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EDINBURGH AS ATHENS:  
NEW EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT A  
TOPOGRAPHICAL AND INTELLECTUAL IDEA  
CURRENT IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

Iain Gordon Brown

Between 1816 and 1818, HMS *Myrmidon*, a sixth-rate frigate under the command of Captain Robert Gambier RN, was deployed in the eastern Mediterranean. The vessel visited various ports around the littoral, and her ship's company came to know the famous cities and archaeological sites of Egypt, the Levant, the Aegean and Ionian islands, and of mainland Greece. Serving in her as Assistant Surgeon was George Sibbald, from Edinburgh, who kept a journal of his travels – or at any rate notes on what he had seen. On his return to Britain, he worked this record up in more complete form, giving the narrative of his voyage the dress of a would-be guide to the histories and antiquities of the countries he had explored, mixed with an account of the social customs and manners of the disparate peoples of the region.<sup>1</sup>

Sibbald's manuscript, entitled 'Observations on Egypt, Syria and Greece', is now in the National Library of Scotland.<sup>2</sup> Doubtless the result of much labour over the years after the end of his cruise in the *Myrmidon*, Sibbald's account was evidently intended for publication. The author, however, either failed to maintain his resolution in this regard, or was dissuaded from attempting to take his project to printed completion. Indeed it is hard to imagine that his narrative would ever actually have become a published book, certainly as a commercial as distinct from a private venture. Sibbald (probably little more than a naval sawbones, with a comparatively limited medical training) was neither an especially well-educated man, nor one blessed with great descriptive or analytical powers, and no amount of self-conscious classical reference or transfusion of English literary

quotation can really mask these facts. The text smells rather of the wardroom lamp, and the work is, on the whole, derivative, dependent on contemporary travel literature and standard classical sources. In short it is worthily pedestrian, and relatively unoriginal – except in one particular. George Sibbald launched into a laboured but nonetheless remarkable comparison of the topography of Athens with that of his native Edinburgh. Certain passages are extremely interesting on account of the contribution they make to the historiography of the contemporary notion of Edinburgh as the 'Modern Athens' or 'the Athens of the North' – the former term tends to have chronological priority in terms of use; the latter, indeed, seems to be a rather later coining – and at a time when its citizens were regarded (more often than not by themselves) as 'Modern Athenians'.

With these facts in mind, it is important to attempt to date Sibbald's manuscript. From a pencil note on the title page, we know only the period of his original Mediterranean voyage in the *Myrmidon*. We may suppose the text to have been shaped into its final, or, at any rate, its existing form, shortly thereafter. In his manuscript – not a very polished production, in that it contains corrections and scribal errors, as if only a first or early draft of a still un-located, 'finished' version – the author refers to contemporary published works he must have consulted after returning home. The Greek portion of the text, however, is also heavy with quotations from celebrated verses by the wildly popular Lord Byron, which had been published in the 1810s and which were quite possibly available to him on board ship: the 'wooden world' of the Georgian Royal Navy was not (at any rate on the

upper deck) entirely devoid of culture. That Byron should figure largely is unsurprising, given the tremendous influence the poet had in making Greece under Ottoman domination, and the romantic cause of the modern Greeks in their nascent struggle for independence, a fashionable concern among the Philhellenes of Western Europe. Sibbald was evidently rather smitten with the eponymous ‘Maid of Athens’ herself, Teresa Macri (sometimes the name is spelled ‘Theresa’, and ‘Makri’ or ‘Macris’), whom the officers of the *Myrmidon* had met (with her family, being that of the late, Greek-born British Vice-Consul) at a *soirée* in Athens. Byron had lodged at the Macri house in Odos Theklas.

In writing up the Athenian portion of his travels, Sibbald mentions recent works such as Edward Dodwell’s *A Classical and Topographical Tour through Greece during the years 1801, 1805 and 1806*, which was published in 1819. He also refers to what must be the Scotsman Robert Richardson’s memoirs of his travels in Egypt and Palestine, published in 1822; and, further, to the work of another Scot, whom he calls ‘Rhe Wilson’. This is William Rae Wilson and his book was *Travels in Egypt and the Holy Land*, of 1823 – so Sibbald’s manuscript must postdate the appearance of this last work. It is worth bearing in mind, when we come to examine Sibbald’s comparison of Athens and Edinburgh, a marked tendency of Rae Wilson’s for bringing the latter city and its buildings into the frame when discussing sites and structures that could only ever spring to the mind of the most ardent ‘Edinaphile’. Thus, for example, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is said to possess a dome reminiscent of that of Register House; and the so-called ‘Temple of Venus’ at Baalbek in Lebanon, with a cella plan that is basically circular and with an almost baroque colonnade, is likened to the rotunda of St Bernard’s Well on the Water of Leith! (These parochial proclivities were pointed out by a writer in *The Edinburgh Review*, who found himself smiling at Rae Wilson’s ‘homely manner of bringing objects within the comprehension of his Scotch friends’.)<sup>3</sup> The vanity of Edinburgh people – sometimes innocently endearing, and (to outsiders at least) sometimes puzzling or downright infuriating – in all matters concerning their own good town, proves to be a constant factor in the complex story of how the city came to be compared with Athens. The comparison was a dual one: both in the realm of the

intellect – in antiquity, and in the present; and in the perceived topographical similarities. This larger topic is one I hope to consider further, and in greater depth, in some future study or studies.

The relevant portion of Sibbald’s more extended memoir can be placed within the literary tradition of a particularly interesting time in the history of Edinburgh, its architectural development (both actual and projected), and the evolving idea of the city’s conception of itself. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Edinburgh was exercising its civic soul on the question of whether it could legitimately view itself, and be generally regarded, as something greater than a mere provincial metropolis within a wider United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and a still wider Empire, or rather more (and more fittingly) as a world ‘capital of the mind’.<sup>4</sup> London was the ‘Rome’ of the British Empire; but, in these crucial years, Edinburgh appeared to have evolved, or to be turning itself (at least in the view of many of its most influential inhabitants and acolytes) into the ‘Athens’ of the Empire, queen of its own cultural realm, a city not of commercial and political power, but of the intellect.<sup>5</sup> In an article of seminal importance published in the July 1819 number of *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, Archibald Alison the younger – a recently-called advocate dabbling in journalism – described both the mood and the age in which Auld Reekie was on the point of being transmogrified into something else, namely the Athens of the North:

... thus, while London is the Rome of the Empire, to which the young, and the ambitious and the gay, resort in pursuit of pleasure, of fortune, or of ambition, Edinburgh might become another Athens, in which the arts and sciences flourished... and established a dominion over the minds of men more permanent even than that which the Roman arms were able to effect.<sup>6</sup>

