THE PARTHENON FRIEZE IN RECENT SCHOLARSHIP: PROBLEMS AND INTERPRETATIONS.¹

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Modern scholars have tended to approach the Parthenon frieze as a monument beset by interpretive 'problems'. Questions have surfaced more readily than answers. What is the subject of the frieze? Under what circumstances was the frieze viewed and interpreted by fifth-century BC Athenians? What do the horsemen in the cavalcade symbolize, and what is their relationship to other groups of figures on the frieze? Would an interpretation based upon gender or sexuality improve our understanding? What is the solemn event commemorated in the central panel of the east frieze, located directly above the doorway on that side? Certainly, a field of study which continues to throw up questions might appear to be in a relatively healthy state, but it is noticeable that most debate has focused upon the subject of the frieze – and that commentators are intent upon solving 'problems'. It is doubtful that fifth-century Athenians experienced the problems of interpretation which have perturbed modern scholars for so long. My own view, which I hope to argue in detail elsewhere, is that the frieze represents an idealized, contemporary celebration of the Great Panathenaia (the festival as a whole, not merely the procession). This is close to the traditional interpretation, which has been challenged strongly in recent years. One result of the energy put into these challenges is that development into other fields of investigation has been inhibited. The function of the frieze, even its style and antecedents, and whether or not it supports the metopes and pediments as part of a sculptural 'programme', are topics which deserve greater attention in future. In this paper I would like to survey the most influential interpretations of the Parthenon frieze (Part I below) and offer a few comments on methodological underpinnings and possible future trends (Part II).

I.

Sculpted c. 442-438 BC, the frieze is situated within the colonnade, at the top looking out, c. 40 feet (12 metres) above ground level. The greater part

¹ This paper was written during a period of research leave at Royal Holloway College, University of London, in the first half of 2000. I would like to thank Professor Susanna Morton-Braund for her hospitality and encouragement. Abbreviations in the notes below refer to works cited in full in the accompanying Bibliography.
of this enormous work of art, 1 metre high and 160 metres (524 feet) in length, is now in the British Museum (part of the Elgin Marbles collection), while various sections are in the Acropolis (parts of the north and east frieze) and other Museums (notably a slab from the east in the Louvre). The entire west side (except for a slab at the north) remained in place on the building until 1993. As a protective measure against the virulent pollution of modern Athens, it has been taken down for conservation and future museum display. Tragically, a large section of the frieze, especially at the east end of the south side, was destroyed in 1687, when a Venetian shell lobbed into the Turkish powder supplies that were being stored in the Parthenon.

The frieze depicts a procession composed of a number of distinct groups - chiefly horsemen, chariot groups including apobatai (dismounters), officials and ceremonial functionaries, sacrificial animals and attendants, groups of women, Athenian heroes or citizens, the Olympian gods, and a group of figures who seem to be handling Athena’s new peplos (a woollen robe). It is probably the best known work of classical sculpture still in existence, and has been seen as both representative and trend-setting. Such assumptions should be questioned. It occupied a relatively inconspicuous position - a fact which is underlined by the lack of attention it receives in our literary sources. No ancient writer has left an explanation of it, not even the second-century AD traveller Pausanias, who commented upon the pediments (I 24.5). From within the colonnade the view of the frieze is too oblique to make it easily intelligible, although its upper part is cut in slightly higher relief. From outside the colonnade the best view, intermittently framed by the columns in the manner of a cartoon strip, is at least 20 metres from the frieze, at a steep angle of view; and since the frieze is only a metre high this means that little detail was readily visible, although the indirect light upon it was probably quite strong. From the available remains, including fragments and drawings, we have a fairly good idea about most of its figures, except for parts of the cavalcade of horses and chariots, and for some details of equipment. It was richly provided with metal accessories, now lost, and it is commonly thought that colour defined objects which were not carved.

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2 On the fragments, see the reconstructions in Brommer (1977); J Boardman and D Finn The Parthenon and its Sculptures (London, 1985); Jenkins (1994); E Berger and M Gisler-Huwiler Der Parthenon in Basel. Dokumentation zum Fries (Mainz 1996)
The East Frieze

(after I. Jenkins *The Parthenon Frieze* (1994) British Museum 22.3
Permission to reproduce requested)
Although it seems an evocative rather than a definitive monument, capable of many meanings and levels of interpretation, the original meaning of the frieze was probably clear to fifth-century BC Athenians. This original meaning faded, however, during later ages. The first recorded response to the Parthenon frieze is that of the fifteenth-century traveller Cyriac of Ancona, who judged it to represent 'Athenian victories during the Periklean period.' Since the eighteenth century, however, there has been general agreement that it represents in idealized fashion the procession held every four years at the Great Panathenaia, celebrated on the date assigned to Athena's birthday (28 Hekatombaion).4

This traditional interpretation stems ultimately from a conjecture published by two British travellers, the artist James Stuart and the architect Nicholas Revett, members of the Society of Dilettanti in London, who returned from a visit to the Acropolis with drawings, descriptions and the idea that the frieze represented the Great Panathenaic procession.5 The piece of cloth that features so prominently in the central panel on the east side was held to be the new peplos, about to be presented to the cult statue of Athena Polias (eventually housed in the Erechtheion) as the culminating ritual of the procession in celebration of Athena's birthday.

Certainly, the frieze seems to depict a festival procession, involving animal sacrifice, in which the citizens of Athens shared. However, scholars have seen 'problems' with the conjecture of Stuart and Revett for some time now. A major figure in establishing the terms of the debate was Bernard Ashmole.6 Why, he asked, would the Parthenon frieze record a contemporary event? The convention in Greek architectural sculpture, observed in every other case, was to decorate sacred buildings with scenes from myth; to do otherwise reeks of impiety. If it is the Panathenaia, where is the wheeled ship that our literary sources tell us was drawn to the temple bearing the sacred peplos of Athena? Where are the allies of Athens?

