INTRODUCTION

Modern historians have portrayed the impact of the French Revolution on Scottish politics and society as limited, especially when compared to other parts of the British Isles. Scots, it is argued, were strongly loyal to the political and social status quo, and the populace largely quiescent in the face of the political excitements and strains of the 1790s. As Louis Cullen wrote in 1989, in words which fully reflect this orthodoxy: 'The French Revolution ... passed over Scotland not quite unnoticed but with little sign of a likelihood of upheaval'.[1] Cullen was comparing Scotland to Ireland, a comparison which inevitably tends to emphasize what did not happen in the former. Nevertheless, the implication remains the same; that what needs explanation is the country's political stability in the 1790s and, in T. C. Smout's phrase, the 'uninflammability' of its population.[2]

Scotland's *relative* stability in this period is undeniable, and it is a theme which will feature at various points in this book. Edinburgh was not London or Dublin, and Glasgow, or Dundee or Paisley, to take two of the country's fastest growing manufacturing towns of the later eighteenth century, were not, say, Sheffield, Norwich or Belfast, all sites of strong and tenacious radical political organizations and traditions. Compared to Ireland and some parts of England, radicalism as an open force was quickly suppressed, although this was due in no small part to a uniquely (in a British context) repressive legal system. Edinburgh became a stronghold of political reaction, which, given the strategic importance of the capital in political culture in this period, including radical politics, was another fact of major importance in explaining the course and outcome of the radicals' campaign. An embattled opposition Whig element led by Henry Erskine, until 1796 the Dean of the Faculty of Advocates, did manage to retain a foothold in public life in the capital and, on occasion, such as in late 1795, mobilize a significant amount of opposition to policies of political repression and the conduct of the war; but their influence was episodic and limited. Glasgow seems to have been only marginally different, although the Professor of Civil Law, John Millar, and his coterie provided a focus for opposition Whig opinion in the university. The Glasgow mercantile classes were, however, for the most part strong supporters of Pitt and Dundas, with whom they had multiple and usually very open lines of communication.[3]

The predominant impact of the Irish Rebellion of 1798 seems, meanwhile, to have been to produce a reassuring sense of distance, psychological if not geographical, from the unhappy conflagration across the St George's Channel.[4] While Scotland's opposition Whigs, as in the rest of Britain, used the convulsion further to condemn policies of official repression and the conduct of the military in Ireland, what impressed more people was the brutality and savage violence unleashed by the Irish 'rebels'. That the British military were at least as vicious was not ignored, but seen as justified by circumstances. As the editor of the *Dumfries Weekly Journal* declared on 5 June 1798, 'At such a mode of warfare humanity shudders; but, relying on the wisdom of his Majesty's councils, we persuade ourselves that dire necessity will be found to justify their severity'. There was a Scottish insurrectionary body, the Society of the United Scotsmen, which was linked, in ways and to an extent which remain obscure, to the revolutionary conspiracies of the Society of the United Irishmen – rightly described by Devine as the 'most formidable revolutionary body in the British Isles'[5] – and through them to revolutionary France, but its numbers appear to have been small. A wave of arrests in November 1797 had, moreover, decapitated it of much of its leadership, most notably the Dundee weaver George Mealmaker. In January 1798, Mealmaker was sentenced to fourteen years' transportation. At the end of the decade, very high food prices and economic depression between 1799 and 1801 led to considerable, periodically intense suffering, and several waves of disturbances, but produced relatively little disaffection, passive or active. By this point, keeping faith with revolutionary France and radicalism was very much the preoccupation of a tiny minority, a minority which barely registers in the historical record. As Hamish Fraser has noted elsewhere, neither the Despard conspiracy of 1802 nor the failed Emmet rising in Dublin in the following year had any Scottish dimension.[6]

When confronted with the rise of republicanism and violence in France from the summer of 1792, the efflorescence of domestic popular radicalism during that autumn, and from February 1793 war with revolutionary France, the Scottish elites closed ranks in defence of the political and social status quo. Unity at the top of society in opposition to radicalism was one of many reasons why radical societies found it hard to survive after their initial flourishing.