To Alison’s ‘Athenian’ parallelism should be added the important statement of June 1819 by Andrew Robertson (which thus has very slight chronological priority, even if his contribution to the debate has subsequently been overlooked). Robertson was calling for a national Robert Burns monument in Edinburgh. He suggested that it be ‘placed on the Calton-hill’. ‘One such Building’, he continued, ‘might lead to the erection of others [there], until it should become the Acropolis of the Northern Athens, and Edinburgh be called the City of Temples and Taste’.<sup>7</sup>

Coming forward in time a little, August 1822 saw the celebrated visit of King George IV, an event which led to a great deal of attention being paid to Edinburgh. As never before was the city viewed, and written of, as a place of striking beauty enhanced by a developing architectural wealth of splendour and refinement that played to an incomparably sublime and picturesque natural setting to create an environment of distinction; and, equally, as a centre of intellectual brilliance which had given rise to its own eighteenth-century Enlightenment, the embers of which were still very much aglow.

The year 1822 was otherwise notable for the irrevocable decision (made certain with the high-profile ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone during the ‘King’s Jaunt’, albeit in the absence of the King himself: on the day he chose to remain at Dalkeith Palace) to build the recently proposed National Monument on Calton Hill as a memorial to the Scottish dead of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. After protracted and convoluted debate conducted in the periodical press – when many liberties were taken by this and that author with what other writers had actually said for and against what kind of building was most suited for purpose and location – the monument was eventually to take the form of a copy of the Parthenon of Athens. (The structure was designed by Charles Robert Cockerell, with the local collaboration of William Henry Playfair as executant architect.) This was first called a ‘transfer’ of the prototype to Edinburgh; then a ‘restoration’ (or, better, ‘a classic restoration’); until, at last, a building which was originally to serve as a ‘model’ for an Edinburgh equivalent of similar form was to be recreated in ‘facsimile’.

It seems very likely that George Sibbald had kept abreast of some, at least, of the extensive writings on the subject of the projected Edinburgh Parthenon and its siting which had since 1819 filled the pages of *Blackwood’s*;<sup>8</sup> of *The Edinburgh Magazine, and Literary Miscellany*; a *New Series of the Scots Magazine*;<sup>9</sup> of *The Quarterly Review*;<sup>10</sup> of *The Edinburgh Review*;<sup>11</sup> and of *The New Edinburgh Review*.<sup>12</sup> It is probable, too, that Sibbald was aware of the printed circular letters of 25 December 1821 and 24 January 1822 in which groups of influential men – various surviving copies bear various combinations of signatures – had attempted to persuade (and had largely succeeded in their task of

doing so) their fellow Scots, both at home and abroad, that the projected National Monument should be in the purest Greek Doric taste.<sup>13</sup> They had argued that the proposed Monument should not just emulate but copy the Parthenon exactly, to the extent of ‘restoring’ it ‘in facsimile’: these lapidary phrases were now an inalienable part of the rubric. Yet it was to be a ‘copy’ but one *without its sculpture*: it does seem extraordinary that those who spoke so fully and forcefully of transfer, restoration and facsimile, did not adequately recognise the irony that the chief glory of the original was not to be, nor was ever likely to be, replicated in Edinburgh. This glaring anomaly being set aside, however, they had – most significantly – sought support for the proposal that the new structure should crown a rocky eminence which was regarded as a finer location, as well as a superb site for present and future monumental building development, than even the Acropolis of Athens itself: Calton Hill.

It is possible, too, that Sibbald had digested George Cleghorn’s lengthy and polemical, but anonymous, pamphlet entitled *Remarks on the Intended Restoration of the Parthenon of Athens as the National Monument of Scotland* (Edinburgh 1824), in which Cleghorn similarly advocated, but in terms even more forceful, the adoption of the ancient Greek temple as model for the National Monument. Cleghorn also advanced the broader argument that Calton Hill should be legitimately regarded as Edinburgh’s answer to the Athenian acropolis: a site increasingly considered as certainly the equal of – and perhaps even superior to – the ancient original. Only a few years previously, Edinburgh Castle would – not unnaturally – have been widely regarded as the ‘acropolis’ of the city: yet now the Calton Hill held sway, giving the Northern Athens a *second* such distinctive topographical landmark.

In 1822, and indeed constantly between 1819 and the time that Sibbald was, presumably, at work on his travelogue, it had been argued that the Edinburgh of the day, newly and increasingly captivated by the beauties of the ‘Grecian’ style in architecture, and by the notion of what we may term ‘romantic-classicism’ in town planning, was capable of becoming a reborn Athens. As such, it might enjoy an ascendancy over the prototype on almost every level. The similarity between the two cities – that of Classical Antiquity, and her supposed heir in the age of the later Scottish Enlightenment – was considered twofold: on the one

hand, physical and topographical resemblance to; on the other, cultural and intellectual hegemony. The congruity might, so the ‘Modern Athenians’ believed, lead in time to actual superiority for their city. That pre-eminence would be due, in the first place, to the finer and even more picturesque natural setting enjoyed by the Northern Athens. It would be compounded once Edinburgh was enhanced by greater architectural achievement, especially if that were to be focused on a range of archaeologically accurate ‘Greek Revival’ buildings. This architectural pre-eminence would be achieved, structurally, by the ready availability of superb-quality Craigleith sandstone and the local skills to work it. The notion would be made incarnate by an enlightened and artistically educated populace, fully equipped to appreciate the glories of architecture and architectural sculpture<sup>14</sup> in a political climate conducive to progress and supportive of the values of civic pride, nurtured in an urban environment without peer in a wider, united British state unchallenged in its power and prosperity won by arms and secured by arts and science. The modern Edinburgh of the early 1820s, in which Sibbald wrote, was thus truly poised to ‘out-Athens’ ancient Athens itself. (Fig. 1)

The ‘Athenian’ epithets, even if not entirely home-grown, were certainly adopted and made their own by late-Georgian Edinburgh denizens. The terms for the city as a ‘modern’, ‘new’ or ‘northern’ Athens soon came to have a much wider, international currency among those who visited the place or who admired it from afar. Yet, despite the celebrity and common – even hackneyed – use of the expressions, right down to our own time, it is not entirely clear precisely when, or by whom, this parallel status with its ancient Greek progenitor was first bestowed upon Auld Reekie. (As indicated above, these are questions that I propose to address fully on another occasion.)

