian history, culminated in the assertion that the Periclean state had been 'a confused ochlocracy, whereby the populace and basest part of the rabble obtained as great a share in the government as persons of the highest birth and quality'.[41] In short, with a choice of words which the Reign of Terror in France had rendered even more chilling than they had seemed when Potter had actually written them, the much-vaunted democratic constitution had been directly responsible for the rise of the Thirty Tyrants, who 'proceeded in their bloody designs with more heat and vigour than before, putting to death all that were possessed of estates, without any form of justice'.[42] Radical democracy, in short, had generated class warfare and violent tyranny.

The works of Robertson, Gillies, and Anderson, not to mention Potter's unexpected Scottish exhumation, mark an unmistakable flowering of interest in the cautionary ideological lessons afforded by Athenian history, which, for Britain as a whole, was to reach its apogee in the great *History of Greece* (1784–1810) written by William Mitford. The latter achieved fame not only for a consummate mastery of Greek history but for his transparent political motives. Himself a tory MP and a vociferous critic of the French Revolution,

[39] John Brims, 'From reformers to "Jacobins": the Scottish association of the friends of the people', in T. M. Devine, ed., *Conflict and stability in Scottish society, 1700–1850* (Edinburgh, 1990), pp. 31–51.

[40] John Ogilvie, *Religious institutions and principles: traced to their origin, and followed in their influence on the most important interests in society* (Edinburgh, 1794), sub-title.

[41] John Potter, *Archaeologica Graeca, or, the antiquities of Greece* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1832), I, p. 18.

[42] Ibid., I, p. 21.

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Mitford was openly unsympathetic to modern republicanism and mass democracy in a British context. These stances produced an account of classical Athens which was plainly hostile, especially in comparison with the sympathetic treatment which Mitford, like Ferguson before him, reserved for the martial heroism and much more restrictive moral and political conditions which he observed in monarchical Sparta.

The wider ideological issues at stake in Mitford's magisterial interpretation of classical Greek history, more strongly drawn here than in Gillies's or Anderson's efforts, must have been perfectly well understood by his late Georgian readers. But to help them, the political options were nicely clarified by Mitford's Scottish colleague, Sir William Drummond of Logie Almond, another tory scholar and Cornish MP. Drummond's timely *A review of the government of Sparta and Athens* (1794), which might almost be read as a contribution to the debate between Burke and Paine over the merits of the French Revolution, explained straightforwardly that those 'who admire the order, the union, and the regularity which reign in monarchy; who think tranquility preferable to a false notion of Liberty' would favour Lycurgus' Spartan constitution, whilst those 'on the other hand, who believe the people to be the best judges of their own happiness; who admire the arts, the eloquence and the philosophy of Athens' would judge Solon's political innovations superior.[43] A less sympathetic whig commentator, Connop Thirlwall, would later complain with justice about the historiographical implications of this ideological dichotomy: 'the attempts, which for the last forty years have been systematically made ... for political and other purposes, to vilify the Athenians'.[44]

Mitford's denigration of fifth-century Athens, and his confident employment of classical Greek history as a warning both against French-style republicanism and against domestic calls for reform, was so compelling that it remained serviceable for conservative-minded authors well beyond the era of the great Reform Act.[45] The Scottish tory historian Sir Archibald Alison, for example, in his *History of Europe from the fall of Napoleon in 1815 to the accession of Louis Napoleon in 1852* (1852–9), could still reflect admiringly on the political relevance of Mitford's study of classical Greece which

> chiefly composed during, or shortly after, the French Revolution ... was mainly intended to counteract the visionary ideas, in regard to the blessings of Grecian democracy, which had spread so far in the world from the magic of Athenian genius. With this view he has brought out a great many most important facts, concealed before amidst the splendours of Grecian eloquence, which the republican party would willingly have buried in oblivion ... the cause of truth has been essentially aided by his

[43] Quoted in Wallace, *Shelley and Greece*, pp. 57–8. Drummond, however, would later follow Hume in venturing into the dialogue form with his *Academical questions* (London, 1805).

[44] Quoted in E. Rawson, *The Spartan tradition in European thought* (Oxford, 1969), p. 357.

[45] On the nineteenth-century career of Hellenic historiography, see Frank M. Turner, *The Greek heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, 1981).

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exertions; and the experiences of the working of democracy in our own times have been such as forbid a doubt as to the accuracy of the facts he has stated.[46]

Alison's thoughts about the modern ideological burden of Greek history, however, were unusual only in their explicitness. Interpretations of fifth-century Athens had indeed from around the time of the French Revolution become even more strongly influenced by individuals' sympathies within contemporary Scottish and British politics.

Tory opinion, which in the days of Blackwell might simply have taken imperial Rome as its natural model, had by 1800 to address the ideological challenge of Athenian democracy and explicitly seek to wrest control of its contemporary implications, as Mitford above all others succeeded in doing. Whigs, once happy to revel in 'the wisdom, the fortitude, the magnanimity, the moderation, the success' of the Roman republic, or perhaps to lose themselves in the blameless by-ways of mythological or epic Greek literature, were increasingly divided as they were forced to take up a position on the much more contentious soil of classical Greece.[47] A radical minority – like Paine – enthusiastically embraced Athens as a timeless symbol of moral freedom and political liberty, where there was 'more to admire, and less to condemn ... than in anything which history affords'.[48] The worried and conformist majority, including that nervous old whig conservative Walter Anderson, found themselves obliged, however incongruously, to mimic the increasingly dominant tory stance, carefully parsing every fragment of historical evidence, seeking to separate the Athenian cultural and military achievement from the insidious political legacy of Pericles.