The political division which opened up in 1792 was also a social one, however. The battle between radicals and the authorities and their supporters became, at least until 1794, one for the hearts and minds of the labouring classes. The difference with other parts of the British Isles was obviously one of degree, but it was notable for all that. Henry Dundas declared on 12 November 1792, in the course of a visit to Scotland which convinced him of the gravity of the challenge posed by developments north of the border:

> Everybody of Character, Respect and Property are so much of one mind here on all the great Principles of real Government, that there is no occasion to write to them. *The contest here is with the lower orders of People, whose minds are poisoned up to the Point of Liberty, Equality, and an Agrarian Law* [my emphasis].[7]

Weavers were very strongly represented among the rank and file of the radical societies which sprang into life in late 1792. Their numbers had grown rapidly in the previous decade, and they often comprised the largest proportion of the male population of Scotland's rapidly growing towns and industrial villages.[8] Scottish popular radicalism, apart from in Edinburgh, emerged from these multiplying and burgeoning weaving communities, a pattern which was to be repeated in 1816–20. It was in the industrial parishes of Renfrewshire, Ayrshire and Dumbartonshire in the west and Fife and Angus in the east, as well as in several of the larger manufacturing towns – Paisley, Perth, Stirling, Dundee, Glasgow – that radicalism, albeit briefly, took a strong hold. Contemporaries were much more equivocal and hesitant in their judgements than some historians have been about the loyalties and views of this section of the population, even, in some cases, after open radicalism had been finally suppressed and cowed in the early months of 1794. As Henry Mackenzie acknowledged to the Prime Minister, William Pitt, at the end of 1793: 'It must be confessed, that the public mind of the country has not got into such a state as to be much more easily agitated & disturbed than formerly; *the lowest of the people talk & read, & think of Politics*'.[9]

Scotland's underlying stability is, therefore, a main theme, but it is not the only one. Equally significant, and overlooked by most historians, were the limitations of the loyalist counter-reaction in Scotland to the rise of radicalism in late 1792. The loyalists' success in mobilizing opinion to combat the threat of radicalism was neither quickly nor easily achieved. Nor were the significance and meanings of any loyalist victory (if it can be so called) unambiguous; there was no uniform loyalist ideological consensus, but rather a strong commitment to order and stability in the fraught, perilous conditions of the decade. If something distinctive needs explaining here it may be why the Scottish elite was so quick in and intent on supporting social and political stability. Here it is that the socio-economic and structural explanations emphasized by Professor Devine are most compelling.[10] On the other hand, such approaches tend to downplay situational factors – in this case the conjunction of events which accompanied and stimulated both the radical campaign and the loyalist counter-reaction in the final months of 1792, the self-defeating posturing of the radicals at the British convention in late 1793, and the discovery of the so-called Watt or Pike Plot early in the following year – and take for granted the success of loyalism, without examining how this was achieved and where it failed as well as succeeded.[11] They also accord relatively little importance to ideology, although clearly there was some relationship between this and social and economic factors. It is worthy of note in this context that several Scots were to the fore in producing historically-minded, empirical defences of the British state at the end of the eighteenth and in the early nineteenth centuries which emphasized progress since 1688 or 1707.[12] This modernizing narrative, which identified Britain's distinctive achievement as one of political stability, liberty and economic and commercial progress, was nurtured and systematized by Scottish Enlightenment writers, and may, given Scotland's recent experience of rapid economic growth, have been one which the elites found it difficult to resist. It may also, perhaps less obviously, have produced a climate of opinion more than usually inclined to value order, as well as liberty, as a precondition of social and economic progress. It was precisely in such terms that the political constitution or 'sett' of Edinburgh was defended in 1777 against those seeking to make it more directly representative of the capital's population. What it ensured, one writer declared, was the 'equal distribution of power' throughout the 'whole community', the maintenance of 'peace' and 'to prevent, as far as possible, the many abuses that would otherwise ensue'.[13] Given the nature of Edinburgh's constitution, the very narrow oligarchy which it served to entrench in power, what might seem striking is that such an argument could be made at all.