Noting that William Gilpin had compared the North Bridge, when seen from a distance, to a Roman aqueduct, Sir John Stoddart had written of the ‘forced assimilation’ of this kind: a predisposition to think one place like another in topographical and (going a step further) even in emotional or cerebral terms. And it was Stoddart who first, it appears, actually expressed the Athenian parallel with Edinburgh – that is, the parallel on the *physical* level, the *intellectual* correspondence having already been hit upon. ‘The Lanerk [sic] road affords a view of Edinburgh, interesting not only in itself, but from its similitude to

ancient Athens’.<sup>15</sup> Stoddart was closely followed by Sir John Carr: ‘The classical eye’, Carr wrote, after using his own eye in 1807, ‘has discovered some resemblance between Edinburgh and Athens; the castle has been compared with the acropolis, Arthur’s Seat with Mons Hymettus, and Leith and Leith-walk with the Piraeus [sic].’<sup>16</sup>

Modern writers have stated that the comparison of Edinburgh with Athens was first made by James ‘Athenian’ Stuart, the architect and decorator, in his celebrated *Antiquities of Athens* of 1762.<sup>17</sup> I am confident in asserting that this was not, in fact, the case: Stuart said no such thing anywhere in his great work, which was in any case a joint production with Nicholas Revett.<sup>18</sup> The error can be traced, very probably, to Francis Groome,<sup>19</sup> who was himself borrowing from Robert Chambers; and Chambers credits the observation, incorrectly, first to Stuart, then to Dr [Edward Daniel] Clarke, and finally to Hugh William Williams.<sup>20</sup> Of these, Williams was the crucial figure; and we shall come to him shortly in examining further the major influences on George Sibbald’s thinking. Williams’s role has been given full credit by Joseph Mordaunt Crook, who goes so far as to say that the title of Edinburgh as ‘the Athens of the North’ was ‘invented’ by Williams.<sup>21</sup> This is not quite accurate, but is getting on that way.

Edward Daniel Clarke, travelling tutor, clergyman and Professor of Mineralogy at Cambridge, knew both Scotland and Greece. In 1797 he had compared the scenery of the Sound of Mull to prospects such as ‘one would witness in the Aegean’.<sup>22</sup> (A few years later, John Galt would be put in mind of the Firth of Clyde viewed from Bishopton Hill when he looked back down the Gulf of Corinth towards Patras.)<sup>23</sup> But one certainly cannot say that Clarke’s letters from Greece hammer home any definite Edinburgh comparisons, for none are ever mentioned; indeed Clarke specifically states that he had never seen anything like Athens, ‘which exceeds all that has ever been written or painted from it. I know not how to give an idea of it...’ The only mention of Scotland in Clarke’s Greek correspondence is in the context of the Elgin depredations, when he condemns the ‘pulling down temples that have withstood the injuries of time and war, and barbarism for ages, to adorn a miserable Scotch villa.’<sup>24</sup> (The Earl of Elgin and Kincardine’s magnificent seat of Broomhall, Fife, hardly deserves that splenetic and demeaning description!) It is,





Fig. 1. A subtle and deeply emblematic vision of the idea of Edinburgh as 'the Athens of the North' is supplied by Alexander Stoddart in the bronze relief panel ornamenting the principal (west) face of the pedestal supporting his statue of William Henry Playfair (2016). The statue is sited in Chambers Street, Edinburgh, outside the National Museum of Scotland. The plaque shows, on the left, Edinburgh, or rather 'Edina' (wearing a mural crown, as befits the personification of a city), who confronts the well-armed and aegis-wearing Athena, patron goddess of Athens, on the right. Edina bears a bronze mirror of classical form. The idea is that the Modern Athens reflects back the image of Athena – and thus Ancient Athens – to herself.

*Photograph: Iain Gordon Brown*

however, true that, when he published his *Travels*, Clarke did compare the relationship of the Pireaus to Athens with that of Leith to Edinburgh, the ancient Long Walls of Athens and their surviving traces forming a sort of Leith Walk. But the Edinburgh/Athens *jumelage* is relegated to a mere footnote: ‘*Edinburgh* exhibits a very correct model of a *Grecian* city: and with its *Acropolis*, *Town*, and *Harbour*, it bears some resemblance to *Athens* and the *Piraeus*.’<sup>25</sup> By Edinburgh’s ‘acropolis’ Clarke without doubt meant the Castle. I have been unable to locate any passage in the relevant Greek portions of Clarke’s eight volumes of discursive travel memoirs in which he states, as at least two subsequent but nearly contemporary writers say he did, that all Edinburgh wanted to make complete the resemblance to Athens was ‘a temple of great dimensions placed upon the Calton Hill’.<sup>26</sup> What Clarke *does* write is that Greek temples were designed to be seen from afar, and he continues in this vein: ‘It is to this cause that the *Doric*, in buildings of so much vastness, owes its superiority over all the other orders of architecture – to that *simplicity* which is the very soul of grandeur; where nothing that is *little* can be tolerated for an instant. Excessive minuteness of design, and of execution, may suit the puny imitations of *Grecian* architecture seen in the buildings of modern cities...’<sup>27</sup> Clarke would certainly have approved of the simplicity and monumentality of the conception of the Parthenon ‘restored’ on Calton Hill, as worthy of both site and general setting, and faithful to the Greek conception of Doric grandeur. But Clarke does *not* actually call Edinburgh ‘the Athens of the North’.

What of Hugh Williams, an artist frequently accorded the soubriquet ‘Grecian’ Williams?<sup>28</sup> It does appear that, in terms both of observation of a topographical similarity and in the demonstration of a like cultural pre-eminence, his comparisons of Edinburgh and Athens are seminal. There are sufficient similarities between what Williams writes, and what George Sibbald attempted to say in his manuscript, that the influence of the one upon the other must be presumed. Williams certainly paired Greece and Scotland in general terms, and in doing so he displayed some of the tendency to topographical distortion and far-fetched supposition that (as we shall see) colours Sibbald’s account. ‘Suppose the lakes of Scotland were plains, I know no country so like illustrious Greece...’<sup>29</sup> Athens had been