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4 Roughly July / August: For the date, see Kallisthenes, FG Hist 124 F 52; Parke (1977) 33; Simon (1983) 55; Jenkins (1994) 24
5 Stuart and Revett (1787) Vol II, 12. On Stuart and Revett, see F Mallouchou-Tufano in Tournikiotis (1994) 169-75 The case for a Panathenaic reading is best made by Robertson and Frantz (1975) 8-12; Parke (1977) 37-50; Simon (1983) 55-72
6 Ashmole (1972) 144-5 (from Chap. 5 'The Parthenon Frieze: Questions Still Unanswered'); cf Pollitt (1972) 87-8; Robertson and Frantz (1975) 9; Boardman (1977) 42-3; Ridgway (1981) 77-8; Connelly (1996) 54
Where are the hoplites? The frieze shows horsemen who are apparently unarmed, but no foot-soldiers. Where are the maidens who served as kanephoroi (basket-beaters) and hydriaphoroi (water-carriers)? There are males carrying hydriai (vases commonly used for carrying water) (N VI 16-19; S XXXIX 115-118 conjectured), and there are chariots, which were not used in combat by classical armies. Horsemen and chariots would not have been allowed onto the Acropolis. What of the fact that the central scene includes two widely-spaced female figures carrying what appear to be cushioned trays or stools on their heads (E V 31-32)? Did the designers and artists of the frieze, elsewhere so skilled in packing figures and meanings into limited space, deliberately allot so much of the central scene to minor temple servants?

If the appearance of the gods and the general preference for myth in Greek temple-decoration seem to stand against the idea of a contemporary, mortal event, might the frieze then show us an early, paradigmatic celebration of the Panathenaea - possibly the very first procession? This thesis, argued in detail by Chrysoula Kardara, has the advantage of tallying with the pediments, which show 'foundation' events - the birth of Athena (east pediment) and the contest between Athena and Poseidon for the patronage of Athens (west pediment). On the other hand, the ten eponymous heroes and other ten-fold divisions identified on the frieze (especially among the horsemen on the south side) have been taken to point to a post-Kleisthenic, fifth-century date. Moreover, this myth-heroic interpretation relies too heavily on detecting and identifying precisely a number of Athenian heroes, such as Erichthonios; but on the frieze these figures lack attributes. The result is too obscure, even for the most practised observer.

In a myth-historical explanation, Ross Holloway suggested that the frieze represents the replacement of the treasures of the archaic Acropolis which the Persians had plundered or destroyed. Elements like the women and the cavalry are thought to represent korai and equestrian statues. But what of the Panathenaic character of the occasion?

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7 Note the surprise of Brommer (1979) 40, that no spears are to be seen.
8 The numbering system of Jenkins (1994) is employed in this paper.
9 C. Kardara 'Glaucopis, the Archaic Naos and the Theme of the Parthenon Frieze (in Greek)' Archaiologike Ephemeris (1961 = 1964) 61-158
11 Criticism of the theories of Kardara and Holloway in Boardman (1984) 210
The Panathenaic elements are most clearly emphasized by Robertson, Parke, and Simon. H.W. Parke, for instance, was in no doubt that the frieze represented a contemporary Panathenaic procession, being 'a selection of episodes suitable for representation in carved relief worked up into one great imaginative unity'. He was especially keen to say that the literary sources - random, late, and lacking in detail - should not without care be used to undermine the traditional interpretation of the frieze.

Almost half a century ago, Arthur Lawrence compared the form and function of the Acropolis with the Apadana (Audience Hall) at Persepolis. Other scholars have followed his lead, prepared to see an ideological battle between democratic Athens and imperial Persia. In the 1980s it was suggested that the uniqueness of the Parthenon frieze derived from the influence of Achaemenid Persian models:

'To the Athenians who planned the Parthenon frieze the sculpture was meant to convey something powerful and energizing: the harmonious ordering of a society guided by positivistic ideas and far-reaching aspirations. Part of the contemporary impact of its representational imagery derived from its calculated emulation of the programmatic imperial visions of Darius.'

There is general agreement about considerable cultural influence from Persia and the wider Near East in the classical period. However, the rows of Immortals and ambassadors and offerings and victims at Persepolis bear only a slight resemblance to the Parthenon frieze; the differences in content, style, spirit and intent are huge. David Castriota accepts this but goes on to describe the frieze as an anti-Persian reworking of the Apadana reliefs, employing symbols known from mainland and Ionian models, by means of which Athens presents herself as the new mistress of the Aegean, especially of the Greeks of Asia, whom she has freed from Persian domination. The point is to express Athens' imperial relationship with her allies. Whereas it is commonly held that Athens' allies are nowhere to be

12 Robertson and Frantz (1975, 8-12; Parke (1977) 37-50: Simon (1983) 55-72
13 Parke (1977) 38
16 On which see the excellent study by M. Miller Athens and Persia in the Fifth Century BC: A Study in Cultural Receptivity (Cambridge, 1997); cf. my review in Scholia Reviews n.s. 7, no. 15 (1998) 5 pp
17 Castriota (1992) 184-229
seen on the Parthenon, Castriota disagrees. It is just that the frieze makes no overt effort to distinguish Athenian citizens from metics (non-citizens resident at Athens), cleruchs (overseas colonists), or allies. The metics, for instance, could see themselves in the figures carrying hydriai, and the allies could see themselves in the figures leading heifers to the sacrifice. Ambiguous treatment of this kind permits all parties to recognize themselves, and it amounts to a 'denial of Athenian imperialism'. The analysis is extraordinarily subtle. Ultimately, however, the appeal should be to the Athenians themselves, and it is hard to agree that the frieze is inclusive in quite this way. It is more about the exclusivity, even arrogance, of the Athenians. Moreover, there are powerful voices against the idea that non-Athenians marched in the Panathenaic procession, at least in an official capacity.

Far more influential has been a reading by John Boardman, who believes implicitly that the Parthenon frieze is just one part of a sculptural programme that includes the metopes, pediments and statue. Their design was conceived against a background of Athenian pride in their victories over the Persians, especially at Marathon. The frieze, it is argued, celebrates the Panathenaic procession immediately preceding the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC, with emphasis on the 192 Athenians who would soon give their lives in that battle. They are heroized via depiction in the cavalcade, naked at times; the gods and eponymous heroes are waiting to receive them. The analysis is quite brilliant in its attention to detail, but opponents find it difficult to see the dead Marathon hoplites in the cavalry and chariots, especially given the absence of Athenian cavalry at the battle itself. In his defence, Boardman could say that the fallen at Marathon were already worshipped as heroes at the time the Parthenon was being built. They had been buried in a consciously archaizing, even Homeric style at the site of the battle. Certainly, they had been infantry hoplites, but after the battle they were thought to have joined the same netherworld as Ajax, Achilles and Agamemnon. Just as large grave-marking vases from eighth-century BC Attic cemeteries show the heroized dead with 'Mycenaean' shields and fleets of chariots, so the Parthenon frieze could show the glory-clad Marathon fighters as riders and chariot-owners. Everything we know about the Greek historical consciousness of the fifth century BC points to a

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21 Boardman (1977) and (1984)
22 Herodotos 6.117 and Pausanias 1.32.4 describe measures taken to heroize those who fell at Marathon.
blurring of the boundaries between myth and history. The classical
Athenian in the Panathenaic procession, passing the building and looking
up at the frieze, would have identified it as an Athenian occasion, but
heroic, in the presence of gods and heroes, and set in the Agora, with
chariots and horses that were not part of the procession once it had reached
the Acropolis itself. The proud identification would be with the immediate
past, glorious and heroic, not the present. The frieze, then, would allude to
an event that was now part of Athens’ stock of myth, not a contemporary
event whose depiction might smack of impious arrogance.

