The art of space in the space of art: Edinburgh and its Gallery, 1780-1860

Nick Prior*

University of Edinburgh

## Introduction: John Kay's Edinburgh

John Kay, *Mr Hamilton Bell, W.S., Carrying a Vintner's Boy from Edinburgh to Musselburgh,* etching, 11.5 x 12.5 cm.

In 1792 Edinburgh's most infamous caricaturist, John Kay, was prosecuted for a satirical portrait which depicted the lawyer, Mr Hamilton Bell in a pedestrian race, carrying a tavern-keeper's boy in a basket perched on his back.[1] Oddly, Kay was prosecuted by the winner of the race, Mr Bell himself, who, like other high and middle-ranking victims of Kay's pen, took exception to being disclosed in such a graceless and inauspicious manner. While the prosecution was proceeding Kay enacted revenge in his usual way, by publishing a further print, *The Examination***,** which depicted the prosecutors, 'black in the face' with rage. Kay was found innocent of the charges and by 1822 had gone on to produce around nine hundred etchings, chiefly of Edinburgh characters and incidents. Visitors to the High Street, where Kay's shop was situated, might even see themselves depicted there in the window, immortalized in ink, for the city's populace to scrutinize. Here, etched in quotidian circumstances, were Edinburgh's powerful and prestigious - Adam Smith, Lord Kames, Henry Dundas, William Robertson, James Hutton - as well as various international worthies, military leaders and popular characters from Edinburgh life (Kay 1837-38).

Kay's urban context was both compact and kaleidoscopic at this point. Whilst the city's population grew from 52,720 in 1755 to 138,235 in 1821 (Devine 1990) it was still, by the late eighteenth century, a relatively cohesive civic unit, compacted around the backbone of the High Street, which stretched from the Castle to Holyrood Palace. The 'ribs' of the city extended north and south from the High Street in the form of wynds and closes so that 'the whole…bears a striking resemblance to a turtle, of which the castle is the head, the high street the ridge of the back, the *wynds* and *closes* the shelving sides, and the palace of Holyroodhouse the tail' (Youngson 1966: 2). The city's population lived cheek-by-jowl in the tall tenements that lined the High Street, although residential space was internally differentiated, with the lower ranks inhabiting the extremities of buildings – basements and lofts – and the higher ranks residing in the more sanitary middle floors.

Kay's etchings were potent, in this sense, because they were representations of a relatively intimate civic nexus, circulated through the tropes of enlightenment virtue,
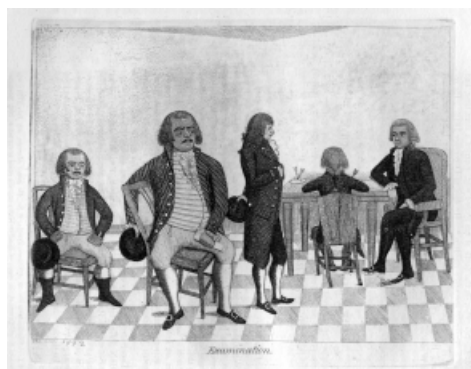
John Kay, *The Artist under Examination by Sheriff Pringle with the Pursuers Bell and Rae, Sitting Behind,* etching, 15.5 x 13 cm

but subject to forms of popular visibility and potential ridicule. The cultural energy expended on the fermentation of the refined *habitus*, through the high portraiture of Allan Ramsay and Henry Raeburn, for instance, was, at this point, counterposed by the popularity of etchings which placed this body in tension.

So, whilst the social world of the modern city had made impression management into an art form, pouring into its higher ranks a heightened degree of performance, it was possible for Edinburgh worthies to be depicted with drunks, giants, beggars, dwarfs, criminals and fishwives. Kay's status as an *independent* limner had been guaranteed by his friendship to William Nisbet of Dirleton, a Jacobite country gentleman, who provided Kay with enough money to give up his trade as a barber. On Nisbet's death in 1784 Kay received an annuity of £20, stabilizing his occupation as an etcher in the city and facilitating his initiation as a freemason in the Lodge of Saint David. Kay's identity as a caricaturist was, therefore, a product of occupational improvement made possible by social intermingling in the city – the same social intermingling that insinuated popular social and cultural practices into the very heart of the city.