‘the light of the world...where genius, wisdom, and taste, had reached their highest perfection’.<sup>30</sup> Yet it was not actually Edinburgh but *Stirling* that started to Williams’s mind when he and his Scottish travelling companion first saw Athens on the Sacred Way leading east from Eleusis. There was from this direction a ‘considerable likeness’ between Athens and Stirling in its distinctive, hilly landscape. ‘From every other point’, Williams continued in his note, ‘it [Athens] bears a striking resemblance to Edinburgh, especially as seen from the Braid and Ravelston Hills.’ From yet another direction Athens, ‘the Queen of Greece’, stirred memories of home: ‘this distant view of Athens from the sea is extremely like that of Edinburgh from the Firth of Forth, though certainly the latter is considerably superior.’ Williams and his Scottish travelling companion may have taken off their hats to Athens (literally and not just metaphorically: they were, as Williams put it, ‘too well bred to pass without uncovering’), but already the idea that Auld Reekie was the better place had begun to take hold.<sup>31</sup> Moved by the temple of Poseidon (then supposed to be of Athena) at Cape Sounion, for instance, he had expressed the sincere wish that the ‘exquisite’ Doric capitals might be ‘adopted in some of our public buildings in good old Edinburgh.’<sup>32</sup>

On his return to Scotland, Williams was able to append to his Mediterranean travelogue a note on developments in Edinburgh, which helped further to clinch his view of its actual, or certainly potential, superiority to Athens, its Greek equivalent. A man who had himself seen the ancient buildings of Athens felt no unease about citing in his text the new structures of Edinburgh: the Regent Bridge and the County Hall (both by Archibald Elliot), the ‘exquisite and classical building the Observatory’ on Calton Hill (by William Henry Playfair), etc. More ‘magnificent works’ and ‘superior designs’ were in contemplation, ‘with the view of giving a classical air to modern Athens!’<sup>33</sup> The idea of Edinburgh as the ‘Modern Athens’, already advanced by Archibald Alison and others, and now compounded by Williams, is very likely in turn to have influenced George Sibbald to hold his opinions on the direct identification of the two places, one with the other. From this time onwards, the duality was so widely accepted that no explanation was deemed necessary when drawing the parallel or stating the case as fact. Edinburgh *was* the Modern Athens. Not, *could be: was now*. Her new

identity might be yet further confirmed or enhanced if ‘a fac-simile, or a restoration of the Temple of Minerva’ should come to crown the Calton Hill as a monument not just to military glory but also of ‘the pure taste which distinguishes our country in the present.’ ‘Is it too much to expect,’ wrote Williams in bringing his case to an end, ‘that an enlightened patronage may call up genius, kindred to that of ancient times, and may direct our native talents to efforts, similar to those which gave splendour to the age of Pericles?’<sup>34</sup>

Williams published this in 1820. Subsequently, he furnished Robert Chambers with a note to append to a section of the latter’s *Walks in Edinburgh* (1825). This was headed simply ‘Edinburgh and Athens’. In this essay Williams supplied a ‘brief comparison of the two cities’, as if the visitor (or resident) were to be invited to reflect on these similarities as he perambulated the New Town or ascended the ‘acropolis’ of Calton Hill. Chambers also advertised that fact that it was Williams’s intention to publish a pair of engravings ‘representing the Ancient and the Modern Athens, as seen from the points where their resemblance is most conspicuous’. Like James ‘Athenian’ Stuart before him, ‘Grecian’ Williams contrived to produce graphic views of Athens which – in their general feeling for the topography and the way that the townscape, with its citadel upon its craggy rock, relates to adjacent hill, mountain, plain and sea – really do appear to resemble the setting and environs of Edinburgh, thus adding to the ‘mental’ image of similitude.<sup>35</sup>

In stating his case, Williams says that the epithets ‘Northern Athens’ and ‘Modern Athens’ had frequently been applied to Edinburgh. He (and, following him, Sibbald) knew the word on the street in a way that we cannot do: it seems in all probability that the terms were indeed in comparatively common use, and that, therefore, the ideas that had given rise to them were current for some time prior to the moment when Williams and Chambers actually set them down on the printed page. ‘The mind’, Williams noted, ‘unconsciously yields to the allusion awakened by these terms [the ‘Northern’ or ‘Modern Athenian’ epithets], and imagines that the resemblance between these cities must extend from the natural localities, and the public buildings, to the streets and private edifices’. But to think thus was wholly mistaken; indeed, the very reverse was the case, for Athens was actually the runner-up in this beauty parade. ‘Athens,

even in her best days, could not have coped with the capital of Scotland.’<sup>36</sup> And in modern times Plaka, with its mean houses, was no Edinburgh Old Town, let alone Monastiraki, Psyri and Metaxourgeio being in any way equal to the splendid New. The comparison between the cities lay not in the domestic building nor in the streets: in these there was neither contest nor parallel. The likeness between the cities lay in the topography and in the distant views, for example from Torphin and Colinton, where ‘the landscape is exactly that of the vicinity of Athens, as viewed from the bottom of Mount Anchesmus [the outcrops of the so-called Tourkovounia range, culminating in Mount Lykabettos, see note 45, below]’; where Mons Brilessus [that is Pentelicon, north-east of Athens] resembled the Braid Hills; where the Castle took on the character of the Acropolis, and the Calton – most improbably – that of Lykabettos coupled with the Areopagus; where the Forth seemed as if it were the Saronic Gulf, and Inch Keith the island of Aegina; where the hills of Fife resembled those of the distant Peloponnese.<sup>37</sup> ‘It is, indeed, most remarkable and astonishing’, Williams concluded in his piece for Chambers, ‘that two cities, placed at such a distance from each other, and so different in every political and artificial circumstance, should *naturally* be so alike.’<sup>38</sup>

It is a fact – not before observed – that Williams, in his breathless search for comparison and parallel, had actually become confused as to where the Edinburgh ‘acropolis’ most appropriately lay: in his *Travels* (1820) he had declared unequivocally for the Calton Hill, crowned, as he hoped it would be, by a new Parthenon (p. 419). But in his essay for Chambers’s *Walks* (1825) he envisioned the National Monument taking the place of the ‘present Barracks in the Castle’ (p. 275). If the Monument were to be located in the latter situation, ‘an important additional feature of resemblance would be conferred...; that being the corresponding position of the Parthenon in the Acropolis.’ So, by 1825, Edinburgh had (or might have had) not one but two putative *acropoli*, in the Castle Rock and the Calton Hill. With the coming of the National Monument, and later the High School, to fulfil the role of Propylaia, one site only would win out. Alternatively, it could be said that the Castle remained the acropolis of Auld Reekie, while the Calton Hill became that of the New Town, otherwise known as New Edinburgh or ‘Modern Athens’.



For his part, however, George Sibbald (as we shall now see) admitted to no such confusion or want of singlemindedness.

Sibbald's topographical comparison of the two cities in terms of the compass points requires some measure of concentration, not to mention flexibility of mind and effort in imagination, in orientating oneself.