One of the main features of this interpretation, something Boardman has
stressed repeatedly, is that it assumes unity of time and place in the frieze.
Other scholars have dispersed the action throughout a variety of settings,
including the Attic plain, the Agora, and the Acropolis. More neatly,
Boardman sets all the events in the Agora, close to features like the Altar of
the Twelve Gods, the Altar of the Eponymous Heroes, and that part of the
Panathenaic Way known as the dromos (racecourse) - suitable for the
chariots and horsemen. Part of Boardman’s argument is numerical: if you
count the number of figures in the cavalry and chariot sections (with certain
exceptions, and making judgments where there are lacunae), their total
comes out at a very significant number - 192. This is, of course, the number
of Athenians who fell at Marathon according to Herodotus (6.117). As a
tally of 'heroized' figures it was first conjectured by W.-H. Schuchardt in
1930.23

There is much that is compelling about this theory. The circumstantial
pressure upon the Parthenon-designers to make some allusion to the heroes
of Marathon was extremely strong. In Boardman’s words,

`. the sculptural decoration of the Parthenon can easily be read as, first, a
statement of the city goddess' commanding status, with scenes of her birth and
the struggle with Poseidon for Attica in the pediments; secondly, as a series of
simple symbolic statements of what the city had achieved in the defeat of the
Persians, at Marathon and afterwards, with the metope scenes of Greeks
fighting Amazons, Greeks fighting centaurs, the sack of Troy, gods fighting
giants, recalling the defeat of easterners, of the uncivilised and barbarian, the
punishment of hubris [overweening pride].'24

Archäologischen Institut* 45 (1930) 218-80. esp 274-8.
24 Boardman (1977) 39
The idea of an ultimate memorial for Marathon may indeed have existed for the contemporary viewer. Nevertheless, many commentators remain unsatisfied, observing that the frieze offered little chance to viewers to count the glorious 192. Indeed, few accept this figure; Jenkins writing that it is based on a discredited reconstruction. Iain Spence dismisses the argument thus:

'He includes the apobatai, but not their drivers, omits dismounted functionaries like musicians, hydriaphoroi, and herdsman, but includes marshals and even a small boy. In fact, it seems altogether too allusive on the part of the sculptors to portray the dead from Marathon as cavalrymen or officials when other friezes simply portrayed them as what they were - hoplites.'

Erika Simon, favouring an interpretation based upon cult rather than myth or history, has sought to revive an old idea of Ludwig Deubner that two different processions are shown: one to Athena Polias and Pandrosos the daughter of Kekrops on the north side, where the frieze shows both ewes and heifers being led to sacrifice; and one to Athena Parthenos on the south, where only heifers are depicted. Evelyn Harrison likewise has two processions: a contemporary procession on the south, where the ten groupings of horsemen indicate the ten Kleisthenic tribes; but on the north, where groups of four are taken to be an allusion to the four Ionian tribes that preceded Kleisthenes' reforms, the procession 'belongs to an earlier age, to pre-Kleisthenic Athens.' Further contributors have tended to agree that the frieze depicts no ordinary Panathenaia but differ on matters of detail: the 'ten eponymous heroes' have been described as eight archons with a marshal and a secretary; and the peplos-scene has proved notably contentious.

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25 The case for viewing the Parthenon overall as a commemoration of the Persian wars is best summarized in Castriota (1992) Chaps 4 (134-83), 5 (184-229) For the view in Roman times of the Acropolis as a monument to the victory of west over east, see Plutarch Life of Antony
26 Among those opposed, see Bronner (1977) 149 n. 15; Harrison (1996) 200; Hurwit (1999) 224 ('I come up with 190, two short of what is required').
27 Jenkins (1994) 26, 44.
28 Spence (1993) 268 For the Marathon dead portrayed as hoplites, see E. Harrison, 'The South Frieze of the Nike Temple and the Marathon Painting in the Painted Stoa' American Journal of Archaeology (AJA) 76 (1972) 353-78 (esp. 373-4); cf. G. R. Bugh The Horsemen of Athens (Princeton, 1988) 77-8 n. 134
29 Simon (1983) 55-72, esp. 61, 68-9
Robin Osborne took a different approach, taking the frieze as a whole and asking how clearly it could have been seen when the Parthenon roof was intact. Some factors enhanced visibility: a fair amount of reflected light would have fallen on it, the figures were made to project further at the top than the bottom, and paint and metal attachments were used to pick out details. However, from 20 metres away it would be difficult to focus upon details. This is precisely the point, thinks Osborne, who emphasizes how well the sculpture falls into scenes framed by the columns as a spectator moves along the building below the steps. Refusing to interact at length with the scholarly mainstream on points of detail, he favours the Panathenaic interpretation but asks his readers to dwell upon the intended effect from the point of view of the spectators making their way outside the peristyle towards the eastern entrance. From that angle the frieze is seen in small sections and moves the spectators to their final goal: a sight of the gold and ivory statue through the eastern doorway. We are urged not to divorce style from subject matter (or to privilege the latter over the former):

'The Parthenon frieze ... presents the very aristocratic image of Athenian democracy at its most elitist, where all citizens are not just soldiers but the quintessential soldier, the young man in the cavalry whom public inspection requires to be a model of physical fitness. In presenting this image the frieze also promotes it, for in showing all the heads without individualization the frieze shows a citizen body where distinctions are abolished and all are equal, and where, despite widely varying personal circumstances, all may aspire to the same role; in involving the spectator in the procession the frieze draws the spectator to identify with the anonymous citizenry and share their aspirations.'

Thus the standard interpretation is turned around: the subject of the frieze is not its own static procession but rather its reflection of the viewer's actual procession around to the front of the building. The uniformity of human type in the frieze arises from a propagandistic desire to depict Athenian


33 Osborne (1998) 182
34 Osborne (1987) 104. P. Veyne 'Conduct Without Belief and Works of Art Without Viewers' Diogenes 143 (1988) 1-22, takes issue with Osborne's view that the subject is not really as important as the effect of the frieze.
society as a democratic ideal 'where distinctions are abolished and all are equal'.