Scholarship by the 1790s, ably represented by Scotland's Greek historians, was therefore beginning to confront head-on the ideological challenge of classical Athenian history. This might mean selectively embracing some of the less contentious facets of the city's experience under the incomparable Pericles – its cultural richness, its architecture (though it was still to be the 1820s before William Playfair, Thomas Hamilton, C. R. Cockerell, and the 'Greek Revival' movement belatedly triumphed in Adam-dominated Scotland), even its military effectiveness and imperial aggrandisement.[49] Gillies, indeed, could gush that 'During the administration of a single man, more

[46] Sir Archibald Alison, *History of Europe from the fall of Napoleon in 1815 to the accession of Louis Napoleon in 1852* (8 vols., Edinburgh and London, 1852–9), I, pp. 473–4; Michael Michie, *An Enlightenment tory in Victorian Scotland: the career of Sir Archibald Alison* (East Linton, 1998).

[47] The whiggish sentiments on senatorial Rome belong to James Boswell's friend and correspondent William Temple, minister of Mamhead in Devon, in a letter to the Scot dated 26 Apr. 1771: *The correspondence of James Boswell and William Johnson Temple 1756–1796*, I: *1756–1777*, ed. Thomas Crawford (Edinburgh, New Haven, and London, 1997), p. 85.

[48] Thomas Paine, *Rights of man*, ed. Henry Collins (Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 199.

[49] On the slow emergence of the 'Greek Revival' north of the Border, a surprisingly threadbare historiography is led by the Scottish Georgian Society's edited collection *Scottish pioneers of the Greek revival* (Edinburgh, 1984). Also useful are the relevant parts of J. Mordaunt Crook, *The Greek revival: neo-classical attitudes in British architecture, 1760–1870* (London, 1972).

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works of elegance and splendour, more magnificent temples, theatres and porticoes were erected within the walls of Athens, than could be raised during many centuries by Rome'.[50] And his further praise for the 'mighty mass of empire' acquired by such 'a scanty population and diminutive territory', within a country which itself 'hardly equalled the extent of Scotland', could hardly have been better formulated by a future historiographer-royal to encourage flattering comparisons with the successful admission of Scotland's own elite, assisted by Henry Dundas's patronage, to the rich pickings of Britain's overseas empire.[51]

Yet uncertainty over the moral licentiousness of fifth-century Athens and concerns about the radically democratic political practices introduced by Pericles, which had always made classical Greek history somewhat awkward for eighteenth-century British commentators to handle, had if anything only intensified by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Domestic controversies over reform, the outbreak and alarming radicalization of the French Revolution, the onset of seemingly interminable European wars in which these conflicting ideological perspectives were at issue, and the strongly reactionary British official response to these developments, in most cases forbad glib admiration of Athens. Given these unpropitious circumstances, it is, to say the least, surprising that in Edinburgh by the early 1820s, a city where the tory political establishment was conservative in complexion and the literary classes were largely conformist by instinct, there should have emerged such a serious attachment to the cult of Athenianism. Yet this is precisely what happened.

III

Part of the explanation for this seemingly contradictory development lies in the other contemporary factors pushing Greece towards the centre of public consciousness. British cultural Hellenism was not only being further undercut from the 1780s by an increased nervousness about Periclean democracy. It was also being simultaneously enhanced and renewed during the early years of the nineteenth century with the formation of modern political Hellenophilia. Democratic republicanism usually remained anathema. But other aspects of the Greek heritage could receive unqualified praise. It had become possible, as we have seen, to admire Athenian commerce and imperialism, or to enthuse sincerely about the efficacy of Athenian *amor patriae*. Safe endorsements of uncontroversial values on which recent Scottish successes also appeared to rest provided a firm foundation upon which more elaborate – and potentially more precarious – forms of modern Athenianism could also begin to perch.

Britain's international pre-eminence after Waterloo, a military achievement in which the Scots had fully – indeed disproportionately – shared, tended in

[50] Gillies, History, p. 133.

[51] Ibid., p. 132; Michael Fry, *The Dundas despotism* (Edinburgh, 1992); David J. Brown, 'The government of Scotland under Henry Dundas and William Pitt', *History*, 83 (1998), pp. 265–79.

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particular to encourage closer identification with the golden age of Athens after Plataea.[52] As Mudie subsequently put it (though he was, of course, trading on the ideological ironies implicit in the comparison), 'Lord Melville was the express image of Pericles.'[53] As a result, many educated Britons, their ardour increased by familiarity with Stuart's *Antiquities* and the rash of Greek histories now available, found it impossible after 1815 not to lend their support to the developing struggle for modern Greek independence – a glorious cause for which not only radicals like Shelley but impeccably establishmentarian members of the British elite, including foreign secretaries and admirals, could honourably strive. Indeed, political Hellenophilia of this practical sort, the result of a potent fusing of high-minded liberal idealism and instinctive Christian fellow-feeling, cut so far across domestic ideological boundaries and developed such a formidable momentum of its own by the early 1820s that it also forced a continuing reappraisal, not least in late Georgian Scotland, of conventional attitudes towards Greek antiquity.