Athens has been so often & so minutely described by various authors, that we shall merely content ourselves with noticing some of its most remarkable places. We shall, however, more particularly describe the Parthenon, or temple of Minerva, not only because it has been the admiration of all ages, but because also it has furnished a model for the national monument, intended to be built in our metropolis of Scotland. And we think that Edinburgh has received the appellation of Modern Athens, with so much justice, not merely for her superiority in the arts & sciences, but also for her general appearance & relative situation, that, pointing out her resemblance in these respects, may enable, we think, such of our readers as are acquainted with the capital of Scotland, the better to understand our description of the capital of Attica.

It must be particularly observed, however, that the absolute situation of Edinburgh is quite the reverse from that of Athens, & that in pointing out the resemblance of her relative situation, we must suppose the east & west, the north & south to change, & take the place of the opposite quarters. Keeping this in remembrance, the Calton-hill will represent, with considerable exactness, the Acropolis or citadel of Athens, & the appointed spot for the national monument will precisely point out the corresponding situation of the Parthenon, which it is intended to represent. The circumstance also that the Parthenon in the ancient Athens was dedicated to Minerva, the goddess of war, which the monument to be built in the modern Athens is to commemorate the warlike actions of our illustrious countrymen, will be an additional proof of the striking resemblance. Nelson's Monument,<sup>39</sup> in its relative situation to the national Monument, exactly corresponds to the Erechtheion, which was also built upon the Acropolis; & we cannot but here also notice the resemblance that the latter was the temple of Neptune, the god of the sea, while the former was erected in commemoration of the naval victories gained by our celebrated Admiral on that god's watery empire.<sup>40</sup> A little east from the Calton-hill may represent the situation of the Areopagus & a little farther to the east & north may point out the place of the Pnyx [sic: the author means the Pnyx].<sup>41</sup> The Firth of Forth corresponds well with the Aegean sea, the hills of Fife with the hills of Peloponnesus, while the harbour of Leith will represent the Piraeus or harbour of Athens, from which it is distant between 3 or 4 miles. Inchkeith, if supposed to be five or six times farther distant, will point out the situation of the island Aegina, which was about 20 miles in circumference & 18 from the Piraeus.

Without the walls of Athens is the Temple of Theseus,<sup>42</sup> once king of Athens, corresponding in its situation to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, and the ruins of the Temple of Jupiter Olympius, corresponding in like manner to the Register House;<sup>43</sup> while Mount Anchesmos is remarkably similar in situation & appearance to the Castle-hill.<sup>44</sup> The Water of Leith also may bear some resemblance to the river Ilissus, only this was nearer the Acropolis than that is to the Calton-hill.<sup>45</sup> And if we are not censured for having already carried

this resemblance too far, we may mention that, to the north-west of Athens are two rocky insulated hills,<sup>46</sup> the larger of which is called the Colonus Hippius or the Equestrian Hill,<sup>47</sup> & is distant from the other about 200 yards; & recollecting to make the same change as before, north-west will become north-east.<sup>48</sup> & then these hills will be strikingly contrasted by Arthur's Seat & Salisbury Craigs.

It is interesting to note that Sibbald, loyal in this (as in all things) to Edinburgh, seems to express a preference for the aesthetic qualities of those examples of Athenian stone which had, through time, been subjected to similar weathering as that of the buildings of his native city. With a sailor's concern for the elements, he writes thus of the masonry of the Parthenon:

Very little of the marble of the Parthenon, which was originally white, retains its pure natural colour. From exposure to the air & weather, the different parts have been more or less affected. Thus, the south side of the building retains somewhat of its original whiteness, & is altogether of a lighter colour than the other sides; & we may perhaps find a sufficient reason for the difference in the south winds at Athens being less accompanied with rain than what blow from other quarters. The west side has received a fine rich yellow tint from the setting sun. The north, exposed to more storms, & receiving fewer rays from the sun, is of a cold dark green colour; while the east side, coloured with a yellowish red of different hue. & mixed with a dusky black, produced by the smoke of some neighbouring chimneys, has been rendered extremely picturesque.<sup>49</sup>

Admiration of the effects upon the ancient temple of an almost Scottish mixture of weathering and discolouration by soot and smoke – Athens thus appearing as a kind of 'Auld Reekie' of the south – was not, however, matched by Sibbald's assessment of the damage done to this structure by modern antiquity-hunters, most notable of whom, of course, was a Scotsman, Thomas Bruce, seventh Earl of Elgin. Sibbald's comments on recent depredations in Athens, and particularly on the Acropolis, were clearly much influenced by the published remarks on such activities by Edward Dodwell, whose forthright but reasoned views he quotes approvingly in condemnation of these activities. (Dodwell, for example, had written eloquently of the 'dilapidating mania' that had so much affected the Monument of Lysicrates, a building shortly to be the ultimate inspiration for two of the Calton Hill memorials, and in condemnation of the 'tasteless cupidity' and 'selfish rapacity of amateurs' who had wanted to carry the whole building off.)<sup>50</sup> When considering the despoiling of the Parthenon itself of so much of

its sculpture, which he had actually witnessed taking place in 1801, Dodwell had written forcefully – but never less than elegantly, and in a commendably measured tone – of what he called the ‘unhallowed violations’ and the ‘devastating outrage’ perpetrated at a ‘scene of havoc and destruction’ through the action of ‘insensate barbarism’.<sup>51</sup> For his part, Sibbald refrains from naming and shaming Lord Elgin – who was, after all, playing a role in the campaign for the National Monument in Edinburgh – though he makes his disapproval of past actions clear. ‘It must always be a subject of great regret, that this splendid aedifice [the Parthenon] has been pillaged by the curious & the learned; & that, even now, comparatively little remains but ruins, to point out its former situation & extent, & the structure & elegance of the building.’ And Sibbald continues, with more vehemence, to condemn the operations of those who had removed the marbles.

And we may add, that every one who knows the value of liberty & independence, & can be proud of the grandeur & ornaments of his country, must deplore the fate of the fallen & wretched Greeks, enslaved by the oppression of cruel & lawless barbarians, &, in order to gratify an idle & useless curiosity, stript even by the learned & civilized, of those monuments of art, which have justly immortalized both the architects & architecture of their country.