In general, students of the Parthenon find it unproblematic to stress how well the frieze accompanies someone in procession, but most continue to believe that the subject matter was more meaningful to the ancients than Osborne allows. Among these, Joan Breton Connelly, a professor of fine arts at New York University, has offered the most publicized interpretation of recent times.\(^{35}\) Her theory that the frieze alludes to a human sacrifice was first aired in seminars during the early 1990s. It explicitly minimizes Panathenaic associations and connects figures from the 'peplos scene' on the east side with fragments from a play by Euripides, the *Erechtheus*, that were found about 30 years ago on papyrus wrapped around a Hellenistic mummy in the Louvre.\(^{36}\) The play, which has been dated to 423-421 BC, deals with the sacrifice of the three (perhaps four) daughters of Erechtheus, the legendary king of Athens. This grisly act, recommended by the Oracle of Delphi, was intended to save the city from destruction by Eumolpos, a king of Thrace and son of Poseidon. The Oracle in fact called for only one daughter to be sacrificed by having her throat slit, but the sisters had sworn that if one should die the others would share her fate. The daughters submit themselves to death, not reluctantly but proudly. If the men of Athens give their lives as soldiers, the women too can put city before self. The Athenians are victorious in the ensuing battle, but Erechtheus is killed. In the play's recovered lines, Athena appears to Queen Praxithea with instructions for the burials of the king and their daughters on the Acropolis and for remembering them 'with annual sacrifices and bull-slaying slaughters' and 'with holy choruses of maidens.' Praxithea justifies herself in a speech in which she compares the sacrifice of her daughters with that of the soldiers. As she declares, 'I hate women who, in preference to the common good, choose for their own children to live.' Athena rewards the queen for restoring 'the foundations of the city' by designating her a 'priestess to make burnt sacrifice at my altar on behalf of the city.'

Connelly identifies five members of the mythic royal family from Euripides' play in the 'peplos scene' at the centre of the east frieze: one is Erechtheus dressed as a priest and about to slay his youngest daughter, who stands beside her father unfolding the shroud in which she will be conducted as a sacrificial victim to the altar (it is not a peplos at all!); she


\(^{36}\) C. Austin *Nova Fragmenta Euripidea in Papyris Reperta* (Berlin, 1968).
will go first. Next to Erechtheus is his queen, Praxithea. The oldest daughter, second from the left, hands down a sacrificial tray to her mother. The last figure, at the far left, is the third princess, who carries a basket in her left arm, perhaps containing a knife for the sacrifice. She faces the front and, like her older sister, carries her death shroud still folded upon the tray on her head. According to this interpretation, then, the Parthenon frieze as a whole evokes the Athenian founding myth of a king's precious sacrifice to save his city from defeat.

The competing claims of Athena and Poseidon are enshrined on the Parthenon's west pediment, so a reading of the Parthenon frieze that locates it within the mythical proto-history of Athens has much to recommend it, especially when one considers that Erechtheus was shortly to have his own temple on the Acropolis (the Erechtheion). On the other hand, Connelly's brilliant thesis has come under heavy criticism. Nigel Spivey37 argues that Athenians in the fifth century probably knew as much about Erechtheus as the British know about King Lear. His personal traumas might be appropriate for the stage; to have them carved on a monument as ideologically charged as the Parthenon was another thing. Certainly the extent to which he and his family were prepared to go to save their country from invasion stands as exemplary; but human sacrifice was not a feature of Greek religion. On the contrary, the Greeks regarded it as a barbarian practice (witness the myth of Herakles and the Egyptian pharaoh Bussiris). And what of the rest of the frieze? Sacrificial attendants and the Olympians are appropriate for Connelly's reconstruction, and she is prepared to see the frieze as an explanation of the myth-heroic origins of the Panathenaia. In quantitative terms, however, the most striking feature of the frieze is the cavalcade, and to explain the figures in it as the celebratory mustering of King Erechtheus' forces after their success in battle with the Thracians at Eleusis is not quite convincing. Where, for a start, are their weapons? If they are celebrating victory in a sanctuary, why has the virgin sacrifice to ensure victory not yet taken place?

The boldness of Joan Connelly's arguments at first left other scholars silent or dismissive. There was a certain initial reluctance to confront her views directly, though a string of points have since emerged: the tragic tale may not have been known before the Parthenon was begun; Euripides is notorious for putting his own peculiar spin on myths; the 'sacrifice' is not otherwise depicted in Greek art; there is no hint of grief or torment in the atmosphere of the frieze; the two young women at the left of the central

scene seem to be carrying cushioned stools, not tables laden with shrouds; and the small child to the right is probably a boy, not a girl. One partial convert was Oxford’s William St. Clair, who reacted strongly against a suggestion by Ian Jenkins of the British Museum that Connelly was claiming to have ‘cracked the code’ of an evocative, layered monument:

'The Parthenon frieze, like all good art, undoubtedly had many layers of meaning for its original viewers, not all of which we can expect to recover. But there was no secret. The original viewers, steeped in the local myths and traditions of their city, knew what was being commemorated on their temple even if we do not. Our only hope of recovering its original meanings is to free ourselves from our Western notions of seeing, and instead try to reconstruct the religious, cultural and artistic contexts and conventions within which the Greeks saw and made sense of their very different world.'

Jenkins, who was aware of Connelly’s work, though his book appeared two years before her major article, has produced an exciting reconstruction of the frieze which in many respects supersedes older publications. His interpretation, likewise, is marked by great sophistication. Yet it seems a little too evenhanded, permitting the coexistence of a wide variety of ideas without providing a firm leader among them. He emphasizes the frieze’s ‘intrinsic ambiguity’, by which term he seems to understand multiple meanings, a certain allusive quality that refrains from explicit definition, numerous layers, allegory, and so on. It is quite fashionable to think this way, and there can be little doubt that much Greek art facilitates symbolism and metaphor and evocation to a considerable degree. The difficulty for interpreters comes with setting limits and providing foundations. Jenkins revives the notion that the Parthenon and its statue should be looked upon as a grandiose votive relief, and is convinced that the frieze, like the rest of the Periclean building programme, was conceived partly as a celebration of the city’s current prestige and partly in commemoration of Athens’ valour during the Persian Wars. Subsequently, the frieze moves from being a procession, to the epitome of both the Panathenaic procession and the

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39 W. St. Clair ‘Apocalypse Acropolis’ *Times Literary Supplement* 14 April 1995, 4-5 (at 5); cf Boardman (1984) 412 n 38: ‘Greek artists may seem obscurely allusive to us, but they were not to their contemporaries.’
40 For criticism of Jenkins’ equivocation, see Connelly (1996) 55 n 16.
42 Jenkins (1994) 12, 18.
Panathenaic festival, to suggesting the idea of festival itself. It is argued that the peplos is the main reason for seeing the frieze as a representation of the Panathenaic procession, but the principal theme is said to be

'the celebration of a festival where the present mingles with the heroic past and mortal seeks to communicate with divine. On the west, north and south sides the idea of festival is a general and a universal one. The various elements that go to make up the composition do not specifically represent the Panathenaic festival, although the chariots may suggest it. On the east frieze, however, the subject is more focused and relates more specifically to the Panathenaia.'