Prints, after all, *could* undermine social rank by holding back the move to differentiate the high from the low. Kay was regularly implored to expunge a figure from a portrait in order to equilibrate representation and social class: to correct a posture, lessen a protuberance or tweak a profile. As vision was becoming increasingly privileged, so too was the body as a 'sign-vehicle', conveyed through deportment, fashion, conduct and overall appearance, or what the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1990) calls 'hexis'. To this extent, Kay's characters were 'representations of space', maps of the social body, as important to the overall production of urbanism as a 'way of life' as the town plans or maps of the city (Lefebvre 1991; Wirth 1938).

Within a few decades, however, the conditions of possibility for Kay's etchings were being chipped away by rapid social change and the emergence of more exclusive sites of cultural enunciation - in particular, sites of refined social space. Never again were the high and the low to be so proximate.

The main plan for the New Town had been chosen in 1767 after a competition won by James Craig, for a town consisting of three main streets, the middle one flanked by squares at either end, in a form that was rectilinear and 'rational'. This was followed by public buildings, the construction of the North Bridge and a series of additional plans that expanded urban space between Edinburgh and Leith and further to the north-west. Georgian town houses were laid out in the classical, but restrained style of the enlightenment, in Adam's gentile designs. Neither palatial nor abject, classical architecture indicated the management of arrangements of civil society, part of which was the quest for a clean, refined space that dissimulated superabundance, whilst dissociating itself from 'rudeness'.

The New Town was to be a space of contemplation and learning, a setting for refined civic life - dignified, elegant and spacious, bereft of shops or markets and giving each family its own domestic space, instead of a share in a tenement. Moreover, it was intended as a *separate* arena of refinement - as remote spatially from the Old Town as it was socio-economically. Indeed, by the early nineteenth century, the erection of the Earthen Mound and Princes Street Gardens was said to form a spatial barrier 'to keep from the too close view of the New Town gentry the poor population of the Old Town' (Youngson 1966: 256). The diffuse social topography of the latter – its mosaic of activities, social groups, building types, occupations – had been torn asunder by 1810. Few large houses remained in the Old Town as the area was abandoned by the higher classes and rapidly degenerated into a slum (Gordon 1983: 171).

Edinburgh was an *oeuvre*, a work of art, produced in definite historical conditions by a particular social agency, Edinburgh's professional middle class. The production of its space was at the same time the production of sets of social relations between classes and the movement or rhythms of bodies in the built environment. The city was a production, a text, a 'semiological system', that contained, assigned and signified the social relations that existed there. What Stallybrass and White (1986) call the 'great labour of bourgeois culture' was an historic undertaking, with economic, political and cultural indices, most visibly enacted in space itself. 'The time is not very distant when the most wealthy and fashionable

inhabitants of this town were content to reside in wynds or alleys, which their servants would now disdain to lodge in', wrote a correspondent to the *Scots Magazine* in 1820. Sixty years later, Robert Louis Stevenson was to write: 'There was such a flitting, such a change of domicile and dweller, as was never excelled in the history of cities' (cited in Edwards and Richardson 1983: 20).

The Building, the Collection and Museofication in the National Gallery of Scotland

The erection of the National Gallery of Scotland in the early 1850s, then, was a flourish in a work already underway. For the rest of the paper I will focus on the role and status of the gallery in relation to the formulation of a refined space, taking seriously Marcia Pointon's call for scrutiny of the 'politics of cultural control in which terms such as "public" and "access" have a long and problematic history' (Pointon 1994: 1).

The gallery was founded by the British state in the early 1850s as a solution to escalating conflicts north of the border between vying artistic factions. Lines of tension were drawn between aristocratic patrons, who were seeking to control the shape of the art field, and artists striving for professional autonomy from the dictates of their masters. Charges of financial mismanagement made by the artists against the body of patrons (known as the Royal Institution for the Encouragement of Fine Arts), reinforced the gradual waning of traditional patronal relations and the rise of the modern art market in Scotland. By 1838 the artists had gathered themselves into an institution with official approval, the Royal Scottish Academy, whose position in the artistic field had been secured with the Board of Trade enquiry of 1847 (Prior 2000).