Although he does not name him as a source, one feels that Sibbald quite probably had in mind the comments recently made by Hugh William Williams on the Greek ‘depredations’, which had contributed so greatly to what he saw as the diminution of the very ‘identity of Athens’.<sup>52</sup> One can only hope that Sibbald and his shipmates were not guilty of a crime such as that condemned by Williams, who had drawn attention to the work of some British sailors (very probably Scotsmen at that) in besmirching the architrave of the temple at Cape Sounion with names written in pitch in letters two feet high. Williams added censoriously the injunction: ‘I advise our Scottish youths to reflect a little, before they again proceed to such wantonness.’ And he continued with just a hint that somehow the mantle of ancient Greece had descended above all upon Scottish shoulders, and that even boisterous young naval officers were Modern Athenians in the making: ‘They, of all others, should be grateful for the stream of light which has flowed from Greece, and accordingly should respect her few remains.’<sup>53</sup>

Sibbald’s only reference to Lord Elgin by name occurs in the context of his writing of the clock presented by the Earl ‘during his late visit to Athens’. (This donation was mentioned by Williams in the context of the Turkish authorities’ somewhat surprising acquiescence in the event.)<sup>54</sup> Sibbald’s account is actually a simplification of what had proved to be a long-running and rather acrimonious dispute over the siting of this civic gift. He observed with approval the ‘handsome clock’ in the town’s market place. That the Elgin Clock had come to be located there in a specially constructed tower, with a Latin inscription recording Elgin’s donation, in the ancient Roman market place (still in use in the early 1800s for more or less the same purpose), appropriately adjacent to the famous so-called ‘Tower of the Winds’ – the Horologion of Andronikos, an ancient water clock or *klepsydra* – was the outcome of much wrangling with the local authorities. Giovanni Battista Lusieri, Elgin’s agent, had actually wanted to place the clock upon the Acropolis.<sup>55</sup> Had that act of overweening arrogance come to pass, it is a matter of whimsical speculation as to what Edinburgh building or monument on Calton Hill Sibbald would have likened this intrusion; or what further liberties with the topography and townscape of the two cities he would have taken in his efforts to assert the physical parallels between them.

All in all, one feels that George Sibbald has been affected by the architectural and more general cultural fervour of Edinburgh in its New Athenian persona. As a contemporary commentator observed: ‘No one can have lived in Edinburgh last winter, and mingled in its society, without perceiving that the subject of the restoration of the Parthenon engaged a very large share of public attention and more particularly was espoused by those whose rank, talents, or acquirements qualified them to take a lead in forming the public opinion.’<sup>56</sup> Sibbald’s writings of only a few years later reflect his earnest desire, or more possibly what is to be characterised as wishful thinking, to be considered as belonging to that élite element of Edinburgh society. All his reading of the literature of the campaign for, and against, a National Monument in the Greek taste, as waged interminably in the periodicals and doubtless in the coffee houses of the city, will have had the cumulative effect of turning the ship’s assistant surgeon into an authority on the matter, when he was not really one at all. Sibbald

represents exactly the sort of character adduced as a product of the times.

It has been the misfortune of these popular and wordy discussions, to have made every man imagine himself an architect and a man of taste; and it is the misfortune of the age that, by skimming the surface of pamphlets, and newspapers, and reviews, it has acquired a scum and skin of all learning, which it mistakes for solidity and reality. It is an age of vast superficialities, of paint, and tinsel, and gilding... There are few, very few, who have ever seen a Doric temple; and not one in thousands, of those who have heated themselves even to smoke and obscurity on the subjects before us, who knows more of ancient classical architecture... Even that much was scarcely known twelve months ago, to those who can now talk of the Parthenon, and of peristyles, and cells, and intercolumniations, and pediments, with all the familiarity of household words.<sup>57</sup>

### Acknowledgements

I have benefitted from discussion over the years with Dr Andrew Fraser, Ian Gow, John Lowrey,

Adam Wilkinson and, above all, the late Professor Charles McKean, with whom I shared some early thoughts on this general area of Edinburgh history and discussed a few of the original sources in the periodical press of the day. The present article has profited enormously from the keen eye and critical judgement of Dr Patricia R Andrew. A first attempt at summarising the issues, and the essentials of the debate, surrounding Edinburgh's assumption of the title of 'The Athens of the North' was made in a lecture which I gave at the British Embassy in Athens in October 2019 – a presentation that commemorated the bicentenary of the first call for a copy of the Parthenon to be constructed on Calton Hill. I am grateful to Her Excellency Ms Kate Smith, CMG, British Ambassador to the Hellenic Republic, for the kind invitation to give this lecture, which was entitled 'Auld Reekie into Athens of the North: an on-going investigation'.

### NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 Sibbald had seniority in his rank with effect from 20 December 1813. He was posted to the *Myrmidon* in 1815, having been a Hospital Mate at the Royal (Naval) Hospital at Haslar, Gosport, Hampshire, in 1814. See *The Naval Chronicle; Containing a General and Biographical History of the Royal Navy*, XXXIII (January-June 1815), p. 264; *Naval Chronicle*, XXXII (July-December 1814), p. 87. He was classed as 'unfit for sea-service' in at least 1840, but probably much earlier than that, and continued to be listed as such until at least 1851: see *New Navy List*, p. 170 (London 1851). See also [https://www.pdavis.nl/Surgeons\\_1840.htm](https://www.pdavis.nl/Surgeons_1840.htm)
- 2 National Library of Scotland, Acc. 12668.
- 3 *The Edinburgh Review*, XXXVII (1823), pp. 406 and 411; cf. Patricia R. Andrew, 'St Bernard's Well and the Water of Leith from the Stock Bridge to the Dean Bridge: A Cultural History', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, New series, 9 (2012), pp. 1-32, at p. 16 and n. 89.
- 4 For the idea of Edinburgh as a 'Capital of the Mind' (and indeed for an early use of the actual phrase), see the work of the Swiss geologist L. A. Necker de Saussure, *Travels in Scotland; Descriptive of the State of Manners, Literature and Science* (London 1821), p. viii, where the city is ranked as 'not unworthy of the title of *the Athens of the North*, and *the Capital of [the] Mind*.' It may be that from Necker's accolade is derived, consciously or unconsciously – it is certainly unreferenced – the title of James Buchan's *Capital of the Mind. How Edinburgh Changed the World* (London 2003).
- 5 On this fascinating topic there is an important, and growing, literature. Angus J. Macdonald provides an excellent summary in 'The Athens of the North', *Rassegna*, 17, no. 64 (1995), pp. 35-39. Of particular significance is the impressive article by John Lowrey, 'From Caesarea to Athens. Greek Revival Edinburgh and the Question of Scottish Identity within the Unionist State', *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians [of America]*, 60, no 2 (June 2001), pp. 136-57. Also valuable is Anuradha S. Naik and Margaret C. H. Stewart, 'The Hellenization of Edinburgh. Cityscape, Architecture and the Athenian Cast Collection', *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 66, no.3 (September 2007), pp. 366-89, esp. pp. 368-71. Miles Glendinning sums up the issue crisply: 'The classical expression of the "national" changed from Rome to Greece... many Scots saw Edinburgh as a pure, intellectual Athens to London's powerful but decadent Rome': see *The Architecture of Scottish Government* (Dundee 2004), p. 196, cf. p. 96. More recently, Ian Duncan has written effectively of how Edinburgh was 'promoting and redefining itself as a new kind of national capital...a cultural and aesthetic one' at a time when there was being developed a 'new ideology of imperial cultural nationalism': see his magisterial *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton, NJ, and Woodstock, Oxon, 2007), pp. 9, 16, cf. p. 18. Kirsten Carter McKee's long-awaited but ultimately disappointing *Calton Hill and the Plans for Edinburgh's Third New Town* (Edinburgh 2018) in fact contributes little new to the debate.