Finally,

"The main subject of the frieze ... [is] the people of Athens ... gathered to pay homage to their gods on the occasion of the Great Panathenaic festival. The manner of representation aims not at the particular, but at a universal portrayal of the city, telescoped, as it were, into an ideal procession. We should not, therefore, be surprised that specific elements known to have been part of the procession are not included. The peplos scene provides an unequivocal Panathenaic context; for the rest, the frieze does not aim to document the event itself. It serves, rather, as a visual metaphor of the spirit of the Panathenaic festival, as it was conceived in Pericles' day, embodying and reinforcing the communal values of the city, but at the same time transcending it."

Much of this is appealing, but there are uncertainties: the Panathenaia both is and is not fundamental; it is both there and not there. To this extent St. Clair's criticism appears justified, for a more stable base could have been constructed from which evocative interpretation could proceed.

One striking feature of Connelly's theory was that it gave a huge amount of importance to the peplos scene in the centre of the east frieze. In turn, this tended to place greater importance on the women in the frieze than the men. Some male scholars showed a certain reluctance to confront this situation. Others, to their credit, have embraced the idea of an approach based on gender and/or sexuality. The results are intriguing, and very different from those of Connelly. John Younger, for instance, understands the child figure holding the peplos on the east frieze (E V 35) as a young boy, paired with the older man (E 34) as a symbol of Athenian homoerotic relationships. The matron-maiden pair (E V 33-32) is a corollary: older

45 Jenkins (1994) 25
46 Jenkins (1994) 32
47 Jenkins (1994) 34
48 Jenkins (1994) 39
49 Jenkins (1994) 42.
women share their experience to assist adolescent girls' passage from girlhood to womanhood. The youngest girl (E V 31), standing at the far left, is a 'pre-gendered' child whose sexuality has not yet been constructed and who, unlike the boy-child, has no clear role. Similarly, the Olympian deities nearby are models for human enfranchisement. On balance it does seem that the smaller figure handling the peplos is a boy; the degree of nakedness does not seem appropriate for a girl, and a loose-fitting garment falling from the shoulders so as to display a naked body puts him in company with a number of the youths on the west, north, and south sides (especially N XLVII 136). It is also valuable to have the isolation of the peplos scene demonstrated so clearly. The gods turn their backs on it, preferring to look at the oncoming procession; the five figures in it do not fill the space available as neatly as one might expect from an examination of the rest of the frieze; the girl on the far left, in particular, seems rather a loner, even if it is hard to accept that her role is not roughly equivalent to that of the girl immediately to her right. On the other hand, much of what is surmised in this type of approach seems better applied as a subtext than as the most immediate set of connotations. At any rate, it remains true that,

'... there has not yet been an identification of these people and their roles that has satisfied all conditions and all scholars.'

Andrew Stewart manages a detailed discussion of the Parthenon frieze in the midst of his study of depictions of the body in Greek art. He reacts against Osborne's view that the frieze is merely a way to introduce the great golden statue. This is to miss the emphasis placed upon the cavalry as a youthful and brilliant élite. Why should Perikles single out this group for special attention? It is part of a morale-boosting call for all Athenians to live up to their responsibilities as superior people. The 440s were a time of troubles, military and otherwise. Cavalry reform can be traced to this period. Ultimately, by 431 BC, a standing force of 1000 cavalrymen plus 200 mounted archers had been created. An especially lavish Panathenaia was celebrated in 442 - by which time the carving of the frieze was


51 Younger (1997) 121.

probably underway. The fundamental message was exclusivity, in keeping with Perikles' citizenship law of 451, which decreed that a citizen required both a father and a mother who were Athenian. The frieze called for, but also stridently asserted, Athenian unity, equality, and (by implication) racial and cultural superiority. This went beyond 'knighting' the citizen body and making everyone an aristocrat. The frieze actually omitted non-Athenian mounted archers and allied tribute-bearers, even female *hydriaphoroi*, replacing the latter with young men. The focus fell squarely upon male youths, especially the reformed, augmented, and partially democratized cavalry. 'Youthening' was employed to awaken the (adult male) viewer's homoerotic desire. One had to love one's fellow citizens. The imbalance between naked and clothed youths serves to intensify the homoerotic element, rather than limit it. 'Accidents' of wind which blow drapery away from naked bodies should be seen as witty come-ons deftly inserted to engage and arouse the citizen spectator. The physical remoteness of the frieze ensured that the spectator kept his distance. The flower of Attic manhood was converted into *eromenoi* (the youthful objects of older male suitors). Such boldness of interpretation is at times breathtaking. Stewart goes further than Younger, though again much of what he says on the homoerotic line might serve as (possibly powerful) subtext. His view of the 440s, however, and the programmatic as well as adulatory message of the frieze rings true. So too does his conception of the frieze as a unity.

Stewart's concentration upon the cavalry does not cause him to question the link between the Parthenon frieze and the Panathenaic procession. Jerome J. Pollitt, on the other hand, does precisely this. After a thorough study of the depiction of the horsemen, he concludes that they represent the contemporary Athenian cavalry, a force which had a high public profile and which had recently been reorganized under the personal patronage of Perikles himself. However, he emphasizes that there is no direct testimony that the cavalry actually participated in the Panathenaic procession, and the different types of cavalry clothing, especially as they occur on the south side, lead him to conclude that the riders are arrayed as

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53 Stewart (1997) 79. The Great Panathenaia was celebrated with special richness in 438 too when the Parthenon was dedicated: Schol. *Ar Peiae* 605

54 Stewart (1997) 79

55 Stewart (1997) 80

56 Stewart (1997) 82

57 Stewart (1997) 84

58 Pollitt (1997) 51-65

59 Pollitt seems not to have known of Spence's work on this subject, which reached the same conclusion: Spence (1993) 267-71
they might have appeared in a variety of processions and displays. Building on the old problems, the absence of the boat, the male rather than female hydriaphoroi, and so on, he systematically undermines the Panathenaic links. In fact, he thinks that the peplos scene on the east is the only explicit link with the Panathenaia, and so the frieze mostly evokes the idea of festival itself.\textsuperscript{60} It is, therefore, general rather than particular in its application, though the Panathenaia is by no means excluded from the realm of its associations.