Political Hellenophilia thus reinforced, as it also derived vital sustenance from, perceived convergence between British and Greek experiences. And this was occurring precisely as Scottish knowledge of Greece, both ancient and modern, was achieving new intimacy. Increasing numbers were following in Stuart's footsteps, including the Edinburgh artist Hugh William Williams, whose popular *Travels in Italy, Greece and the Ionian islands* (1820), published by Constable, comprised a collection of letters to Rev. John Thomson of Duddingston and the advocate George Thomson (both men, with Williams, also being close friends of Jeffrey and Scott).[54] Williams himself offered striking direct comparisons between Scotland and Greece, further cementing the putative connection between the two peoples – beginning with the idiosyncratic (though not unreasonable) observation that Stirling, rather than Edinburgh, was the more obvious resemblance: 'Both Mr D. and myself concurred in thinking that there is a considerable likeness between Athens and Stirling, as seen from the sacred way. Athens has her castle (Acropolis) seated high. Hymettus is like the Ochill Hills, Anchemus and Brisselus answer to Craigforth and Abbey Craig.'[55] Even so, Williams found the comparison with Scotland's capital obligatory, adding that 'From every other point, it bears a striking resemblance to Edinburgh, especially as seen from the Braid and Ravelston Hills.'

Later, on departing from Piraeus, Williams wrote again to George Thomson, appealing more directly to a patriotic affinity with their own capital city: 'Both my friend and I agreed that this distant view of Athens from the sea is extremely

[52] J. E. Cookson, 'The Napoleonic Wars, military Scotland and tory highlandism in the early nineteenth century', *Scottish Historical Review*, 78 (1999), pp. 60–75.

[53] Mudie, *Modern Athens*, p. 126.

[54] John Gibson Lockhart, *Peter's letters to his kinsfolk*, ed. William Ruddick (Edinburgh, 1977), pp. 123–5.

[55] Hugh William Williams, *Travels in Italy, Greece and the Ionian islands in a series of letters, descriptive of manners, society, and the fine arts* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1820), II, p. 289n.

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like that of Edinburgh from the Firth of Forth, though certainly the latter is considerably superior.'[56] Such sentiments support Cockburn's later judgement that it was 'about this time that the foolish phrase, "The Modern Athens", began to be applied to the capital of Scotland ... a comparison of the physical features of the two places'; and they make good sense of the claim that it was Williams himself who coined for the city the breezy soubriquet 'Athens of the North'.[57] Moreover, that Williams's friends were now almost as comfortable with the Greek city as with their own could safely be assumed: its topography, the exact sites, proportions and decorations of its ancient ruins, needed no description when one could 'find them all in Stuart's Athens'.[58] Instead this was an invitation to engage imaginatively with the Athenians. What Williams and others retailed was an opportunity to immerse oneself in Hellenism, to follow the author nostalgically around the crumbling vestiges of Greek civilization and contrast them with the resplendent glories which had dignified the city in Pericles' time. Presented in this way, and employing a melancholy sentimentalism so as to reinforce the reader's emotional identification with the oppressed birthplace of Western civilization, political Hellenophilia – 'We are all Greeks', wrote an exuberant Shelley – was merely the logical next step: how could the inhabitants of modern Edinburgh not wish for the recovery of the lost freedom and independence of their Christian brethren in the modern Athens?[59]

The consequences of this literal close encounter with the remains of classical Athens, albeit acquired vicariously through the works of authors like Stuart and Williams, were profound. The magnetic attraction of Hellenism led some Scots to make their own pilgrimage to Greece, not only to look and admire but, like the now-controversial Thomas Bruce, seventh earl of Elgin and eleventh earl of Kincardine, between 1799 and 1803, to repatriate the material remains of antiquity from out of the grasp of the Ottoman infidel to a safe and appropriate modern home – which, to those transfixed by the comparisons with ancient Greece, seemed assuredly to be Britain.[60] Out-and-out Hellenophiles, like that dissolute nobleman from Aberdeenshire, George Gordon, sixth Lord Byron, set off intending to fight and die on hallowed ground – acting on plangent appeals to their sense of duty which increasingly inflamed the Scottish public.[61]

[56] Ibid., II, p. 384.

[57] Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of his time* (Edinburgh, 1856), p. 288; Crook, *Greek revival*, p. 104.

[58] Williams, *Travels*, II, p. 297.

[59] Wallace, *Shelley and Greece*, p. 53.

[60] D. Constantine, *Early Greek travellers and the Hellenic ideal* (Cambridge, 1984); W. St Clair, *Lord Elgin and the marbles* (Oxford, 1967); N. Heringman, '"Stones so wonderous cheap": the aesthetic value of the Elgin marbles in the romantic period', *Studies in Romanticism*, 37 (1998), pp. 43–62. Elgin's Hellenism almost gave rise to Scotland's finest early Grecian architecture, the earl commissioning no fewer than thirteen different plans by 1828 for his property at Broomhall near Dunfermline in Fife, one of them from Cockerell, the designer of the Edinburgh Parthenon, but most of them never executed: *The buildings of Scotland: Fife*, ed. John Gifford (Harmondsworth, 1992 edn), pp. 46, 102–4.