- 6 [Archibald Alison], 'On the Proposed National Monument at Edinburgh', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, V, no. XXVIII (July 1819), pp. 377-87 at p. 385.
- 7 Alison, 'On the Proposed National Monument', p. 384 called Edinburgh 'the Modern Athens'. Andrew Robertson's brief paper serves as a sort of preface to a pamphlet entitled on its wrapper *National Monument to be Erected at Edinburgh, to the Memory of Robert Burns*, and on its title-page *Festival in Commemoration of Robert Burns; and to Promote a Subscription to Erect a National Monument to his Memory at Edinburgh: Held at the Freemasons' Tavern, in London, on Saturday, June 5, 1819...* (London 1819). The NLS copy has the shelf-mark 1966.32 (4).
- 8 [Archibald Alison] 'On the Proposed National Monument at Edinburgh', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, V, no. XXVIII (July 1819), pp. 377-87; 'R' [?Andrew Robertson], 'Restoration of the Parthenon for the National Monument', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, V, no. XXIX (August 1819), pp. 509-12; [Archibald Alison] 'Restoration of the Parthenon in the National Monument', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, VI, no. XXXII (November 1819), pp. 137-48; 'A Journeyman Mason', 'Public Buildings of Edinburgh', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, VI, no. XXXIV (January 1820), pp. 370-75.
- 9 'A Traveller', 'Restoration of the Parthenon' [in a Letter to the Lord Advocate], *The Edinburgh Magazine, and Literary Miscellany; a New Series of the Scots Magazine*, VI (February 1820), pp 99-105.
- 10 "'Plans, Elevations, and Sections of Henry the Seventh's Chapel". By Lewis Cottingham', [an excuse, under specious claim to be a review of the book in question, for what is actually a very substantial essay on the National Monument of Scotland], *The Quarterly Review*, XXVII, no. LIV (July 1822), pp. 308-37.
- 11 "'An Enquiry into the Principles of Beauty in Grecian Architecture; with an Historical View of the Rise and Progress of the Art in Greece" by George, Earl of Aberdeen...' [likewise an excuse, under cover of a supposed review of the book cited, for a lengthy essay clearly entitled – as the printed running head has it – 'Restoration of the Parthenon', *Edinburgh Review*, XXXVIII, no. LXXXV (February 1823), pp. 126-43.
- 12 "'Lectures on Architecture...". By James Elmes' [similarly a would-be review of a book which is then blatantly ignored in favour of an extended diatribe on a wholly different topic, and which immediately turns into an extremely long essay on the 'Athenian' pretensions of Edinburgh, its 'Greek Revival' buildings, etc., etc.], *The New Edinburgh Review*, VIII (April 1823), pp. 554-603.
- 13 These circular letters from the Sub-Committee of the General Committee of Subscribers to the National Monument bear signatures that are sometimes autograph, sometimes engraved in manuscript facsimile, and sometimes typeset. Examples are to be found in NLS, MSS. 638, ff. 9-10; 10958, ff. 304-5; and 15973, ff. 12-13.
- 14 Drawings, together with some casts, of the Parthenon marbles were already in Edinburgh: many more high-quality casts would soon arrive to inhabit the Trustees' Academy in W. H. Playfair's Parthenon-like Royal Institution building. See Naik and Stewart, 'The Hellenization of Edinburgh', p. 366 and note 4; and Margaret Stewart, *The Edinburgh College of Art Cast Collection and Architecture* (Edinburgh 2009), pp. 2-3. In 1827 Lord Elgin presented some casts from the Temple of Nike Apteros on the Acropolis, and in 1835-38 a full set of very high quality casts from primary moulds of the Parthenon marbles was obtained: these casts included the sculptures of the west frieze, which Elgin had left in situ. For further references to the acquisition by Edinburgh of casts of the Parthenon marbles in 1816-17 see *The Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon*, edited by Willard Bissell Pope, 5 vols (Cambridge, Mass. 1960-63), II, p. 41; and, for the showing in Edinburgh of Haydon's drawings of the Elgin Marbles, see *ibid.*, p. 293, note 2 which refers to the notice in *Blackwood's Magazine*, VIII, no. XLIV (November 1820), p. 219, which mentions Haydon's exhibition in Bruce's Room in Waterloo Place, at the very foot of the would-be Calton acropolis.
- 15 John Stoddart, *Remarks on Local Scenery and Manners in Scotland during the Years 1799 and 1800*, 2 vols (London 1801), I, pp. 48, 54. At the time of publication of this work Stoddart was a young lawyer. Though he does not furnish the reference, Stoddart was in fact referring to William Gilpin, *Observations Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty made in the Year 1776: on Several Parts of Great Britain; Particularly the Highlands of Scotland*, 2 vols (London 1789), I, Section vii, p. 62.
- 16 John Carr, *Caledonian Sketches, or a Tour through Scotland in 1807...* (London 1809), p. 47. Carr was a barrister by profession, but became a noted (and, unusually, a knighted) travel writer who also published works on France, Ireland, the Baltic countries, Holland, Germany and Spain.
- 17 See, for example, Colin McWilliam, *Scottish Townscape* (London 1975), p. 118; David Daiches, *Edinburgh* (London 1978), p. 195; and Trevor Royle, *The Mainstream Companion to Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh 1993), p. 13. Ian Duncan still suggests this in his *Scott's Shadow* [see above, note 5], p. 14.
- 18 *The Antiquities of Athens. Measured and Delineated* was the result of a collaboration between Stuart and Revett. Stuart was responsible for the text and also for the general picturesque and topographical views; Revett for the measured drawings. The first volume has a title-page dated 1762 but publication in London was in fact in January 1763. The second volume, containing the major temples of Athens, and with a title-page dated 1787, actually appeared in January 1790. For publication details see Eileen Harris, *British Architectural Books and Writers 1556-1785* (Cambridge 1990), pp. 443, 446 and 448.
- 19 *Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland*, 6 vols (Edinburgh 1882-85), II, pp. 467-68. Groome, however, may well have been taking his lead from an earlier work and, within that, the excellent essay on Edinburgh, in Fullarton's *Topographical, Statistical and Historical Gazetteer of Scotland*, 2 vols (Glasgow 1842), I, pp. 432-33.