In Chapter 9 of his monumental study of the Acropolis, Jeffrey Hurwit reinforces the overturning of tradition. He rejects Boardman's view of the cavalry as Marathon heroes, and Connelly's of the central panel as the prelude to human sacrifice. He prefers Pollitt's suggestion that the frieze depicts 'the idea of religious festival',\textsuperscript{61} its participants evoking a variety of festivals celebrated throughout the year, the Panathenaia among them, of course. The frieze, Hurwit argues, fits into a unified thematic pattern that can be found throughout the Acropolis, a pattern of \textit{agon} and \textit{nike}, contest and victory, that can be read in monuments large and small. The frieze, while celebrating Athena's birth, the event depicted in the east pediment, likewise celebrates (Athena's role in) the battle won by all the gods over the giants, the event depicted in the east metopes.\textsuperscript{62}

II.

Modern scholars, therefore, have shown considerable reluctance to accept that when the Parthenon frieze was unveiled in the 430s BC it was intended to represent an idealized, contemporary Panathenaic occasion. A wave of opinion has been growing against the traditional link between the Parthenon frieze and the Panathenaic procession. This uncoupling has been achieved through sophisticated readings of the frieze which pay close attention to iconographical details. The scholarship is often exemplary. I wonder, however, whether the forest is being missed somewhat in all the close

\textsuperscript{60} Something like this was already available in Ridgway (1981) 78 ('a general display of religiosity by the Athenians'); cf L. Beschi 'Il fregio del Partenone: una proposta di lettura' \textit{Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei} (1984) 173-95 (at 192, the idea of festival); Jenkins (1994) 32. Ridgway, however, goes on immediately (at 78) to say that 'an abstract rendering of \textit{pietas} seems a symbolic concept much more in keeping with Roman than with Greek practices, which tended towards the concrete. In addition, the central scene would remain unexplained.'

\textsuperscript{61} Hurwit (1999) 227

\textsuperscript{62} Hurwit (1999) 228, 233.
attention that has been given to the trees. A number of the assumptions employed in recent scholarship deserve to be questioned closely.

Against those who belittle the Panathenaic connection, some circumstantial points should be made. We have a frieze depicting a procession which ends with (what can most naturally be taken to be) the peplos being handed over. The frieze is located on a temple of Athena that is in turn located on the Acropolis at Athens. There were other festivals, processions, and sacrifices at Athens, but how many of them involved all these elements: Athena, Acropolis, peplos? How many specifically celebrated Athena's birth, and perhaps also her role in the defeat of the giants, as depicted in the pediment and metopes at the front of the Parthenon? And what of the lavish scale of the event depicted? The Great Panathenaia was the greatest of the Athenian festivals. Our literary sources may mention details which cannot be traced in the frieze, but this is hardly surprising, for the frieze is not a comprehensive record. Nor, for that matter, are our literary sources, which turn out to be snippets of information preserved here and there in scholia and late lexica. There is no warrant in this case for implying that the literary sources form a control against which to measure the art. No extant author attempted to give a detailed description of the procession. The two types of sources are not complementary; the limitations of both are such that when combined they do not permit full appreciation. Their respective degrees of incompleteness especially prevent any decent impression of changes in the ritual over time.

Time and place appear not to be unified throughout the frieze. We have episodes rather than a complete overview. As for the 'impious' presence of

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63 Hurwit (1999) 228, 233
64 A gigantomachy was also woven into the peplos: Eur Hec. 466-74; PI. Euth 6b-c; E J W Barber 'The Peplos of Athena' in Neils (1992) 103-17, esp. 112-17
65 Connelly (1996) 54: 'disparate sources mostly of Hellenistic through Byzantine date'; 76 n 150: 'the later sources ... conflict in so many ways'; Neils (1992), 14: 'many of our literary sources] are Hellenistic, Roman, or even Byzantine commentaries on classical texts and so considerably later than the period under consideration'; Neils (1996) 182: 'all of the surviving ancient testimonia on the Panathenaia are later than the vases and the frieze.' The written sources are discussed most fully in L. Deubner Attische Feste (Berlin, 1932); L Ziehen Panathenaia, in RE 18.3 (1949), 457-89; Parke (1977) 37-50; Simon (1983) 55-72. Neils (1992) 14, is good on the limitations of all types of relevant evidence, including inscriptions and pottery
66 Ashmole (1972) 145: 'The designer took) some liberties with time and place. His was not a canvas a few feet square but five hundred feet of continuous picture which could not all be seen at one time.'
67 Pollitt (1972) 88: 'omissions may be attributable to an episodic technique of narration in which the effect of the whole procession is captured by a linked series of excerpts from it'
a mortal procession on a divine building, the idea of votive forerunners has
been floated, but there are massive differences of scale and spirit. In
particular, the Olympians do not dwarf the mortals as do the deities
on votives, and they are not the object of the sacrifice or peplos. Votives,
moreover, focus upon individual divinities, or upon pairs and triads of
deities united by cult practice. What is appealing, nonetheless, about the
idea of a votive is that the frieze similarly wants to imply perpetual
devotion which deserves ongoing benefits in reply; both the goddess and
her people are constrained by a contract for extraordinary worship and
patronage. It is as though the Great Panathenaia, Athenian worship at its
ultimate, is going on all the time. For Osborne, anyone who appreciates the
frieze may join in, but such a person would probably benefit regardless.
Perhaps the common view that there was an absolute requirement for
scenes of myth on divine buildings is misleading. Fragments of a sixth-
century marble architectural frieze from the Acropolis show a draped figure
climbing into a chariot. It has been thought that these reliefs might once
have decorated the Old Temple of Athena. Because additional fragments
seem to depict seated figures, Brommer and Ridgway wonder whether
the frieze of the Peisistratid temple depicted an archaic precursor to the
Parthenon frieze, which would make the latter less exceptional than it
otherwise seems. Boardman, on the other hand, accepts the fragments as an
architectural frieze, but opposes attempts to assign them to the Peisistratid
temple because he regards the style as too late. Castriota believes simply
that too little of the frieze remains to permit the identification of its subject
or its attribution to a specific monument. In addition, whereas Brommer
finds mortals in temple sculpture of the archaic period, Ridgway argues that
these are not real precedents, for the human element serves merely as an