The enquiry's solution to artistic conflicts in the capital was the construction of more exhibition space for the Academy and the formation of a national collection of art. Official funds were to be given to the Academy via the Board of Manufactures, an official development agency set up by the British state in 1727, to build galleries for annual exhibition and the teaching of fine art. Moreover, the Academy's collection, together with those of the Royal Institution and Board of Manufactures, was to form the nucleus of the new national gallery, to provide 'opportunities, which cannot be over-estimated, of rational amusement, mental cultivation, and refinement of taste' (Lefevre 1850: 15).

In the event, the new building, designed by the artists' own champion, William Henry Playfair, housed the Academy and the national gallery collection in two separate suites of rooms on the Mound. No rent was to be charged to the Academy and the curator of the National Gallery was to be chosen from a short-list of Academy members. Officially opened in 1859, the neo-classical edifice and its internal zones were primed for public reception and museological effect.

Indeed, the mere sight of the external shell of the gallery and its setting gives us an idea of the 'ceremonial' programmes and ideological scripts that the visitor might have encountered. Like other 'ritual sites', including other museums, the external appearance of the National Gallery of Scotland actually helped to sustain and authorize its contents as refined and distinguished. Paradoxically, the neo-classical stringency of the National Gallery design adds to its overall impact. The Gallery exerts a monumental effect on the surroundings. In particular the east/west screens of columns, even today, dominate the townscape from North Bridge, despite the low Doric order (Gow 1988). In fact, Playfair had raised the central section four steps above the flanks for external effect. With the archetypal conjunction of Ionic columns supporting an entablature at the portico entrances this austere but powerful spatial ensemble helped to connote the existence of a higher reality operating within its walls – of high culture. The gallery form, in other words, became the first stage in the symbolic production of the works inside, helping to render the ensuing experience as refined and polite; as implying an aesthetic mode of receptivity.

As for the internal layout, the gallery contained just over three hundred objects, arranged in a busy, carpet-to-cornice scheme, and disposed under the basic categories of 'Ancient Masters' and 'British Artists'. In contrast to the enlightened schemes of what Duncan and Wallach (1980) have called 'Universal Survey Museums' - the Louvre, for instance - which collected *en masse* heterogeneous objects from different periods and filtered them through

the assumptions of enlightened philosophy, Edinburgh's layout was elementary; not based on a rational, evolutionary scheme, but jumbled for a more decorative effect.

This was a pragmatic choice. Not only was the shared building too small, but there were too many modern pictures, mainly provided by the Royal Scottish Academy, which skewed the ensemble in favour of the contemporary. Apart from a few choice examples acquired by the Academy, the Royal Institution and the Board of Trustees, the gallery had no significant representations of Italian art from Raphael to the late seventeenth century, of the 'French School' pictures of Claude or Poussin, or notable works from Flemish, Dutch or Spanish masters. Gaps in the historical scheme were slowly filled over the 1860s with bequests and gifts. In general, however, the weakness of the collection militated against the implementation of a complete historical scheme. This mirrored the situation throughout Britain where the principles of the continental enlightenment hang did not fully materialize in galleries until quite late. The National Gallery in London did not, on its inception, hang its pictures according to continental fashions of historical development but stuck to a more traditional scheme – what Waterfield has termed a 'picturesque hang' (Waterfield 1991). This unified pictures into a jumbled aesthetic from which the amateur was supposed to decipher the comparative claims of ancient masters.

The jigsaw-like collection at Edinburgh was ordered into six rooms, one of which was a small cabinet-sized octagon. The first room contained the rather ambiguous genre of portraiture and indexed the increasing popularization of significant characters in British history. The second room displayed around forty Flemish, Spanish and Italian masters, many with uncertain authorship, but which were claimed to be 'authentic' by the Board of Trustees.[2] The centre octagon was given over to 'modern diploma pictures' from the Royal Scottish Academy, which was unusual for a National Gallery; and the last two rooms in the building were dedicated to ancient pictures collected by the aristocratic Royal Institution and the Torrie collection - a Georgian collection of Dutch, Flemish and Italian pictures and marbles.

