The High Within and the Low Without: The Social Production of Aesthetic Space in the National Gallery of Scotland, 1859-70

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Abstract

This paper addresses the socio-aesthetic relations between art and space in the context of the National Gallery of Scotland on its opening. The narrative is ordered according to a hypothetical walk through the gallery to show how the institution's texts, its collection and rules of behaviour, conferred meaning on aesthetic objects and established the space as a high cultural enclave. The gallery was opened to the public, but it also differentiated this public according to its ability to play the game of art appreciation. Spatially, the gallery served to remove 'low' or 'vulgar' constituencies and elevated the pure, high and refined. To this extent, the National Gallery of Scotland was used by (Edin)bourgeois professional elites as a cultural resource of distinction and distanciation.

Without (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1989)
I.2a. Outside (or out of) the place mentioned or implied; especially outside of the house or room; out of doors.
III.8a. In a state of not possessing; not having (as a possession of any kind, a part, an advantage, etc.); in want of, destitute of, lacking.

INTRODUCTION

> 'Space is not a scientific object misappropriated by ideology or politics . . . [it] is political and ideological' (Lefebvre, cited in Dufrenne, 1978: 318).

The idea that history begins at the layers of individual spatial experience, 'at ground level, with footsteps' (de Certeau, 1985: 129) has been crucial to some contemporary forms of social, geographical and cultural enquiry. The work of the new cultural geographers, Harvey, de Certeau, back to Simmel, Benjamin, Lefebvre and the Situationists, has opened up the spaces, forms and activities of quotidian life to a rich social analysis that deals with the interfaces between our experience of space and its social context. Some of these propositions have been applied to the environment of the museum. The recent turn towards a social or political 'anthropology' of museums, in particular, has concentrated on the spatial arena itself as operating to fulfil certain 'ceremonial' programmes or ideological 'scripts' (Karp and Lavine, 1991; Sherman and Rogoff, 1994; Pearce, 1992; Duncan, 1995; Vergo, 1989). The visitor, here, is inscribed in a web of sequenced spaces and arrangements of sounds, colours and objects that provides a 'stage set', shaping and structuring the visit according to dominant aesthetic and social interests.

Museums, under such scrutiny, are symbolic sites which circulate ideological effects. Through their systems of installation, the layout of their rooms, the labelling of their objects and their iconographic schemes, museums have been claimed to produce colonial identities (Coombes, 1988), confer artistic value on objects (Bourdieu, 1993) and authorise state ideologies (Duncan and Wallach, 1980). The museum's artefacts, in turn, are not considered to be neutral or static units of value that present the same face to all. Rather, they are set up as active shapers of experience that take on multiform effect according both to the museum context -- its design and visual representation -- and the visitor's own social and cultural identity.

Every museum, then, makes and remakes its space through layers of visual and ideological effect. Often this is an invisible organisation. In fact, the very socio-political efficacy of the museum is a product of the appearance of purity, neutrality and legitimacy that is produced by its own texts, architecture and iconography. These cultural and spatial forms give the museum an air of timeless truth, or an internal coherence (Sherman, 1987; Saumarez-Smith, 1991). The task of critical analysis, however, is to by-pass this anonymity. The critical analyst must look at the museum as a class of object which, through the construction of material 'events', purposefully frames space and people in space according to historically and ideologically specific conditions. This leads commentators such as Duncan and Wallach (1980) to characterise museums as 'ceremonial monuments', resembling traditional sites of power/knowledge such as churches.

This paper fits into a similar turn to the 'spatial' via the 'critical' in that it seeks a socio-cultural investigation of the spatial relations that pertain to the National Gallery of Scotland from 1859-70. This ensemble consists of architectural, aesthetic, decorative, and behavioural layers of meaning which accompanied the early structuration of the building's internal and external environment. There would be several ways of organising this investigation, but I have chosen to emphasize two modes of effect that relate more to the gallery's internal efficacy. Whilst a hypothetical visit encounters (1) the initial external sight of the gallery -- its architecture and setting -- and (2) the gallery's internal

topography, ornamentation, and decor, I have reserved special attention for (3) the collection itself, the layout of the objects and their iconographic effect; and coterminously (4) the internal regulations and codes of behaviour expected and reinforced in the gallery. The combination of these latter zones of museological effect were potent precisely because they produced meanings that were crucial to the core function of the gallery as a whole: these included the particular field of power relations that gave the museum its essential character, its high cultural status and inner workings.