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68 On votive forerunners, see J H Kroll 'The Parthenon Frieze as a Votive Relief' American Journal of Archaeology 83 (1979) 348-52; Simon (1983) 72; Jenkins (1994) 12. 18
Ridgway (1981) 79, and Boardman (1984) 210, are opposed to the idea.
69 Castriota (1992) 215
70 See also Connelly (1996) 56, on art as agalma 'pleasing gift for the gods.'
71 Osborne (1994) 149
72 H Payne and G Mackworth Young, Archaic Marble Sculpture from the Acropolis 2nd edn (London, 1950) 47
73 Brommer (1977) 152
74 Ridgway (1981) 77
76 Castriota (1992) 306-7 n. 65
accessory to the main mythological scenes. Be that as it may, Neils has demonstrated that fifth-century Athenians were probably quite used to seeing painted representations of the Panathenaic procession on pots. She also reminds us that the distinction between myth and reality is a modern one. The Athenians took their descent from heroes like Erechtheus and Theseus seriously. Modern commentators have probably worried far more about the presence of mortals in the frieze, especially ones heroized, than did the Greeks themselves. Given the setting, Osborne thinks the frieze could only represent a human procession, that of the viewer.

Another basic point is that the frieze is an idealizing monument. There is not always much awareness of what is at stake when scholars criticize it for not showing elements that were present in reality. To a great degree the criticism is unfair or misguided. Artistic conventions, notions of aesthetic balance, and the limitations imposed by the medium would have been in the artists' minds, as would their preconceptions about gender and sexuality. It need hardly be pointed out that the horses are too small in relation to their riders. Numbers (e.g. groups of four on the north and ten on the south) will have been as subject to these kinds of considerations as to others. We might be misinterpreting the significance of these numbers gravely in our readiness to see things historical or political. These and other factors militate against a realistic depiction, if ever there can be such a thing. Moreover, the artists' capacity for innovation should not be underestimated. It was an extraordinarily energetic time, and a time to

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77 Ridgway (1981) 77; cf 79, where her ultimate view is that '[t]he juxtaposition of deities and common men in architectural sculpture remains unprecedented and, perhaps, still largely unexplained. The processional character of the composition is, at present knowledge also very rare if not unique (author's italics)' Castriota (1992) 192, finds no precedent in temple sculpture for a religious event like that of the frieze

78 Neils (1996) 184, 194; cf. Neils (1992) 26: 'Since the residents of this polis were entirely capable of fabricating myths to glorify themselves - such as Athena accompanying Peisistratos in his take-over of the Akropolis, a keptathlos for their local Theseus in order to rival Herakles, or the epiphany of long-dead heroes at the battle of Marathon - there is no reason they should not elevate themselves to the level of heroes on the walls of their new temple!'

79 Osborne (1987) 100-1

80 Cf. Hurwit (1999) 226: 'Now, no one expects the frieze to be a completely accurate, documentary record of the event: this is sculpture, not videotape.'


82 Ridgway (1981) 83: 'Yet they remain one of the most successful artistic deceptions of Greek sculpture.'

expect pride, even arrogance, rather than modesty.\textsuperscript{84} I would accept unity in the frieze with regard to subject matter, and that any overall view of its subject affects the identification of all its parts, and vice versa,\textsuperscript{85} but it seems that omissions and modifications are natural products of the situation.\textsuperscript{86} 

Finally, a few remarks about ambiguity. There can be little doubt that much Greek art is evocative or metaphorical in character.\textsuperscript{87} The Parthenon metopes, pediments, and Athena's statue were covered with symbols of conflict which can justifiably be interpreted to cover Athens' recent history as well as its mythical past. It is not too hard, for instance, to see the Athenians and Persians behind the gods and giants, and so on.\textsuperscript{88} The difficulty for interpreters comes with setting limits and providing foundations. It does not seem right to think that the Greeks merely accepted multiplicity, even inconsistency, or that they intended no precise definition, believing that the message is often 'paradox itself and the irreconcilability of the forces that govern human destiny.'\textsuperscript{89} Some degree of precision should be present.\textsuperscript{90} Meanings can be constructed on top of meanings, and this is probably intrinsic to the process of creating meaning, but there needs to be a base.\textsuperscript{91} It is, for instance, hard to believe that 'ambiguity' could allow for

\textsuperscript{84} Cf. D. M. Lewis 'The Thirty Years' Peace' in \textit{Cambridge Ancient History Vol 5: The Fifth Century BC}, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1992) 146: 'Pericles was not a modest man, and there was nothing little about his ideas.' Note in this context the number of writers who see not just heroization but apotheosis on the frieze: Pollitt (1972) 87: 'Perhaps we see the citizens of Periclean Athens apotheosized'; Boardman (1977) 46: 'as near to apotheosis as any Athenian dared have hope for his brave forefathers'; Castriota (1992) 217: 'The goal of those who designed the frieze was to create an atmosphere that could evoke the notion of apotheosis without asserting it so openly or specifically'; Neils (1992) 26: 'a procession into the presence of the august Olympians implies an apotheosis'; Hurwit (1999) 233: 'The divine and the mortal spheres intersect; divine and human images blend. There is no modesty here.'

\textsuperscript{85} Cf. Boardman (1984) 211

\textsuperscript{86} Cf. Parke (1977) 38, on omissions being unsurprising

\textsuperscript{87} A. Delivorrias, 'The Sculptures of the Parthenon' in Tournikiotis (1994) 98-135. writes of 'deliberate polysemy' (at 126)

\textsuperscript{88} Pollitt (1972) 81: 'The Greeks had a tendency to see the specific in the light of the generic.'

\textsuperscript{89} Jenkins (1994) 32, cf. 34 (against forcing a precise definition where none may have been intended). For a view close to mine, see Hurwit (1999) 227: 'Now, ambiguity is good and great works of art should have more than one level of meaning and all that, but they should not mean just anything (author's italics)' Boardman (1984) 211, finds it hard to credit that no specific festival is meant

\textsuperscript{90} Cf. Harrison (1996) 200: 'a depiction ought in some way to look like what it represents (author's italics).'

\textsuperscript{91} Connelly (1996) 55 n. 16: '[i]n the Greek iconographic system ... images had primary meanings, immediately recognizable to the viewer, even though they could be read and interpreted on multiple levels. Thus, the Parthenon's sculptural program presented images
'uncertainty' in the mind of a contemporary viewer. In viewing the Parthenon frieze, Athenians of the Periclean age were to be impressed and stimulated rather than made uncertain or uneasy. Surely they were constructing their evocations on the foundation of a rather solid idea.