Here, it is of interest to note the quantity of objects whose origins lay within a context far-removed from that of the museum; whose organic function was certainly not to be collected, framed, labelled and hung in a way that signified its existence as an object of artistic inspection. The gallery displayed: cabinet pictures from the seventeenth century Dutch school, decorative works, objects of personal glorification and religious objects – all extracted from their original settings and turned into museum pieces. On entry and display, cultural works drastically transmuted; they were now 'framed' by the building, art history, the collection, the frame itself, the label, in a way that invited visitors (if they could) to perceive the object as a secular cultural triumph of humanity. Images that in isolation or out of context may have disturbed the sensitivities of (Victorian) morality could receive a public airing in the museum because this was a sanctioned environment. In Scotland, at least, the National Gallery must have been one of the only 'public' institutions where one could see naked flesh without incurring the wrath of Protestant admonition.

To this extent, 'Museofication' was a complex process of transformation that was central to the overall logic of the National Gallery and to the meaning of its contents. All the gallery's materials were active in shaping a certain receptivity and of transfiguring works such as cabinet pictures, objects of personal glorification and decorative pictures that were never meant to end up there. Despite limitations in its collection, its modest iconography and its mixed hang, the National Gallery space provided certain conditions for opening up the surface of the picture to the 'contemplative gaze', giving the impression of direct contact with the artist and the act of creation.

The 'Naïve' and the 'Educated': the Case of the Catalogue

But as the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu does (1993), we must ask whose gaze this was. If professionalism had stripped the gallery of all that was superfluous to efficient display, leaving a space dedicated to disinterested and refined cultural pleasures and aesthetic knowledge, whose socio-ocular dispositions did this favour? Well, like other galleries, the National Gallery of Scotland's context worked to differentiate viewing publics by establishing

a level of 'cultural capital' that was required to 'play the game' of informed appreciation. A hierarchy of perception was implicated, in other words, in the way the gallery set out its collection, in the quality of its 'texts' and the codes of behaviour enforced by the trustees. A basic line of distinction was implied between the educated middle classes - those equipped with the requisite aesthetic disposition (or '*habitus*') and the 'naive' or 'uneducated' who could be physically present but symbolically excluded, or at least could not operate at the levels of perception that were valorized in the gallery.

Apart from the varying opening times themselves,[3] one way in which the hierarchization of different *habituses* can be unveiled is by looking at the catalogue. Sold at sixpence, the one-hundred page catalogue was significant to the visit. It provided a historical description of the pictures and their artists as well as critical remarks on particular styles and schools. By appearing to summarize the collection and its import, the catalogue appeared to stand outside it; a neutral text of iteration and knowledge that presented the same face to all. Yet, on investigation, it can be seen that the catalogue was an ideologically potent text which differentiated subject positions, reinforcing divisions between the cognizant and the untaught.

The Board's attitude to catalogues had been revealed in 1854 to the Royal Institution for the Encouragement of Fine Arts whose collection of Old Masters and modern pictures in the Royal Institution galleries (now the Royal Scottish Academy) had been accompanied by a plush, high-quality catalogue. On the one hand, in keeping with its historical role as art educator and its challenge to the narrow privacy of the old aristocratic faction, the Board wrote to the Royal Institution asking them to reduce the existing price which was 'quite out of the reach of the working classes'. 'To such persons' the Board observed, the ownership of a catalogue was 'a pleasing recollection of the Exhibition they had seen and by shewing it to their friends might be a means of exciting an interest in the Exhibition and of making it more widely known and appreciated' (NG1/3/27). On the other hand, and fitting with its increasingly specialized and professionalized role as guardian of fine art, the Board suggested keeping the present high quality stock for the 'higher classes', who would prefer to pay the higher price for it for the sake of 'obtaining that superior printing and style of this catalogue which make it the best for reference in viewing the pictures' (NG1/3/27).

The educated middle and upper classes were offered a superior set of cultural references because this satisfied their socially acquired hunger for aesthetic works. 'But common people' wrote the Board, 'would be satisfied with much less' (NG1/3/27) and a restricted, inferior catalogue was produced for this social constituency. Those who probably needed as much assistance as possible to artistic reception were given a cheap, Spartan experience which reinforced their inability to 'play the game'. In fact, *The Scotsman* had intimated that the minimal information conveyed by the picture label (subject, name, date of birth and death of the artist) would have been enough for such visitors 'who are contented with these particulars [and] need not incur the expense of a catalogue' (*The Scotsman,* Saturday, April 2, 1859).