Two broad themes run through this paper. Firstly, the gallery is analysed as a professionally controlled space. Having in mind Chaney's remark that 'professionals can be characterised by their ability to control social space' (1994: 141), I have sketched some of the relations between the National Gallery of Scotland's internal domain and the precepts of Edinburgh's professional leaders. This is particularly apt since the idea of a gallery relied very much on notions of classical purity that marked the enlightenment world-view. Secondly, I have focused on a resultant facet of the gallery's aesthetic space -- that it was internally and socially differentiating. At work through the gallery's spatial relations were certain distinctions between groups of visitors, the informed/high and the uninformed/low, in particular. Despite being lauded as universally accessible, the gallery, in effect, served to privilege professional and bourgeois identities and modes of contemplation above lower or popular modes and identities. The coherent set of cultural dispositions and orientations belonging to the former, which can be subsumed under Bourdieu's term *habitus*, fitted well with the gallery's spatial order, whereas the values and predispositions of the uncultured *habitus* fitted less well with the space.[1] Indeed, this socio-spatial hierarchisation of the gallery pointed up the historical genealogy of the institution as a whole. The gallery emerged as a domain of cultural capital that articulated and reinforced (Edin)bourgeois norms of civility and sociation. The high aesthetic, to this extent, was a central resource for professional expertise and purity; the gallery a privileged space for performances of bourgeois distinction.

THE COLLECTION, CATALOGUE AND ICONOGRAPHY

How, then, did the material arrangement of the collection contribute to the gallery's overall distinction? How were the art objects ordered and classified? To what extent did the collection interact with the internal space in order to 'produce' the gallery's epistemology? What texts or discourses accompanied the arrangement and whose interests and identities were privileged or circumvented?

Perhaps more than any other single layer in the social production of aesthetic space, the manner in which a gallery's aesthetic objects are acquired, disposed and made visible is primary to its mode of operation. A gallery's 'iconographic programme' structures a multiplicity of socio-aesthetic meanings, each of them crucial to the overall function and status of the gallery, to its patrons or commanders (be they nation-states, cities or private individuals) and to the varying forms of reception that are possible or elevated. The collection it is, in short, that forms the locus of the eye, of power and of the gallery's self-definition as culturally refined.

The Collection Layout

Clearly, the National Gallery of Scotland's iconographic scheme can not be compared with those of other 'Universal Survey Museums' in breadth or intensity. The visual order of the gallery did not overly resemble the post-revolutionary Louvre's (re)presentation of French art as the summation of cultural civilisation, for instance -- through guides, sculptures and labelling as accompanying 'texts' of national affirmation (Duncan and Wallach, 1980). Nevertheless, the classification and installation of the Edinburgh gallery's three hundred or so objects was an important moment in the organisation of its ceremonial experience. The iconographic pattern, in other words, diffused a requisite level of high cultural codes for the constitution of a distinctive, 'public', civil and hierarchised space of representation. In every room it is possible to decipher some component feature in the overall production of the gallery's cultural order: of the socio-aesthetic priorities of the Trustees, of the modes of perception played out by the 'educated' and 'naive', and of the turning of erstwhile hidden objects of private delectation into 'public' objects of artistic contemplation.

Figure 1: Interior of the National Gallery of Scotland, c.1867-77, Anonymous, used with permission of the National Galleries of Scotland

As with much else to do with the gallery, aesthetic predilection was always tempered by available resources, which in this case were scant. For a start, the gallery's collection could not boast decent or representative specimens of the 'canon' and was seriously deficient in many areas of art history. Having at least a representative of the key periods in the enlightenment narrative of art was a prerequisite for Universal Survey Museums on the Continent. The ensuing chronological hang, according to schools and periods, was

believed both to unveil the underlying laws, truths, rules and structures behind the progress of art and to thereby foster an amelioration in the educative capacities of visitors. Mechel's arrangements in Vienna were based in exactly this kind of combination of enlightened bourgeois pedagogy and disaffection with Baroque or decorative principles of abundance: and in early nineteenth-century Germany a set of principles had been formulated by the respected critic Dr Waagen and the architect Schinkel. Seling sums up their programme on acquisition and layout as follows:

> Is a work to be hung 'a good painting', that is, 'a worthy representative of the time and school to which it belongs?' Once this is settled your aim should be (1) to 'display the originators of the various trends . . . as fully as possible as the true, principal and fundamental masters', (2) 'to obtain a complete idea of those great masters who are specially noteworthy for spirited variety, as for instance Rubens', (3) to show 'national painters who are at the same time great artists . . . as completely as possible', (4) 'to be saving in pictures by masters of limited individuality . . . and who tend to repeat themselves', and (5) 'to represent only by one or two examples subordinate masters working in a particular trend' (Seling, 1967: 114).