[61] E.g. *Address on behalf of the Greeks, especially those who have survived the late massacre in Scio* (Edinburgh, 1822). The importance of Hellenophilia among Britain's radicalized Romantic poets

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More widely, the still-immovable object of anti-Periclean ideological resistance confronted the irresistible force which was the desire for Greek independence and the accompanying craze for all things Hellenic, the contemporary political meaning of Athenianism as a result coming to seem less precisely defined for modern Britons than ever before. In such difficult conditions, the decision to commemorate victory in the Napoleonic Wars by recreating the Athenian Parthenon on Calton Hill in Edinburgh, instead of pursuing the original and much less problematical scheme for a Roman Pantheon, appears to have been very brave indeed.[62] For widespread doubts about the symbolism of the national monument ultimately ensured that the plan for a 'Scottish Acropolis' (by a nice coincidence its designer, Cockerell, was at that very time also sketching a proposed Grecian modification to Elgin's country house in Fife) would emerge as a historic cultural miscalculation by important sections of Scotland's elite.[63]

Almost no totem could have been more appropriate for Scottish society in the years after Waterloo than this Doric edifice for which the foundation stone was finally laid by George IV himself on 27 October 1822; yet none could have been more ambiguous in its contemporary semiotic function. That this remained the case is clearly seen in the essay *On the national character of the Athenians* (1828), published in Edinburgh by John Brown Patterson, a student at the university, in the years during the monument's fitful construction under the overall stewardship of Playfair, one of Hugh Williams's friends.[64] Patterson's discourse was printed, and a prize of 100 guineas awarded, under the terms of a competition for an essay of this title set by the recent Royal

is well known, and has been discussed in many studies, including Wallace, *Shelley and Greece*; *M. Aske*, *Keats and Hellenism* (Cambridge, 1985); F. E. Pierce, 'The Hellenic current in English nineteenth-century poets', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 16 (1917), pp. 103–35.

[62] The surviving records of the project reveal that a major edifice of some sort was central to the early discussions about a post-war national monument. A Roman Pantheon, incorporating a church, was the first substantive neo-classical design concept, favourably discussed at the general meeting of subscribers and supporters on 24 Feb. 1819. By July the following year, however, the Pantheon had metamorphosed into a Parthenon: the growing popularity of the latter idea with some, and their making their promises of financial aid strictly conditional upon its implementation, appears to have forced the hand of the majority of subscribers by 18 June 1821, when a recreation of the Athenian temple was formally endorsed at a further meeting in Edinburgh. See 'National monument: minute books 1816–1864', 2 vols., Edinburgh City Archives, SL103/1/1: vol. I, esp. pp. 26, 35–6, 38, 45, 47, 49; also *National monument of Scotland: list of subscribers* (n.p., n.d.), clearly from around 1820 and almost certainly printed in Edinburgh, which lists 290 subscribers, many of the names bearing the significant rider that their pledge was dependent upon the Parthenon idea being implemented.

[63] Ian Gow, 'C. R. Cockerell's designs for the northern Athenian Parthenon', *Journal of the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland*, 16 (1989), pp. 20–5.

[64] The friendship between artist and architect was significant, for because Playfair had never visited Greece (or, for that matter, even Italy at this stage), it was from Williams's works, as well as Cockerell's professional advice, that his impressions of the original Parthenon seem to have come: *Scottish pioneers*, pp. 44–9.

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Commission for Visiting the Universities and Colleges of Scotland: that the commissioners considered this title peculiarly apposite for an Edinburgh undergraduate essay competition shows how far the city's modern character was now assumed, even by outsiders, to be wrapped up in that of classical Athens. Patterson's success in securing the prize, however, arose not only from the fact that his thoughts on the fifth-century Athenians managed to play upon all of the Hellenic and Hellenophiliac sensitivities current in Scotland by the 1820s. He was also quite unable to disguise the continuing ideological problems involved in any act of homage paid to the Periclean state.

'A modern city', Patterson reflected, with one eye obviously on Edinburgh itself, 'if distinguished by the beauty of its situation, by elegance of structure, or by literary refinement, straightaway assumes the title of the Modern Athens.'[65] It was also, of course, 'animating to behold the enlightened nations, with Britain at their head, awake to the generous impulse, and, by spreading the shield of their protection over the reviving liberties of Greece, repaying, as far as that may be, the debt which they owe'.[66] Yet the fifth-century constitution remained problematical, something to be approached with due circumspection even by the modern Hellenophile. This period had seen 'the establishment of an unlimited and despotical ochlocracy', cautioned Patterson, seeming to echo Potter's recently republished sentiments: it had seen 'the union of all the powers of government in the hands of the sovereign populace; or, in two words, a democratical tyranny'.[67] There had therefore followed the city's fateful decline, the consequence of 'the inebriations of absolute power at home, and continued victory abroad'.[68]

Yet Patterson's ability to balance these contradictory elements in the contemporary Scottish response to classical Athens was helped by a preparedness to follow his own whiggish instincts. Expressed with due tact, Patterson's attitude towards the ideological ramifications of the Periclean state was clearly less cautious – and his admiration for Athenianism therefore less qualified – than his more conservative countrymen. Indeed, he suggested that although

> the introduction of pure democracy was certainly a loss; but, in another respect, that is, in reference to all that for which Athens now is remarkable in the eyes of men ..., it is the greatest of blessings. It is only in a democracy that all the genius of a country becomes public property, and is brought into activity for public ends.[69]

Patterson's apparent comfort with modern Athenianism, arising out of a politics which rendered him susceptible to the charms of the Periclean heritage, was in fact symptomatic of the extent to which ideological sympathies continued to determine responses to classical Greece. This was nowhere better seen than in the heated controversy over the national monument fought out in

[65] John Brown Patterson, *On the national character of the Athenians and the causes of those peculiarities by which it was distinguished* (Edinburgh, 1828), pp. 56–7.
[66] Ibid., p. 151.
[67] Ibid., pp. 50–1.
[68] Ibid., p. 64.
[69] Ibid., p. 69.