This was the operation of a 'cultural arbitrary' that functioned to reinstate the divisions between the aesthetic of a cultured middle class and that of the lower classes, the stranger or the uneducated. The latter were registered in the gallery but in a way which subordinated their presence and subject position. Primacy was given to the cultivated gaze that could delve under the surface of the pictures, that could decipher the invisible codes and make them coherent, that could place works and artists into recognisable movements, schools and styles.

So, the educated eye was a source of visual power and observation that could animate the gallery's objects and meet the demands made by the spatial-aesthetics of the gallery. This included the artistic competence needed to use the catalogue in the sense demanded. Schools, movements and styles were discussed as if the reader was familiar with their definitions. The 'Bolognese School', the 'Venetian School', 'Mannerism', 'the Picturesque', 'the Eclectic School', 'the Spanish School', 'the Flemish School' were all listed without explanation (or without proper separation in the gallery). There was 'truth and simplicity of treatment' in Bassano, whose greens 'had a kind of vitreous sparkling appearance'; Ostade's 'pictures have great depth and transparency, produced by an unctuous mode of working, exactly the opposite of Teniers'; and in Tiepolo 'an intelligent art student may...find

technical qualities of manipulation, texture and colour, from which benefit may be derived' (EUL, I* 15/2.6). Overall, the catalogue was geared towards the informed visitor and a technology of seeing that fell in with the middle-class *habitus.* For, to paraphrase Bourdieu (1993), classification, more than anything, classifies the classifier.

The Regulation of Codes and the Modes of Conduct

All of which was reinforced by the informal rules, regulations and codes that stipulated the kinds of behaviour expected in the gallery. Normatively inscribed forms of conduct became integral to the mode by which the gallery regulated its space. Indeed, most museums had formal regulations or proscribed rules for dealing with the public. As Sherman notes, the Louvre issued instructions 'fraternally to invite citizens to move along' (1987: 51) before 1793, and other continental museums recruited guards to prevent visitors touching works of art, to suppress unruly or drunken behaviour, and to deny access to those accompanied by dogs. This was clearly part of the attempt to mark off the gallery space, like its relatives in the bourgeois public sphere, as a realm of cultural distinction and contemplation. Conditions of consumption had to reflect the reservation of the gallery site for a quality experience, divested of vulgarity and the pleasures of the low orders. Hence, rules against spitting, shouting, swearing, fighting, eating, drinking and so on, served to expel the values of the fair and the tavern, leaving instead a pure space of etiquette and eminence.

On its opening, the National Gallery of Scotland had no set of formal regulations from which we can extract a clear-cut operation of purifications and exclusions. But what we do find is the existence of certain decisions and statements on the gallery's visitors and the organization of the visiting space, from which certain assumptions about its audience can be drawn.

First of all, then, the question of access - who was and was not welcomed into the gallery - remained a thorny question for the Board. Inasmuch as the national gallery was a nominally public institution, the Board found itself confronting the possibility of having to welcome visitors of all classes, ages, temperaments and states of sobriety. Indeed, part of the movement to elevate the taste and behaviour of both Scotland's industrial class and its 'drunken denomination' to a level less prone to radicalism, intemperance or 'idleness', found *occasional* expression in the encouragement of such constituencies into the gallery. In the 1850s and 60s, for instance, the Board accepted requests from the Society of the Suppression of Drunkenness and the Campsie Mechanics Institute to attend the galleries under the supervision of the Board. That the Board was not totally at ease with such visits is indicated by its condition that policemen and security guards be in greater attendance. This went also for public holidays when the gallery could be visited by those who ordinarily worked during opening hours. On private views when similar numbers had attended the galleries, of course, no such recourse was needed in the Board's view; a less troublesome audience was implied on such occasions.

A suspicion of the popular, profane and boisterous appeared to be a defining characteristic of the Trustees' regulation of the gallery space. The possible inclusion of the 'masses', gave itself to caution for the potential escape of transgressive, disruptive or 'eccentric' behaviour which might undermine the respectable foundations of the space. Guards were asked to be particularly vigilant against the touching of pictures and the entrance staff of the Royal Institution galleries warned against 'persons trying to get admission [who] are not quite sober, and troublesome' (NG1/3/28). By the Board's own directives, 'disorderly visitors' were to be checked and 'misconduct' suppressed by the police; while officers were empowered to 'refuse admittance to suspicious characters' (NG1/1/44).