In the later 1790s, the main threat to political and social stability came not from domestic disaffection, although it continued to cast a sinewy shadow, but from an expansionist France under the Directory and then Napoleon, a threat which called forth a patriotic response from across the political and social spectrum, and for the suspension of differences to 'bid defiance to the threat of France'.[14] Defensive patriotism was a broader, more pervasive phenomenon than loyalism; it stretched to include, for example, groups of religious dissenters and the lower ranks who, by and large, had remained outside the loyalist reaction of the earlier 1790s. Nevertheless, because of this elasticity, it lacked even the limited degree of ideological coherence displayed by loyalism.[15]

The principal purpose of this book is to examine the rise, trajectory and nature of radical, loyalist and patriotic politics in Scotland in the 1790s from the perspectives of those who took part in them. This is partly done out of a conviction that we need to return to the evidence before seeking to explain in structural terms what did or did not happen; that we need, in short, to pay more attention to the contemporary experiences of radicals and those who sought to defeat them and their ambitions. We also need to map more carefully than has occurred hitherto the opportunities for participation in public and political life and debate to which the developments of the 1790s gave rise. Some of the fascination of this aspect lies in the fact that for most individuals and groups such opportunities had fewer precedents than in many places in England or in Ireland. For those who became the rank and file of the new radical societies formed in the final third of 1792, the unprecedented explosion of political debate in this period meant, for probably the first time, there was a powerful incentive to read about events in newspapers, to discuss them with others, and to seek to construct a new type of politics. The fact that this resulted in failure does not mean that we should relate this story primarily or only with this in view. The full story of Scottish loyalism in this period has, in any case, not been told elsewhere.[16]

This book, then, focuses on the varieties of political experience which were created by the unusual conditions of political life in the 1790s. The sources for doing this are, however, limited in several important ways. This is particularly true of radicalism. Scottish radicalism in the 1790s produced few pamphlets of note and only two short-lived newspapers. In the case of one of the latter, moreover, the *Caledonian Chronicle*, just two issues survive.[17] Of the few pamphlets, the most notable is James Thomson Callender's *The Political Progress of Britain*, which first appeared in 1792 in serial form in James Anderson's periodical, *The Bee*. It has been described by Callender's modern biographer as 'the only lengthy treatise attacking British political institutions to be published in Scotland during the era of the French Revolution'.[18] Almost the only other work which might fall into this category is George Mealmaker's *The Moral and Political Catechism of Mankind* (1797), the existence of which has led to his being described, with little further evidence to support the proposition, as the 'chief ideologue' of the United Scotsmen.[19] It is not hard to think of reasons which might explain why so few Scottish radical pamphlets emerged in the 1790s. First, it reflected London's role throughout the eighteenth century as a magnet to aspirant Scottish writers and journalists. Once there, these individuals tended to adopt a metropolitan perspective on debates, albeit their works were shaped by distinctively Scottish intellectual currents and formations. The full title of James Mackintosh's riposte to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France – Vindicae Gallicae; a Defence of the French Revolution and its English Admirers* (1791) – is significant and representative in this context. Second, a combination of repression and shortage of funds can only have deterred further efforts at putting pen to paper following a series of prosecutions of Scottish radical writers and publishers in early 1793. It is probably significant in this context that the Paisley weaver James Kennedy's verse collection *Treason!!! Or, Not Treason!!!* (1795) was published not in Scotland but in London by that 'pugnaciously persistent' radical publisher Daniel Isaac Eaton.[20] (It was also Eaton who published a second edition of Callender's *The Political Progress* in 1795.) Third, the Scottish intelligentsia were, for the most part, conformist by habit, conviction or circumstance – or some combination of these – and the few that were not were largely, although not entirely, silent on reform issues in the 1790s. What Scotland singularly lacked was anything comparable to the extensive culture and institutions of rational dissent out of which came so many of the English reform voices of the 1790s. Fourth, partly because of the repressive climate and the loyalist bias of most of the Scottish press, Scottish radicals and reformers came to depend heavily on English reform and radical newspapers and propaganda, a dependency which only increased as the decade went on.