As a result, Universal Survey Museums collected en masse heterogeneous objects from different periods, filtered them through the homogenising assumptions of enlightened philosophy and established 'ideal paths' for visitors to follow through the collection (Duncan and Wallach, 1980). Typical quantities of displayed objects ranged anything from four hundred and fifty to six hundred or more. Authoritative texts or briefs gave added coherence to the museum's iconography, making explicit the axioms of art history, further directing the visitor's tour according to historicist, rational and universal truths and resolving all of the individual objects into an essence of European civilisation and its component styles.

For the most part, no such simple overriding system of taxonomy was implemented at Edinburgh. In fact, the base assumptions articulated by Waagen and Schinkel could never have been carried out even if the gallery's administrators were willing. A cursory review of the collection reveals why. Apart from a few choice examples acquired by the key players in the gallery's development (the Royal Institution for the Encouragement of Fine Arts, the Royal Scottish Academy, the Board of Trustees and the Royal Association for the Promotion of Fine Arts in Scotland) the National Gallery of Scotland really had no significant representatives of Italian art from Raphael to the late seventeenth century, of the 'French School' pictures of Claude or Poussin, or of the notable works of Flemish, Dutch or Spanish masters. Gaps in the historical scheme were slowly filled over the decade with bequests and gifts (most notably Lady Murray's bequest of 1861 of foreign masters including French paintings by Greuze, Watteau, Boucher and Lancret). But in general, the weakness of the collection militated against the implementation of a complete historical scheme. This all proved to be an agitation for the critic of the *Daily Scotsman* who was obviously familiar with the working hypotheses of other European galleries and their contents:

> A public gallery ought to fulfil two conditions -- to be capable of teaching art, and of forming the taste of the public. To accomplish this successfully, the gallery ought to contain a due proportion of works by the principal artists of each school or country, as it is only by comparing and contrasting the properties of the different schools that their merits can be ascertained, and correct judgments formed. Judged by this standard, the present gallery is lamentably deficient. It contains no specimens of the revival of art in either Italy or Germany -- that pure spring from which Raphael and succeeding artists quaffed so freely. None of the succeeding great masters of the Roman and Florentine schools are represented and the leading men of the Flemish and Dutch schools with the exception of Vandyke, are also wanting, or are represented by unfavourable . . . specimens. As a collection of the comparative claims of genius, it is therefore quite useless, and likely even to cause false notions and unfounded conclusions (*Daily Scotsman*, Saturday March 19, 1859).

However, it would have been odd to expect otherwise. In addition to the limited nature of the collection itself, space was never in abundance for the Trustees. With only six rooms to distribute the collection in, including the small cabinet-sized octagon, it would have been difficult to impose a strict chronological hang. Size often determined the placement of a picture and if an object was considered over-large it was sometimes rejected. Secondly, the amount of 'modern' pictures in the collection (mainly provided by the Royal Scottish Academy) unbalanced the ensemble in favour of the contemporary and precluded a thorough historical sweep. Thirdly, the National Gallery of Scotland appeared to suffer a certain disfavour in the acquisition of surplus pictures from London, which may have considerably bolstered its programme. In the period 1859-70, in particular, the Board regularly complained at the order of preference that prevailed in the disposition of London's 'surplus pictures'. At times the Edinburgh gallery appeared to be overlooked in favour of Dublin's National Gallery and the South Kensington Museum, at a moment of centralisation in official arts policy in Victorian London (Minihan, 1977; King, 1985).

Finally, the principles of the continental enlightenment hang did not fully materialise in British galleries generally until quite late. The National Gallery in London, on its inception, did not hang its pictures according to continental fashions of historical development but stuck to a more traditional scheme -- what Waterfield (1991) has termed a 'picturesque hang'. Robert Peel and important collectors opposed a national acquisition policy based on historical principles, instead preferring a decorative or 'aristocratic' approach. This unified pictures into a jumbled ensemble from which the amateur was supposed to decipher the comparative claims of ancient masters. Resisting continental tastes in the light of the Napoleonic campaign was certainly a factor (the distrust of French aesthetic theory, for instance), as was lack of space and of collections that would allow a full evolutionary hang. In any case, Parliament refused to sanction an acquisition policy for the National Gallery based on the historical value of pictures until the second half of the century.