Precisely because the gallery had been carved out as a space of rank, hierarchy and professional regulation, that body of the unpalatable 'other' had to be kept distant or controlled. The image *potential* of the low and transgressive was enough to spark the Board into marginalizing the visibility of the lower orders as feasibly as a public gallery would allow. Indeed, eliminating or distancing the rude, the dirty, the primal and the venal was a defining moment for Europe's bourgeois. For, as Stallybrass and White (1986) indicate, the fear and representation of elements of the 'Great Unwashed' - the sewer, the rat, the vagabond, the

prostitute, the contagious - a fear which, paradoxically, returned in sublimated ways as desire and fascination, marked out the boundaries between the high and low that collectivized and purified the former. By stipulating that drunks, criminals and suspicious visitors were kept in check the Board was merely acting out the historical role that the 'civilization process' had instilled in this class (Elias 1978), raising the stakes of manners and codes of conduct in such a way that mapped the cultural primacy of the (Edin)bourgeois subject onto the space of contemplation.

We might look at the question of the inclusion/exclusion of children and infants, for instance, as a test of the Board's intolerance of the spontaneous, unpredictable and 'crude'. In the Board's view, the child represented a potentially promiscuous constituency in the gallery; it was still at a 'rude' stage of social development that could be dirty, visceral and noisy. By the mid 1860s complaints were registered from the curator who suggested that 'all children under 4 years of age should be excluded' (NG1/1/43). This proposition was rejected but, interestingly, 'Babies *in arms'* were excluded. Presumably the possible disruption caused by the holding of a baby (the risk of the infant's touch, or vomit, for instance), was reduced if the baby was cot-ridden. In effect, of course, this would have served to exclude those working class mothers who could not afford such amenities as a cot. By 1866 further edicts were issued to limit the admission of boys and girls under 10 years of age and a rope was placed around pictures 'so as to make it more effective for keeping off children' (NG1/1/44). The Board's antipathy to dirt, as well as its desire to subject the 'unruly' to discipline and public regulation was further evident in the curator's observation of the 'hands of ragged little boys and girls' who he then pointed out to the assistant curator 'as to be specially looked after' (NG6/7/29).

Two pictures in particular were singled out for attention - Noel Paton's *The Quarell of Oberon and Titania* and the *Reconciliation of Oberon and Titania*. The detail in the pictures was a source of fascination for young visitors, depicting as they did, the fantastical minutiae of lizards, plants, snails, foliage, spiders, and sprites from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Increased vigilance was stressed towards these pictures and guards instructed to prevent any inclination towards corporeal involvement beyond the ocular and contemplative. The stare of the strange and poor, in this sense, was the opposite to the pure gaze; it was felt as an act of aggression or physical contagion. Rope was ordered to keep children and undesirables at a safe distance and glass finally installed to protect against the tactile promiscuity of those wanting to 'ascertain the surface' of certain pictures. All this reiterated the ideals of the civilized *habitus*, to control the boundaries of the body - touching, eating, defecating, spitting, expelling mucus - and to keep the socially inadmissible in check (Elias 1978). Corporeal occlusion, for instance, was surely the basis to the Board's tragi-comic decision to cancel copying tickets for a Mr Weiss who 'being subject to epileptic fits' appeared both to alarm visitors and 'endangered any works of art he might be near' (NG1/1/44).

Finally, the strengthening of a silent mode of contemplation - inoffensive, graceful and dignified - was always one of the main aims of the Board of Trustees. To the extent that sound always works interdependently with space, hush appeared as a defining component of the gallery's interior. The physical parameters of sound, the rhythms and circulations of silence, penetrated the gallery's spatial materiality, as it did in museums, theatres, concerts and libraries throughout Britain. Indeed the gallery's carpet was claimed as an integral facilitator of quietude; it banished the 'constant footfalls of visitors' that was 'extremely irritating to those desiring the calm and contemplative study of art' (NG6/6/16). It is likely, in addition, that the progressive expulsion of young children turned on matters of noise, the crying of babies in particular. Infantile disturbances threatened the gallery's ability to deliver distinction and impaired the professional rectitude that had been so carefully layered *vis-a-vis* the neo-classical building, the decor and the gallery's 'texts'.