The voices of Scottish artisan radicals of the 1790s are equally, if not more, elusive, even where they played a notable role in radicalism locally and nationally. It was on these men that the fortunes of radicalism in Scotland came to rest in the second half of 1793 as their propertied, opposition Whig and burgh reformer allies fell away, but they have left little mark in the historical record, partly because they were defeated so quickly and completely at the end of 1793 and then cowed or driven underground. Their contributions to the debates at the general conventions of Scottish radicals were limited. Rather, these were dominated by a small number of leading delegates, who were from the professional or educated classes, although on occasion the discussions hint at a much broader hinterland of opinion only weakly reflected in the national deliberations. Political talk amongst Scottish radicals more often than not took place in private spaces – weaving shops, rooms in tenement or cottages – rarely accessible to the historian's scrutiny. Subscription coffee rooms, by the later eighteenth century increasingly the most common and certainly the most visible type of coffee room present in Scottish towns, were not haunts of Scottish radicals, something which reflected, in the first place, the relatively high cost of subscription. Nor were the ranks of merchants who tended to frequent them generally sympathetic to the radical cause. An anonymous report on Perth radicalism dating from late 1792 noted: 'A list of subscribers to the Guild Coffee House has been seen but there does not seem to be many Friends of the People among them'.[21] Towards the end of 1793, Walter Hart, one of the city's delegates to the British convention, was hissed from the Glasgow tontine coffee room; in the spring of the same year, the subscribers to the Dundee coffee room terminated the subscription to the *Edinburgh Gazetteer*, mouthpiece of the Scottish Friends of the People.[22] Radicals met in taverns and tap rooms, but such gatherings have produced few records.[23] Sympathetic booksellers' shops were almost certainly common radical haunts. George Galloway, the Glasgow agent of the *Gazetteer*, appears to have set up a reading room in his new shop in 1793, but we have only a single, very brief, mention of this.[24]

The best published account of Scottish political life in this period remains that of Henry W. Meikle, which appeared as long ago as 1912.[25] His narrative was largely based on sources from the national and French archives; and he was not greatly interested in reconstructing viewpoints from beyond Edinburgh. This book seeks to balance a national perspective with a shift in focus to events beyond the capital, although again this is not easily done. There are no equivalents of the provincial radical papers which have proved such a rich source for the study of provincial radicalism in England, and very few papers of any kind other than those published in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Only a tiny number of the radical societies formed in the early 1790s have left any record of their existence other than a solitary notice in a newspaper or a note that they sent a delegate to one of the national conventions of the Scottish Friends of the People held in Edinburgh in 1792–3. What follows, therefore, is not exhaustive, and some places are better represented than others. There is scope for more work on Renfrewshire, Dumbartonshire and Ayrshire, especially in the early 1790s. This book does draw, however, on private manuscript collections and local archival sources which take us a deal further into local and regional conditions than other historians have yet managed. Of particular note in this context are the Atholl Papers, held at Blair Castle. These papers contain a wealth of correspondence between the fourth Duke of Atholl, from 1794 the new Lord Lieutenant of Perthshire, and his deputy lieutenants and other members of the Perthshire and Angus gentry.