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the reviews, whose own emphatic political preferences, though not always in predictable ways, helped generate sharply opposing responses to the Calton Hill venture.[70]

A crucial stimulus to the dispute was the appearance in 1822 of *An inquiry into the principles of beauty in Grecian art*. Published in London, it was the work of George Gordon, fourth earl of Aberdeen, a young Scottish tory aristocrat who was one of many who found it possible to combine avid cultural Hellenism and sincere political Hellenophilia with a conservative domestic agenda: indeed, as a Peelite, Aberdeen would become prime minister of the United Kingdom in the 1850s. Yet his scholarship in the early 1820s caused problems for his native capital by failing to applaud the proposal for a replica Parthenon on Calton Hill. Although in general terms an enthusiastic admirer of Greek civilization and its architectural expression, Aberdeen's work led to early doubts being cast on the wisdom of the scheme, explicitly because the Doric would be anomalous in a vernacular Scottish townscape but also because its unspoken ideological implications would thereby receive stark and permanent articulation on the city's skyline.

These concerns were taken up and widely publicized in an essay published in London in the *Quarterly Review* of that year, which doubted whether the projected edifice could ever be truly 'national'. This staunchly tory journal savaged the aesthetic disjunction involved in grafting an eye-catching Grecian Acropolis on to an unmistakably Gothic urban core – of which the reviewers were, it was implied, not unfond. Indeed, if the plan ever came to fruition, it appeared that 'we must begin by blotting out every memorial of Scottish antiquity, power, independence, or piety by which the "Doric Temple" is surrounded'.[71] These aesthetic points, however, were governed by underlying ideological reservations. It would be 'a Grecian national monument, and not a monument of Scotland in the reign of George IV', and thus a further diminution of Scotland's heritage at a time when local tory commentators (most famously Edinburgh's own Scott in *Letters of Malachi Malagrowther*) already feared the sapping influence of anglicization and modernization urged on Scotland's universities, Scotland's legal system, Scotland's electoral franchise, even Scotland's bank notes, by advanced whig opinion.[72] The national

[70] John McCaffrey, *Scotland in the nineteenth century* (London, 1998), pp. 20–3; Wallace, *Shelley and Greece*, pp. 53–6.

[71] *Quarterly Review*, 54 (1822), p. 330. Revealing a critical divergence between the Scottish and London wings of intellectual toryism, at least under Gifford's editorship and before Lockhart succeeded him in 1826, see the latter's accusation of 'improper prejudices against the Scottish' behind some essays in the journal: *Peter's letters*, pp. 176–7. On the reviews, see Joanne Shattock, *Politics and the reviewers: the* Edinburgh *and the* Quarterly *in the early Victorian age* (Leicester, 1989); Biancamaria Fontana, *Rethinking the politics of commercial society: the Edinburgh Review, 1802–1832* (Cambridge, 1985); Hill Shine and Helen Shine, *The Quarterly Review under Gifford, 1809–1824* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1949).

[72] *Quarterly*, p. 328; G. E. Davie, *The democratic intellect: Scotland and her universities in the nineteenth century* (Edinburgh, 1961); Nicholas Phillipson, *The Scottish whigs and the reform of the court of session, 1785–1830* (Edinburgh, 1990), esp. pp. 165–73.

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monument was therefore not well calculated to win unanimous support from British toryism as a whole, in effect alienating some of those who might have been expected to form the natural constituency for this most bombastic of patriotic enterprises.

At the same time, the whiggish *Edinburgh Review* emerged as the principal literary defender of Scotland's projected Acropolis. Like Patterson in his subsequent dissertation, reviewers like Francis Jeffrey (a key subscriber to the scheme) not only were drawn to the scheme by local pride but also found the Periclean echoes one of its more appealing aspects. Civic loyalty predisposed the *Edinburgh* to dismiss the concerns registered in the *Quarterly* and in Aberdeen's study of Greek architecture, which it pointedly reviewed in 1823. The unique appositeness of the Calton Hill site for an explicit reconstruction of the Parthenon was strongly attested, the *Edinburgh* referring its readers to the resemblance, now obvious to everyone in the light of Stuart's familiar engravings, between ancient Athens and late Georgian Edinburgh: 'Alone, of all the European capitals', it boasted (apparently ignorant, for example, of Prague's situation), 'this city contains a rocky eminence, precisely similar to that on which the Parthenon stands.'[73] This claim was in fact integral to the scheme's attraction to its Scottish proponents, the *Edinburgh*'s observations merely recapitulating an argument heard from the monument's promoters in the previous year, when they had requested parliamentary funding not least on the grounds that 'the vicinity of Edinburgh not only affords the best materials, but perhaps the most favorable [sic] site in Europe'.[74]