In contrast to the hubbub and conviviality of popular pleasures and street spectacles, then, the National Gallery elevated a dormant specular concentration that again petrified divisions between the naive and the informed visitor. On the one hand, like neo-classical architecture, silence fitted well with the *habituses* of the latter. The domestic gentility of the New Town drawing room, the theatre, the church and other places of bourgeois assembly

in the city, presupposed an ability, at designated moments, to suppress coarse laughter or noisy participation and assume a refined bodily deportment of hushed humility. On the other hand, the popular proclivity for filling up space with noise, the laughter of carnival and the verbosity of folk sociation - idioms, gestures and symbols that signposted the closes of Edinburgh's Old Town and the markets of its High Street - such a tendency was at odds with the gallery's solemnity. Silence, a pre-requisite in most galleries of Europe, was not only golden, but genteel and hegemonic.

Outside the gallery, the popular was a literal target for expulsion. In 1863 the Board of Trustees was pressed into writing to the police to take steps to ban 'disruptive' performances of Punch and Judy at the side of the Royal Institution galleries' (NG1/3/32). The clamour of 'two rival performances' had caused boys to spill over into the 'interior side steps of the Royal Institution within its Railings'. 'Moreover', wrote the Board, 'a leading access to the National Gallery for foot passengers is blocked by the crowd and made very disagreeable to pass'. On the pretext of damage to the pillars, the Board declared: 'This of course cannot be allowed and must be put a stop to' (NG1/3/32). Carnival was subsequently severed, folk culture extricated from the visual field, leaving a pure space where bourgeois recognized bourgeois, but in relative hush.

Or rather, we should say, folk culture in its overt and palpable materiality was removed from the National Gallery of Scotland. For the genre scenes of the Dutch Masters, the modern Scottish genre scenes of Walter Geickie and the later acquisitions of works by David Allan and David Wilkie all depicted the rural and labouring poor and scenes from popular celebrations such as weddings. And yet, the repressed or unpalatable had returned in nostalgic or palatable form. Disgust, in other words, had returned as desire. The characters had been bowdlerized, sentimentalized or turned into objects of humour. They were divested of dirt and famine, ordered and knew their rank. The lower orders had returned, in other words, as spectacle, as distanced and unreal - framed and therefore controlled. Like the religious, decorative or cabinet pictures themselves, the lowly had been fetishized 'inside'. 'Why Edinburgh?' ask Stallybrass and White: because the art of space in modern European cities was to construct 'a clean ideal sphere of judgement...defined in terms of a low and dirty periphery, a notional and literal 'outside' which guaranteed a coherence and privilege to the 'inside'' (Stallybrass and White 1986: 109).

Conclusion

On the occasion of its opening the Lord Provost of Edinburgh spoke of the National Gallery as a 'source of refined and intellectual enjoyment to all classes of the community, from the highest to the lowest' (*The Scotsman*, March 23, 1859). The trustees and their catalogue reiterated this idea of universal accessibility. But what was disavowed in these statements was the fact of uneven distribution *vis-a-vis* the possession of an informed aesthetic *habitus*; of the cultivated visitor's capacity to stave off the necessities of work and survival and partake of the refined pleasures that education and leisure produced.

Administrators assumed a public that, whilst being structurally and experientially differentiated in the gallery, was held up as an unproblematic whole or collective. Rarely did the gallery's idea of its public coincide with the actual community it served most naturally. In contrast to some of the science and technology based projects of the 'popular enlightenment' in Scotland (Smith 1983), the gallery did not emerge as an institution of mass improvement. Its remit was never to inculcate 'useful knowledge' in as many of the lower classes as possible, or to de-radicalize potential agitators. Bourgeois subject positions and identities were clearly marked out for preference and fulfilment. The gallery's layers of spatial effect became a marked argot by which Edinburgh's superintendents of high art collectively established a familiar set of codes that, in turn, constructed a known space. The gallery, to this extent, was saturated with its own social history.