A further major aim is to examine how Scotland fits into a broader British and to a lesser extent Irish pattern of politics in this period. There are two elements to this. First, Scottish politics in this period – radical, loyalist and patriotic – in somewhat different ways was or increasingly became a dimension of British politics, in terms of identity, strategy and relationships. Just as a local, regional and national context is helpful in illuminating developments, crucial also is a British one. Linda Colley emphasized the British nature and identity of radical politics in the 1790s some years ago.[26] What this meant and how it was achieved are questions which have never been fully explored, although important work has been done on Scottish radical identities and their national outlook.[27] Perhaps the oddity is that we know rather more about Scottish-Irish connections in light of the influence of the Society of United Irishmen on the Society of United Scotsmen. Prior to 1796, however, connections to England were much more important in influencing the paths taken by Scottish radical politics; and even after 1796 they remained significant.[28]

This book pays close attention, therefore, to the role which individuals and personal relationships played in creating connections between radical politics in Scotland and England from the summer of 1792. This, in turn, serves to bring into new prominence the role in the opening phase of Scottish radical politics of several politicians who are best described as *British* reformers, including most notably Lord Daer, the eldest son of the Earl of Selkirk, and Norman Macleod, until 1796 opposition Whig MP for Invernesshire. Paradoxically, Daer, who remains a somewhat shadowy presence, would appear to have been a Scottish nationalist, at least from the contents of a remarkable letter which he wrote in early 1793 to Charles Grey; in practice and tactically, however, he was a British politician.[29] A member of the Scottish Friends of the People, he was also a member of the London body of the same name and the London Corresponding Society (LCS). He was in addition a very active member of the Society for Constitutional Information, which together with the LCS played a coordinating role in English radicalism in the early 1790s, and which took him to the very heart of metropolitan radical politics.[30] Macleod's connections in London were with the opposition Whigs, and to some extent, therefore, his role represents a natural extension of the increasing integration of Scottish and English opposition politics from the 1780s, as indeed does the initially close connection between the Scottish Friends of the People and the Whig Association of the Friends of the People. Macleod's enthusiasm for parliamentary reform seems to have gone beyond most opposition Whigs and certainly most Scottish opposition Whigs. Another important figure in this context was the staunchly independent-minded Earl of Lauderdale, and his hand can be detected behind the renewed momentum of the Scottish opposition Whigs in the later 1790s. The presence of Scots in metropolitan radical circles – Thomas Hardy, the founder and first secretary of the LCS, being only the most famous – was equally crucial to this process of forging connections between groups north and south of the border. 'Union' as a strategy and goal among radicals was undoubtedly impelled in part by the common experience of repression, but it was also a natural extension of the radicals' outlook and search for unanimity as a means of achieving reform. The pattern of relationships across the national border established in 1792–3 was replicated, to differing degrees and in somewhat different ways, by others in the mid to later 1790s, including the Edinburgh 'bookseller to the people' and agent for the London Corresponding Society, Alexander Leslie. The British thread in the Scottish politics of this period is a major theme in this book.

There is also a comparative aspect which runs throughout much of this book, in that another recurrent theme is Scottish similarity and difference with developments south of the border. To date, where comparison has been made this is with Ireland, with the effect of underlining, or seeming to, the relative placidity of Scottish society and opinion. But conditions in Ireland were uniquely combustible; there was dynamic towards violence and instability there which was not present elsewhere in the British Isles, certainly not to the same degree.[31] Given the diversity of conditions and experiences in England and indeed Scotland, it may be that sub-national comparisons are a more meaningful exercise. Nevertheless, if we wish to construct fuller, more complete narratives of British politics in the 1790s, the approach adopted here provides one way of positioning Scottish experience within a British framework. Much of the existing work on Scotland in the 1790s is, in any case, implicitly comparative on a national basis. Here this aspect is made explicit in the belief that this is a natural perspective to adopt; but it is also done to encourage further debate about Scottish experience among historians of eighteenth-century Britain.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first searches for the eighteenth-century roots of the rise of popular radicalism in the Scotland of the early 1790s. Here Scotland fits awkwardly into the standard narratives of politicization in eighteenth-century Britain, which has led some historians to miss several important continuities spanning the second half of the century. To a considerable degree, the causes of the stark social and political fissure which opened up in Scottish society in late 1792 are to be found in cultural, intellectual and religious developments in previous decades. If the Scottish Enlightenment was, ultimately, a moderate and conservative phenomenon, popular Calvinist orthodoxy provided a well-spring of emotion, commitment and a tradition of 'liberty' which prepared, if no more than this, sections of the labouring classes for the democratic message of liberty created by the French Revolution and Thomas Paine in 1792. Chapter 2 traces the course of political debate and opinion as reflected in the newspapers of the decade. They possess obvious limitations as sources for doing this, but their influence was a growing one in the 1790s as the habit of newspaper readership was powerfully stimulated, and at the same time broadened and deepened socially, by the French Revolution. They have the advantage of allowing us to sketch the broad outlines and contours of opinion, especially among the propertied classes. Reflecting their unique capacity to form circuits of political communication, and their authority as disseminators of news about international events, newspapers were also active and influential agencies in the politics of the period, and for this reason alone their role merits close attention.