For all these reasons, then, the gallery at Edinburgh was organised loosely around two primitive categories -- 'Ancient Masters' and 'British Artists', which effectively split the collection into ancient and modern works (there being very little of note in the 'British School' that could be considered 'ancient' or 'masterly'). The inclination to make such a distinction in Edinburgh can be traced back to the arrangements of the earlier Royal Institution galleries and to the memos of the National Gallery's curator, William Johnstone, to the Board in view of the gallery's opening. Within the Royal Institution galleries, the Board of Trustees, in May 1850, resolved to maintain 'a more distinct separation between the Ancient and Modern pictures of the collections' (NG1/1/39). In effect, this meant putting the Torrie collection -- a mix of Dutch, Flemish and Italian pictures belonging to Sir James Erskine of Torrie -- in the north octagon and Etty's modern historical pictures in the south octagon. It was believed that the effect of both suffered if hung too close. In particular, the curator had focused on the difference in tone between Old Masters (dark) and the modern pictures (light) which disharmonised them.

By 1858 this general principle of organisation had been transposed to the National Gallery and after some experimentation, a rudimentary hanging scheme had emerged. We can loosely reconstruct the initial configuration from Johnstone's memos to the Board, the first catalogue and from newspaper accounts on the gallery's opening.

The Hanging Scheme

> 'My dear Johnstone, How goes the National Gallery? are your pictures yet arranged? are there any spaces of wall yet left?' (Letter from David Roberts to William Johnstone, December 14th 1858).

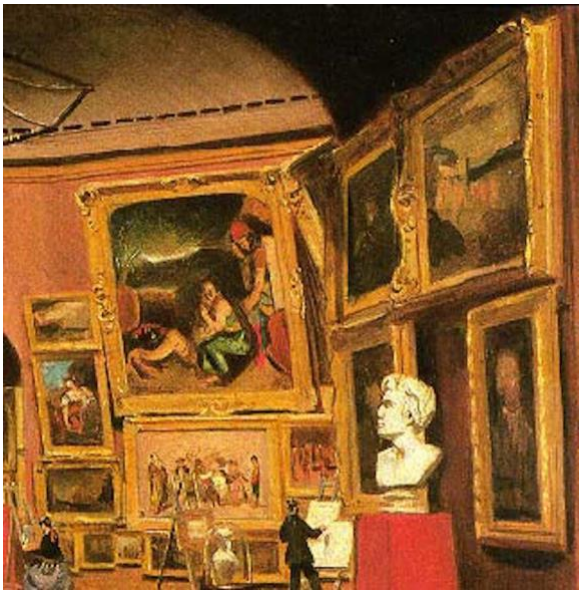

Figure 2: Interior of the National Gallery of Scotland, Anonymous, c. 1867-77 (detail), used with permission of the National Galleries of Scotland

Perhaps the most striking difference a visitor today would have noticed of the National Gallery on its opening was the crowded mode of its arrangement. From all accounts the pictures covered the wall, virtually obliterating any trace of the green planks beneath. This was carpet-to-cornice hanging at its most extreme, making maximum use of the small space for the three hundred objects. Installation procedures certainly contrasted heavily with the more 'pedagogical', ordered and evolutionary presentation on the continent. The 'mixed hang' of the National Gallery of Scotland resembled much more the aristocratic schemes of the eighteenth century, where the overall effect was crucial. An urgency to keep the walls overflowing with pictures, frame to frame, pervaded the actions of the gallery's superintendents, and indicated the logistical juggling that was required to keep the jigsaw whole. Frequently, the gallery was forced to rearrange the ensemble in order to 'fill up the blanks upon the walls' when pictures were loaned to other exhibitions in the Kingdom -- the International Exhibition of 1862, in London, for instance (NG1/1/42). If no replacements were found in time, vacant sections of the walls were 'filled up with dark red hangings' which 'much improved the appearance of the Gallery' (NG1/1/43). Pictures were hung on the walls of the arches between the galleries and over the top of the arches, as high as the walls would allow.2 Many of the pictures in the National Gallery collection were inordinately large -- a fifteen foot Terbrugghen, a thirteen foot Lauder, a nine foot Van Dyck and so on. In fact, it had been forced upon Johnstone to hang these large pictures first as it was 'impossible to form any opinion as to where smaller pictures are to be placed, 'till these are put out of the way' (NG6/7/28).