Literally, the space and setting that framed the gallery symbolized Edinburgh's move to refinement. The Mound had been built from earth extracted from the basements of New Town houses. More than providing an enclosed setting for high art, though, the Mound was the visible means whereby the Old Town and its vulgar populace was obscured, distanced

Benjamin W. Crombie, *Modern Athenians*, George Thomson, Esq and J. F. Williams, etching, 30 x 25 cm

and disconnected, undermining the possibility for the two to co-exist in 'representations of space' such as Kay's prints. That the tradition of portrait etchings was continued in a more sanitized form, in the case of Benjamin Crombie's 'Men of Modern Athens', reinforces the sense in which the risky proximity of diverse social groups had been replaced by a form of individualized social existence for Edinburgh's middle classes. Indeed, Crombie's preference for 'true likeness' is given special praise over Kay's tendency towards 'caricature' in the preface to the 1882 collection, *Modern Athenians* (Crombie 1882).[4]

In his essay on the 'musée', Georges Bataille characterizes the museum project, and the Louvre in particular, as bearing the marks of blood that the guillotine left after 1789 (Hollier 1992). For Bataille, such institutions embody contradictory energies. The rise of the museum is also the metaphorical rise of the slaughterhouse (the guillotine). There is cleanliness but also a 'dirty' history; art is secular but the experience can be profoundly ritualistic. These oppositions contain but also hide each other. No blood tainted the Mound as such, but this does not mean the site was as unsullied as the version produced by its professional guardians. For regardless of the differences between the political impulses driving the Louvre and the National Gallery of Scotland, they both emerged as spatial constellations at the interplay between displaying, legitimating and excluding.

All of which brings us back to the social parameters of space. For 'no space is "innocent" or devoid of meaning' in Chaney's words (1994: 149). The organization of space is a highly potent mode of establishing identities, boundaries and subject positions. Places embody, but also circulate and hierarchize social interests. They can, therefore, be 'read', or 'deconstructed' if you like, as cultural 'texts' themselves, with authors, narratives, socially located readers and socio-cultural genealogies. The task of organizing space is a necessity for all communities that order social experience. Not all spaces are equal, however. Many are manipulated by powerful social forces and inscribed with historically patterned ideologies

Benjamin W. Crombie, *Modern Athenians*, David Tweedie and John Tweedie, etching, 30 x 24 cm.

which elevate them beyond the reaches of the collective. We make and remake space but not in circumstances of our own choosing, to paraphrase Marx, but under circumstances directly transmitted according to economic, social and political interests (Duncan and Ley 1993).

From this perspective, in which space is not an empty site of representation but loaded with power, the question of displacement and privilege in the gallery has to become central. For 'where somewhere is' pertains not to the rhetorics of ideologues and

professionals, but to the material levels of experience - levels which, in the gallery, are coded in a distinction between those with an aesthetic disposition and those strangers without.

Notes

[1] This paper was first presented at the Economic and Social Research Council *Museum and Society* seminar, held at the Liverpool Tate Gallery, January 2000 and I am grateful to Gordon Fyfe and others present at the seminar for comments and support in its writing. It is a revised version of a paper that first appeared as "The High Within and the Low Without", *Cultural Logic: An Electronic Journal of Marxist Theory and Practice*, http://eserver.org/clogic, 2 (2) Spring 2000, and subsequently published as chapter 6 of my book *Museums and Modernity*, Berg, Oxford, 2002. The material on John Kay has formed the basis of a lengthier analysis of the body, social space and urban change in late eighteenth-century Edinburgh, published as 'Urban Portraits: Space/Body/City in Late Georgian Edinburgh', *New Formations,* Summer, no. 47, 2002.

[2] After all, attribution made all the difference between a valorized object of aesthetic desire and a mere copy or derivative.

[3] With, in 'descending' order but with increasing consternation on the Board's count, private views, sixpence days, copy days and free days.

[4] I am grateful to Gordon Fyfe for alerting me to the existence of Crombie's prints.

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NG 1/3/24-33	1829-1869 (letters)
NG 1/73/23	1847-1848 (misc. papers)
NG 3/1/1	1819-1867 (letters)
NG 3/7/3	1820-1845 (misc. correspondence)
NG 6/1/1-4	1858-1906 (minutes)
NG 6/6/1-22	1849-1930 (building records)
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* Nick Prior is Lecturer in sociology at the University of Edinburgh. He is author of *Museums and Modernity: Art Galleries and the Making of Modern Culture* which is published by Berg. He has also published a number of papers on the historical sociology of Edinburgh's art world including 'A Different Field of Vision: Gentlemen and Players in Edinburgh, 1826-1851, in Bridget Fowler (ed) *Reading Bourdieu on Society and Culture,* Blackwell (2000).