Perhaps further study of the Panathenaia as an institution will open avenues for advancement. There can now be little doubt that the Athenian cavalry participated in the Panathenaic procession. Furthermore, male *hydriaphoroi*, so long a problem for the traditional interpretation, have been detected on fifth-century pots in a Panathenaic context, as though the right of women to bear *hydria* in the procession was an honour accorded them subsequent to the Periclean age. It remains true, as Stewart and others have pointed out, that women are confined to the east frieze only. This certainly seems deliberate. However, the 'problem' of male *hydriaphoroi* has probably been one of our own making, a matter of privileging one class of evidence over the other without fully appreciating the limitations of each.

If the subject of the frieze could be settled, scholars would then be free to discuss its effect and relationship with the rest of the Parthenon sculptures. Recent work by Osborne and Fullerton shows an interest in doing just this, with Osborne showing a refreshing willingness to open the question

with unambiguous, primary meanings (Gigantomachy, Amazonomachy, Centauromachy, Birth of Athena, Contest of Poseidon and Athena), which could also be read on multiple, metaphorical levels (triumph of civilized order over barbaric chaos, birth of Athens and autochthonous nature of the Athenians, victories of Athenians over exotic outsiders).


93 For arguments in favour of their participation in the procession, see Spence (1993), xxxii-xxxiii, 77. 184, 187-8, 267-71. Politt (1997) 52-3, points out that Demosthenes *Against Meidias* 171 and *First Philippic* 26, and Xenophon *Hipparchikos* 3, the texts most commonly used in support of this contention, make mention only of 'processions' in general. But is it likely that the cavalry did not participate in the most important of these?

94 Neils (1996) 183-4, citing a *hydria* by Phintias (London, British Museum E 159; *ARV* 24, 9) and a fragmentary pelike by the Pan Painter (Paris, Louvre C 1079; *ARV* 2 555, 92).

95 The earliest literary evidence for the role of metic women as *hydriaphoroi* it should be noted, dates to the fourth century BC: Demetrius of Phaleron 228 *FGrHist* F 5. Note also Pollux III.5, s.v. *skudaphoros*, scholion Ar *Birds* 551; Ael 6.1. For discussion, see Boardman (1977) 40; Parke (1977) 44; Jenkins (1994) 70-1. 85-7.

96 Osborne (1998) 174-84; M D Fullerton *Greek Art* (Cambridge, 2000) 79-88 (esp 82, on reasons why a procession was represented).
of whether or not there is a sculptural 'programme' on the Parthenon.\textsuperscript{97} There are some clues in this direction, such as the rampant horses which appear in the centre of the west pediment, the west metopes, and the west frieze.\textsuperscript{98} Such concordance hardly seems coincidental. On the other hand, a rather dramatic discovery by the renowned Parthenon architect Manolis Korres has thrown the issue wide open - and predictably this discovery has received less attention than it deserves to date.\textsuperscript{99} Korres believes that the decision to add the Ionic frieze to the Parthenon was taken at a much later stage than has previously been thought:\textsuperscript{100}

'It seems that instead of the frieze, simple unadorned metopes had been projected above the cella walls. Before the positioning of the stylobate of the east portico a decision was made to incorporate relief sculptures in the cella metopes, or to replace these entirely with an Ionic frieze. After the positioning of the first column drums of the east portico it was decided that an Ionic frieze should be added to the interior of the Pronaos. Then the already positioned drums were removed and their diameter was reduced. For the same purpose the east wall was built more to the west than had originally been planned. In general the erection of all the sides of the building was simultaneous, but nevertheless steadily behind the progress of the eastern side. At the moment when it was decided to add the lower frieze, the east side was ready up to the pediment with all the metopes in their positions, while in the other sides the architraves were in their places, but not the triglyphs or the metopes.'

This upsets traditional ideas about the sequence of the sculptures on the building. It also tilts at the notion that there was a consistent Periklean 'programme' underlying the sculptures, for Korres credits changing political conditions with the change of mind about decorating the outer cella:\textsuperscript{101}

'These continual revisions to the programme could not possibly have been due to imperfections in the original studies and plans of the building. They must rather be due to the evolution and eventual prevalence of an opinion which had serious ethical and political dimensions. The metopes already provided allegorical allusions to the victories over the Persians (Trojan war, battle with

\textsuperscript{97} Osborne (1994) 143: 'I cannot prove that the sculptures of the Parthenon form a programme.'

\textsuperscript{98} Osborne (1994) 145: 'The hint that the frieze has a relationship with the metopes and the pediment is hard to miss.' He goes on to argue (145-6) that horses evoke the world of Poseidon and gradually drop out as the viewer approaches the world of Athena on the east side.

\textsuperscript{99} M. Korres 'The Sculptural Adornment of the Parthenon' in R. Economakis (ed.), Acropolis Restoration: The CCAM Interventions (London, 1994) 29-33. I am very grateful to Ken Sheedy for drawing this paper to my attention.

\textsuperscript{100} Korres (1994) 33.

\textsuperscript{101} Korres (1994) 33.
Amazons), but said nothing about those who more recently had sacrificed even more, which was perhaps more proper. The Panathenaic frieze allowed the possibility to honour the state and to project the Athenian political system at a point in time when the need for an ethical justification towards allies and enemies appeared to be at its highest. Thus the building was not only a temple and monument to the Persian wars, but also a monument to the state.

Of course, the technicalities of this argument must be confirmed and debated more fully than they have been. If others with architectural expertise can agree that Korres' findings are accurate, we must then question our ideas about the way the frieze fits with the other decoration. On the face of it, the frieze, particularly in light of its mortal subject, has always seemed a less-than-comfortable fit with the other subjects depicted.

In conclusion, I have tried to accomplish a number of aims in this paper: highlight the perception that the Parthenon frieze is a monument beset by 'problems' of interpretation; emphasize the scholarly preoccupation with the subject of the frieze; signal my personal preference among the many different interpretations; reflect the richness of scholarship in this field; comment upon recurring features of the methodology employed; and also make a couple of predictions about future developments in the field. One particular message is worth special emphasis: a monument might be 'enigmatic' without being 'problematic'. I prefer to think of the Parthenon frieze as an evocative monument rather than as one causing distress, uncertainty or some degree of mental upset. Whatever one's ultimate opinion on its subject, the calm atmosphere created by its style and setting must indicate that distress was in no way intended by the original creators.
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