- 20 Robert Chambers, *Walks in Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1825), p. 272.
- 21 J. Mordaunt Crook, *The Greek Revival. Neo-Classical Attitudes in British Architecture, 1760–1870* (London 1972), p. 104.
- 22 [William Otter], *The Life and Remains of the Rev., Edward Daniel Clarke, LL D* (London 1824), p. 232.
- 23 *The Autobiography of John Galt*, 2 vols (London 1833), I, p. 145.
- 24 *Life and Remains of the Rev. Edward Daniel Clarke*, pp. 501–502, letter to the Revd. William Otter, Athens, 31 October 1801.
- 25 Edward Daniel Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa*, 4th edn, 8 vols (London 1816–18), VI, p. 378.
- 26 [Archibald Alison], ‘On the Proposed National Monument at Edinburgh’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, V, no. XXVIII (July 1819), p. 385; and ‘A Traveller’, ‘Restoration of the Parthenon’ [in a Letter to the Lord Advocate], *The Edinburgh Magazine, and Literary Miscellany; a New Series of the Scots Magazine*, VI (February 1820), p. 100. The late John Gifford has recently rehearsed this same erroneous statement: ‘The National Monument of Scotland’, *Architectural Heritage*, XXV (2014), pp. 43–83 at p. 48. Alison (on the same page of the article cited above) further took quite deliberate liberties with Clarke’s original words when he distorted what Clarke had actually said to make it appear that Clarke had asserted that ‘of all the cities he had visited...Edinburgh bears the closest resemblance to the cities of ancient Greece.’ Clarke said no such thing.
- 27 Clarke, *Travels*, VII, p. 77.
- 28 Walter Scott referred to Williams as ‘the Grecian’ even in an artistic context wholly concerned with the recording of Scottish Border antiquities. See *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, edited by W. E. K. Anderson (Oxford 1972), p. 101.
- 29 Hugh William Williams, *Travels in Italy, Greece, and the Ionian Islands. In a Series of Letters Descriptive of Manners, Scenery, and the Fine Arts*, 2 vols (Edinburgh 1820), II, p. 274.
- 30 Williams, *Travels*, II, p. 288.
- 31 Williams, *Travels*, II, pp. 289, 384.
- 32 Williams, *Travels*, II, p. 382.
- 33 Williams, *Travels*, II, p. 419.
- 34 Williams, *Travels*, II, pp. 419–20.
- 35 On the visual connection between Athens and Edinburgh, and the shared geographical character of the two places, see Naik and Stewart, ‘The Hellenization of Edinburgh’, p. 368.
- 36 H. W. Williams in Robert Chambers, *Walks in Edinburgh* (Edinburgh 1825), p. 273.
- 37 Williams in Chambers, *Walks*, pp. 274–75.
- 38 Williams in Chambers, *Walks*, pp. 274–75.
- 39 Interestingly, Sibbald casts no aspersions on the architecture, or suitability for its site, of the Nelson Monument. As a naval man, he seems to be been well satisfied with it. In this, his view (or, rather, lack of any contrary opinion) is in marked contrast with that expressed almost universally by other contemporary commentators.
- 40 Sibbald greatly simplifies the extremely complex nature of the Erechtheion and the deities and heroes to whom the building was actually dedicated. Poseidon was honoured there, certainly, but it is entirely wrong to suggest that the temple was his alone.
- 41 Sibbald is evidently thinking of the area occupied by the Calton Hill Gardens, and Royal, Carlton and Regent Terraces, round the eastern and south-eastern flanks of the hill. The Hill of the Pnyx was the meeting place of the Ekklesia, or assembly, in ancient Athens.
- 42 The Theseion, as it was known (and is still popularly known), which stands above the Agora, is now recognised as the temple of Hephaistos.
- 43 The Olympieion, a vast temple which took many centuries to complete: the Roman Emperor Hadrian eventually achieved the task.
- 44 Mount Anchesmos, as a descriptive geographical name of antiquity, is generally reckoned to equate with the ‘Lykabettos’ of today’s Athenian townscape. See W. M. Leake, *The Topography of Athens, with Some Remarks on its Antiquities* (London 1821), pp. 68–69 for a statement of the difficulty of being completely sure which names in ancient usage actually applied to features that Leake – in this pioneering and still valuable work – was able to label accordingly. There is no absolute certainty that the distinctive conical hill of Lykabettos was the ancient Anchesmos. Leake does not, anywhere in his book, use the name ‘Tourkovounia’. For that, see the modern authority John Freely, *Strolling Through Athens. A Guide to the City* (London 1991), pp. 2–3, 321.
- 45 The Ilissus flows south of the Acropolis.
- 46 For ‘insulated’ in eighteenth-century usage *The Oxford English Dictionary* gives ‘placed or standing in a detached position; standing apart; ... isolated, solitary’.
- 47 This feature lies north of the Acropolis, outside the city wall.
- 48 Sibbald must in fact mean south-east; but one can forgive his error in this welter of distorted topography and in view of the general eccentricity of his notions.
- 49 This passage echoes the observations of Edward Dodwell, *A Classical and Picturesque Tour through Greece during the years 1801, 1805 and 1806*, 2 vols (London 1819), I, p. 344.
- 50 Dodwell, *Classical and Picturesque Tour...*, I, pp. 291.
- 51 Dodwell, *Classical and Picturesque Tour ...*, I, pp. 322–24.
- 52 Williams, *Travels*, II, pp. 321–23.
- 53 Williams, *Travels*, II, p. 382.
- 54 Williams, *Travels*, II, p. 361.
- 55 William St Clair, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, 3rd, revised edn (Oxford 1998), pp. 206–7. In the end it was erected in 1814 in the bazaar, where the tower (sans clock itself) remained until 1884.
- 56 ‘On the Restoration of the Parthenon’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, VI, no. XXXVII (April 1820), pp. 304–12, at p. 306.)
- 57 *New Edinburgh Review*, VIII (April 1823), p. 601.