But the *Edinburgh* also rested its case on unmistakable ideological foundations, deferring to the whig critique of Scottish history developed by scholars like principal Robertson in the hey-day of the Scottish Enlightenment by arguing that post-Union, Hanoverian, Scotland, in entering an age of commerce and politeness, had left behind its feudal and Gothic past. It was

> a total mistake to imagine, that Edinburgh is a Gothic town, or that it still retains the feudal character which it once bore. That character has totally changed since Scotland became a part of the United Kingdom; and the same revolution in its laws and government, which levelled the pride of its feudal nobility, has changed the aspect of its metropolis.[75]

Whilst not strictly true (for even in the most expansive period of New Town development, the wider city of Edinburgh still derived inspiration from vernacular traditions), this claim gestured plainly at a further reason why, for Scotland's whigs at least, fifth-century Athens held such powerful fascination. Committed to the progressive modernization of their country, local sophisticates like Jeffrey and Henry Cockburn saw the Calton Hill development less as

[73] *Edinburgh Review*, 75 (1823), p. 133.

[74] 'Statement relative to the national monument of Scotland, London, 29th March 1822', Edinburgh City Archives, SL 103/2/50, p. 2.

[75] *Edinburgh Review*, p. 140; for Robertson's anti-feudalism, see Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's past*, pp. 180–4.

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a symbol of a remote Hellenic past than as concrete reinforcement of the irresistible drive towards improvement in the Scottish and British present – hence the insinuation, so offensive to the *Quarterly* which had correctly interpreted it, that the importation of classical Greek architecture, the mimicry of the Acropolis with its irrepressible Periclean resonances, would confirm Edinburgh's and Scotland's belated entry into the modern era.

Whilst the great reviews of late Georgian Britain locked horns explicitly over aesthetics but implicitly over the deeper meaning of the Scottish Parthenon, the project itself, under Playfair's overall direction, descended into farce. Serious work on the edifice was delayed until 1826. By 1830 the building, with only £16,000 of the necessary £42,000 raised, had stopped for good. This sad *denouement* had, of course, been made more likely by the prevailing atmosphere of intellectual dissension to which the rival journals had so richly contributed. But it was also the consequence of mutual misunderstanding between those promoting the scheme and other influential sections of the Scottish public at whom the proposal had been pitched. As George Cleghorn admitted in *The restoration of the Parthenon of Athens as the national monument of Scotland* (1846), the original launching of the project had been clumsy and at cross-purposes. Casting around for a scheme to commemorate Scotland's contribution to Britain's triumph over France, it had 'occurred to a few public-spirited individuals, of more refined taste, that a restoration of the Parthenon of Athens would be the most eligible; and that the Calton Hill, from its resemblance to the Acropolis of Athens, should be the chosen site'.[76] In other words, the plan for a Doric temple, whose precise origins are in any case unclear, had been allowed to seem the choice of a narrow cabal with essentially alien aesthetic preferences, a fact which had helped bring the national monument under sustained attack from other quarters.

Presbyterians in particular were unhappy that the Scots' heroic role in Bonaparte's defeat might be marked by the reconstruction of a pagan temple on a prominent site overlooking the capital city, and this without the accompanying structure 'destined to the purpose of Divine worship' which they had at first hoped for.[77] In other words, an important constituency had soon been alienated by yet another problematical facet of classical Athenianism to which the promoters, infatuated with the Hellenic symbolism of national glory and cultural sophistication, had scarely given a second thought. Local opposition to the scheme, which usually came more from the whig standpoint – not the secular cosmopolitanism of the intellectuals' *Edinburgh Review* but the earnest, prurient piety of the evangelicals and dissenters, as well as genuine ideological radicals, who formed the bedrock of popular whiggery in Scotland – was also whipped up by the prominence of certain tory politicians

[76] George Cleghorn, *The restoration of the Parthenon of Athens as the national monument of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1846), p. 2.

[77] *Report of the proceedings of a … meeting … on 24th February, 1819 … with a view to the erection of a national monument in the metropolis of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1819), p. 11.

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and anti-reform conservatives among the promoters. Scott, for example, was an enthusiastic supporter, as were 'a large portion of the peerage, aristocracy, and professional classes of Scotland' – among them Scott's kinsman the duke of Buccleuch, the duke of Atholl as chairman of the subscribers' committee, and, though obviously no Caledonian himself, the politically symbolic Wellington, whose equestrian statue now stands almost in the shadow of Calton Hill.[78] Willing to overlook the Periclean connotations, or perhaps just unable to decode the progressive symbolism with the cool detachment mustered by the *Quarterly*'s sceptics, influential sections of the tory elite, motivated by pride in Scotland's recent achievements and intent on basking in the cultural and imperial glory that was Greece, had backed the Edinburgh Parthenon to the hilt, tainting it by association with their own political interest. Unhelpful signals about the real meaning and ownership of the scheme – to different groups it had contrived to appear simultaneously godless, elitist, oppressive, and triumphalist – had thus been given from the outset.