Chapters 3 and 4 look, respectively, at the rise and decline of radical politics and the mobilization of loyalist feeling and demonstrations during the period 1792 to 1794. These chapters should be read closely alongside one another; together they help us see the strengths and limitations of both radicalism and loyalism at different moments. They also focus on what radicalism and loyalism meant at specific points. As with English radicalism, Scottish radicalism in the early 1790s was diverse; it also changed over time in response to new opportunities and new constraints and pressures. From a national, British perspective H. T. Dickinson has emphasized radical weakness and its limited support as important factors in its failure.[32] Scotland fits this picture well. Support flourished briefly and then decline set in very quickly as the initial optimism and expectation which surrounded its rise were not sustained. Yet if numbers of radicals were not overwhelming, loyalists in Scotland did not carry all before them. In many places in England in the early 1790s a noisy, vocal loyalist reaction, which seems to have reached far into society, cowed radicals from late 1792;[33] north of the border, loyalism was probably confined in this period to rural and urban elite uncertain about the views of many of the 'middling' and 'lower' sort. It was led from 'above' and directed, to a significant extent, by the authorities in Edinburgh. Significant sections of society resisted pressures to subscribe to a loyalist consensus, mostly obviously religious dissenters, while others viewed loyalist initiatives with apathy if not downright hostility. As we will see, opinions and emotions also shifted abruptly according to circumstance and context.

Chapter 5 focuses on the years 1797–8, which yielded starkly contradictory images of Scottish loyalty and discontent. An underlying theme is how we might reconcile these images and what, together, they tell us about the limitations of any patriotic consensus on Scotland in this period in reaction to the threat of invasion from revolutionary France, rendered only too clear by the arrival of a French fleet off Bantry Bay in Ireland in late 1796. George Ramsay, a director of the Royal Bank of Scotland, recorded tersely in his diary for 9 February: 'dreadful apprehensions of invasion'.[34] In 1796, a visitor to the lowlands identified the volunteer forces first raised in the spring of 1794 as the salvation of places like Ayr, Dumfries, Perth and Dundee, by which he presumably meant that they had successfully intimidated and cowed radicals or those inclined to disorderly conduct.[35] This was before the further marked expansion of volunteering in 1797–8. The account of what motivated those who joined their ranks in these years, or sought to do so, provides further support to those historians who have tended to emphasize the pragmatic reasons for membership on the part of lesser tradesmen, artisans and labourers.[36] One of the causes of the anger which burst out over the implementation of the Militia Act in 1797, a wave of protest which profoundly unsettled the ruling elites in the late summer of that year, albeit only relatively briefly, was the fact that many offers to join volunteer companies earlier in the spring had been rejected. James Wodrow, a minister in an Ayrshire parish, noted in mid April 1797:

> The military spirit had begun to rouse & if properly fanned, we woud [*sic*] soon have had near that number [5,000] of trained men in most counties. In the towns of Saltcoats and Stevenston after a little effort, which I heartily seconded, even from the Pulpit, we had three companies of 60 men each drilling themselves with much spirit. Their offers of service have been to their great mortification now rejected by the Gov. t and a Militia is said to be about to be forced upon us.[37]

Service in the militia was altogether more onerous and disruptive to labouring families than volunteering, and, therefore, resented. The obligation of service also fell on only a small section of the population, and was further resented for that fact. At one level, the stark contrast between the effusion of patriotic spirit in the spring and the violent resistance to the implementation of the Militia Act in the late summer of 1797 emphasizes again the pronounced mutability of popular opinion in this decade. It also indicates very clearly the limitations of patriotism as a socially integrative force.