The project's ambiguous symbolism in fact proved fatal, as, in retrospect, ought to have been anticipated. After all, at a meeting of subscribers as early as 1821 the secretary had reported on these confused and conflicting public perceptions: of the sum so far raised, 'part had been subscribed for a Monument in general, a considerable proportion under the impression that the Monument was to be combined with a Church, and part on Condition of the Monument being the Parthenon of Athens'.[79] Such uncertainties inevitably ensured that popular support would remain inadequate; parliamentary subvention (the small matter of £10,000 had been requested by the subscribers) was also denied. Despite Cleghorn's later protestation that the national monument had really enjoyed the support of 'men of all ranks – of all political parties – of all religious persuasions' (which was technically true, even if the multiple meanings of Athenianism had made its appeal not only genuinely ubiquitous but also incurably problematic), the Parthenon was to complete its ungracious decline from being the putative pride of north Britain to what it remains today, twelve neglected Doric columns of Craigleith white stone glowering down upon Princes Street, 'Edinburgh's Folly' and 'Scotland's Disgrace'.[80] What was worse, the mismanagement and humiliating failure of

[78] Cleghorn, *Restoration*, p. 9; for the signatories, see *Edinburgh 24th January 1822. The undersigned, being the sub-committee appointed by a general committee of subscribers at Edinburgh, for carrying into execution the design of erecting a national monument in Scotland* ([Edinburgh], 1822); for background, W. T. Fyfe, *Edinburgh under Sir Walter Scott* (London, 1906), pp. 264–5; A. J. Youngson, *The making of classical Edinburgh: 1750–1840* (Edinburgh, 1966), pp. 159–60. A useful if tendentious and rather depressing account of the whole project from inception to ignominy is in the *Report of the directors to the annual general meeting … of contributors to the national monument of Scotland, 18th June 1847* (Edinburgh, 1847).

[79] 'National monument: minute books 1816–1864', vol. I, p.49.

[80] Cleghorn, *Restoration*, p. 9; Sandy Mullay, *The Edinburgh encyclopaedia* (Edinburgh and London, 1996), p. 144; *The new Shell guide to Scotland*, ed. D. L. Macnie and M. McLaren (London, 1978 edn), p. 133. The claim that the monument was the work of the whole nation was an important part of its early appeal, the initial proposal noting that the promoting committee was 'composed indiscriminately of Noblemen and Gentlemen of both Parties in the State':

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the development, rather than adding visible lustre to the town council and to Scotland's patrician elite, simply tainted them with incompetence, with political as well as financial bankruptcy.

Unexpectedly – and certainly in a way which the civic pride and Periclean sympathies of Edinburgh's own whig intellectuals had prevented them from either foreseeing or desiring – the skeletal Parthenon of the modern Athens was by the middle of the 1820s emerging as a potent symbol for other anti-tory groupings who believed that Scotland, and perhaps Britain too, was in need of urgent reform.

IV

This, then, was the complex situation in which Robert Mudie's *The modern Athens* actually burst upon the literary scene, with its extended parody of the Hellenic affectations of late Georgian Edinburgh which, in truth, both whig and tory Scots had for many decades been slowly embroidering.[81] Yet that Mudie's primary interest in Athenianism lay in what he regarded as its utility for a selective attack on toryism is evident, not least from a second work which he published in London in 1825. *Attic fragments, of characters, customs, opinions, and scenes* made explicit connections between recent political history and the pretentious Athenianism of Edinburgh to which his title alluded. The reign of George III, Mudie suggested, had been marked by an increasing attack by the British government on the rights and liberties of its subjects, as the incitement offered to the American colonists had above all demonstrated.[82] These reactionary trends had become even more pronounced since the French Revolution, the British government contracting a particular 'jealousy of the people'.[83]

The modern Athens, a much more coherent attack on Edinburgh conceit, took this political analysis as its starting-point, presenting Athenianism not only as a piece of civic self-delusion but, more specifically, as the play-thing of a narrow, authoritarian, and corrupt tory hegemony. As should now be clear, this was unfair. Edinburgh's tories had certainly been an important influence behind the stalling Calton Hill scheme – indeed, none other than Robert Dundas, Lord Arniston, a scion of Scotland's principal tory dynasty, is usually accorded the dubious honour of having first suggested the building of a national monument.[84] But the local whig intelligentsia, led by Jeffrey, had been scarcely less implicated, and, as the *Edinburgh Review*'s enthusiasm shows,

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'Memoranda of measures ... relative to the proposed national monument for Scotland', Edinburgh City Archives, SL 103/2/10, p. 1.

[81] Mudie's authorship of *The modern Athens* has not been universally accepted. However, the very obvious ideological burden of the text betrays the errors in Kenneth Gordon Lowe's study *The modern Athens* (*Sir Walter Scott's satire on Edina*); *or, the lurid story of the forgeries of two works by the* '*great unknown*' (Dundee, 1935).

[82] Robert Mudie, *Attic fragments, of characters, customs, opinions, and scenes* (London, 1825), p. 80.

[83] Ibid., p. 83.

[84] Cookson, 'Napoleonic Wars', p. 74n.

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from a relatively early stage. Moreover, Athenianism of various kinds had been under construction by Scots of all persuasions for nearly a century: Hume had ventured some daring early comparisons between modern Britain and the city of Pericles, whilst later, from conservative tory scholars like Gillies, Drummond, and Robertson, with one eye firmly on Scotland's own development, there had been praise of Athenian commerce, conquest, and civilization alongside wariness of the city's political legacy.

Mudie, however, had no time for the nuances of the Scots' evolving engagement with classical Greek history through the age of Enlightenment, preferring instead distorting generalizations which would add power to his denunciation of toryism and of the Scottish political system. The embarrassing hiatus in the development of the national monument, he insisted, was simply the humiliation of a reactionary clique. The Parthenon was a confidence-trick by a desperate and increasingly isolated cabal, conceived simply 'either to win the hearts or dazzle the eyes of their countrymen'.[85] Indeed, the economic problems of the early 1820s and intense unpopularity of Liverpool's government in Scotland had specifically motivated the initial decision: 'The time was well-chosen. It was in the very depth of those clouds which, arising immediately from the sufferings of the people, and remotely, as was supposed, from the wasteful expenditure and unaccommodating pride of the Administration, were threatening to burst upon both ends of the island.'[86] But Mudie also protested that 'a very large proportion of the leading men of Scotland, and of the Athens, joined the people in being whigs'.[87] It was thus the contrast between the sham Athenianism of the national monument and the reality of the tories' illiberal politics and partisan manipulation of Edinburgh's cultural and political life, denying the large majority their right to participate, which lent real edge to his satire.

On the one hand the tories, above all Scott, had stage-managed the recent visit of George IV, fawning sycophantically before 'that mightiest marvel of human nature – a king'.[88] In clothing themselves in a misleading Athenianism, moreover, they had to take great care to emphasize the cultural, philosophical, and architectural dimensions of modern Edinburgh rather than the constitutional arrangements of the city which fell so obviously short of the Periclean model: 'The Modern Athens holds herself up to the world as a sort of concentrated tincture or spirit of all that is fine or feeling in the country, – as being the throne of learning – the chosen seat of sentiment and song.'[89] Meanwhile, as Mudie correctly perceived the selectivity of tory Athenianism, he also mocked its sheer dishonesty. In *Attic fragments*, for example, he wickedly caricatured the supposed status of Edinburgh, from Hume to Dugald Stewart, as the incomparable home of free thought: 'It is impossible to be in Edinburgh without philosophizing, – aye, without having a theory to one's self, or living a

[85] Mudie, *Modern Athens*, pp. 125–6. [86] Ibid., p. 126. [87] Ibid., p. 125.
[88] Ibid., p. 5; John Prebble, *The king's jaunt: George IV in Scotland, 1822* (London, 1988).
[89] Mudie, *Modern Athens*, p. 31.

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sceptic of all theories whatever.'[90] This was the city in which every person was taught to believe 'Lord Macconachie was even more than Plato.'[91]

Yet on the other hand, Mudie was able to turn the Athenian vogue to his own advantage, strengthening his critique of the tory government and of Scotland's political arrangements by contrasting them with Pericles' democratic ideal. He was scathing about the electoral system, arguing that most Scots 'have no political rights at all'.[92] Indeed, as a glance at the situation in the surrounding Attic countryside would confirm, 'a Scotch county representation is substantially no representation at all'.[93] Those who watched over and profited from this restrictive, non-participatory constitution, the 'Athenian tories', were 'perhaps the most place-devoted race in the British dominions. Office is their God.'[94] Patronage, the means by which Henry Dundas had helped the Scottish elite surpass even the Athenians in their imperial acquisitions, was another obvious target. The necessary lubrication of a crude and antiquated political machinery, it had even destroyed the former eminence of the University of Edinburgh which, he argued, 'pressed down by the general circumstances of the Athens, and yet more by the peculiar circumstances of its own patronage, has sunk to rise no more'.[95]

Robert Mudie, then, was ultimately no less exploitative of complex Athenian symbolism than his many recent Scottish predecessors. This was appropriate, for not only did Mudie share with Blackwell, Hume, Gillies, or Robertson an interest in Greek history which was redoubled by its widely recognized ideological implications. He too was a true-born Scot, metaphorically the 'Modern Greek' of his sub-title – a fact which goes even further towards explaining the effort lavished on this elaborate parody. Like Gillies he was from Forfarshire and had worked as a schoolmaster. The politically formative experience of his life, however, had come when, as a member of Dundee's town council, he became passionately embroiled in the unsuccessful local campaign for burgh reform.[96] He had then headed for London and involvement in metropolitan radical circles and journalism. When, as the *Morning Chronicle*'s correspondent, he finally returned to Scotland to cover the visit of George IV, the seeds of *The modern Athens* had long since been sown. Mudie was determined to wreak his revenge on his tory tormentors. As a Dundonian exile in the south, he was unable to share the enthusiasm of Jeffrey and the Edinburgh whigs for a replica Parthenon which symbolized, as a recent historian has quipped, 'nobody knows what'.[97] And he recognized that, by playing on its unresolved ambiguities, it was possible to exploit to devastating effect the *ersatz* Hellenism in which elements of the Scottish elite had managed so unwisely to entangle themselves.

[90] Mudie, *Attic fragments*, p. 98. [91] Mudie, *Modern Athens*, p. 129.
[92] Ibid., p. 168. [93] Ibid., p. 169. [94] Ibid., p. 182. [95] Ibid., p. 210.
[96] On burgh reform, see McCaffrey, *Scotland*, p. 24. [97] Young, *Edinburgh*, p. 37.

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