The subject of Chapter 6 is responses to two periods of shortages of grain and high food prices, 1795–6 and 1799–1801, the second of which was accompanied by an economic and trade depression. In England, the former was linked to, although not caused by, a revival of radical politics in London and elsewhere, which took the form of large, open-air meetings, while the latter was accompanied by a deep undercurrent of political alienation and disaffection. In Scotland, a radical revival was almost entirely absent in 1795, although the opposition Whigs did manage to mobilize considerable support for petitions for peace and against the so-called Gagging Acts, the latest round of repression passed by the Pitt ministry. The groundswell of opinion in support of peace was fuelled by a perception that the dearth was linked to the war. In the later crisis, any political content to the disturbances (whatever its significance) was very rare and confined to a few places in the west. In both periods, there were also a relatively small number of protests, certainly when compared to England, and those that did take place were generally quite orderly and peaceful. Among the factors which have been put forward to explain this is the proposition that paternalism was a more active and pervasive force in Scottish society than south of the border. Related is the view that economic progress, despite accelerating and broadening from the final third of the eighteenth century, created relatively few tensions and stress points in society, which might have led to alienation and disaffection. Nor did it weaken the hegemony of a small, very powerful landed class. One of the main themes of this chapter is to explore the different faces of paternalism in this period, and to examine more systematically than has been done hitherto their possible role in explaining Scottish *difference* during the period 1799–1801. A further aim here is to examine how far the regulation of the bread market in Scotland was similar to or different from the practices and habits of intervention in England. In an English context, this period has been represented as a critical phase in the repudiation of 'moral economy', although it is an idea which has not gained universal acceptance.[38] Scottish conditions and experience have to date not formed any part of this debate.

A brief word, finally, is required about political terminology. Political labels, in this decade more than most, could be very slippery things. When in 1796 a highland minister called Robert Burns a 'staunch republican', what he really meant by this is a moot point.[39] Did he mean an opponent of monarchy and the balanced constitution of King, Lords and Commons? Or, did he simply mean a reformer and opponent of war against revolutionary France? Republican, like its near relation in the 1790s 'Jacobin', was a much-employed term in the loyalist lexicon of abuse and as such tended to be loosely applied; subtle distinctions between varieties of radicalism and reform were not to the purpose of opponents of any sort or measure of reform. Reformers, meanwhile, tended to speak in different voices in different contexts, by turns revealing or concealing aspects of their motivations and inspirations for basically prudential or tactical reasons.[40] Radical politics was also at moments infused with an excitement and intensity which bred a rhetorical violence which was often no more than that, or a gesture of defiance in the face of loyalist misrepresentation. The Scottish parliamentary reform movement as it emerged in 1792 was also a notably broad alliance comprising moderate reformers as well as individuals with a wider and deeper commitment to change. Nevertheless, as we will see in Chapter 3, reform of parliamentary representation was, in line with radical movements and agitations elsewhere in this period, for a growing number of people a beginning rather than an end; the 'cause of liberty' was a campaign of social and individual, as well as political and even moral, recreation, a call to eradicate privilege and aristocratic government in Britain and its attendant ills in the name of humanity and equality. It is this facet of reform politics in this period which above all seems to justify the use of the label 'radical' even though it was not a contemporary usage. Or, to put this another way, Professor John Millar was a reformer who sought principally the dismantling of the Pittite system of government and an end to the war against France: the radicals, taking their lead from Paine and the French Revolution, saw in the cause of political reform the potential for a much more far-reaching transformation of British politics *and* society.