iii) Rooms I-V

If we can now take a progressive 'walk' through the gallery, we will be in a position to focus on certain issues which pertain to the organisation, status and ethos of each room. In the light of the later foundation of the National Portrait Gallery in 1882 (opened in 1889), it is interesting to note that the whole of the first room had been dedicated to portraits. Indeed this room was often termed a 'portrait gallery' in itself (NG6/7/28). The catalogue spoke of the importance of the recent decision to institute a National Portrait Gallery in London and alluded to a similar interest north of the border. Portraiture was a very popular genre in Scotland and despite the fact that this was one of the smaller rooms in the gallery, the general effect of the thirty-four pictures of Scottish figures, hung close, must have been impressive. Placed here were modern pictures by the likes of Thomas Lawrence, Henry Raeburn, Allan Ramsay, John Watson Gordon and John Runciman.

Portraiture, however, caused a problem which struck at the very heart of the Board of Trustees historical role in the encouragement of art in Scotland, as well as the position of the gallery itself. Such was the ambiguous aesthetic status of portraiture, which could range from the historically grand and ideal to the most vain, vulgar and technically deficient (Pointon, 1993), that the Board found itself increasingly stuck on the horns of a dilemma. What criteria should be used in deciding whether or not to accept and display a portrait? Should the historical importance (or celebrity status) of the sitter override the aesthetic or high artistic status of the picture? The problem arose every time the Board was offered a picture of a well-known figure, particularly if the character had connections with the Board itself. A set of resolutions was suggested to clarify matters of acquisition

and other galleries in Britain were sounded for their policies. In the event, the Board was pressed into fully embracing its role as guardian of a high aesthetic by nominally rejecting portraits which fell outside the 'principles upon which a National Gallery ought to be formed -- which it was essential should be strictly confined in its purposes to the encouragement of high art' (NG1/1/41). In other words, 'none but works of artistic merit find a place in the National Gallery' (NG1/1/41). In subsequent years, many offers were deflected to the likes of Register House or the Industrial Museum where the sitter rather than the style or form took primacy.

Despite this concerted effort to retain an aesthetic purity to the gallery space, however, critics still found fault with the first room in the gallery. The reviewer for *The Scotsman* of April 2, 1859, for instance, spoke of the pictures by Ramsay, Runciman and Laing as well as others in this room as lacking in 'sufficient merit as works of art to entitle them to a place in a National Gallery of Art, however well adapted they may be for a Portrait Gallery'. Portraiture, it seemed, did not lend itself so easily to aesthetic ideals. Often, its import was synonymous with historical or antiquarian tastes; interests which sat uneasily with those of high aesthetics; interests, in fact, which provided the later basis to the foundation of a separate portrait Gallery in Edinburgh.

The visitor who moved into the second room, a more substantial octagon, would have encountered around forty pictures of the Flemish, Spanish and Italian schools which made up a substantial part of the Marquis of Abercorn's collection. This included two interiors by Panini, Velasquez's *Don Balthazar Carlos*, two pictures by Tintoretto, *The Marriage of St Catherine* by Albano, The Adoration of the Magi attributed at the time to Titian, but later revealed as a Bassano, and what the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* in March 1859 called 'a very doubtful Rembrandt' (*Deposition from the Cross*).

The question of attribution was central to the Board's claims to display a representative, worthwhile and authentic collection. The trace of the signature or the expert's official sanction clearly made all the difference between a valorised object of aesthetic desire and a mere copy or derivative ('school of'). Hence objects of uncertain authorship, inasmuch as authorship was considered to be held down to one individuated 'creator', posed a problem for the Board. On the one hand, the gallery could not make outlandish claims to the art world regarding its objects that could be subsequently revealed as specious or unfounded. On the other hand, and especially given the gallery's lack of specimens of the international canon, the trustees had to play on what it already had as a 'National Gallery' with the cultural distinction that this label implied.

The tensions in this position were manifest on the revelation that the Board had taken at face-value the claims of dealers or patrons as to the history of the objects in the collection. The Board, in other words, could not itself guarantee the work's authenticity, and doubt was thrown over some of the pictures in the Torrie collection, as well as the 'Rembrandt' and 'Titian' mentioned above. Indeed, a reviewer went as far as to cast aspersions on the accuracy of the catalogue and, by implication, the Board's professional credentials as an artistically cognizant national guardian of taste. 'It is somewhat anomalous to find a national institution sheltering itself under such a declaration'

suggested the critic in reference to the Board's acceptance of dealer authorship in the catalogue. He continued: 'Whatever may be the reason for dealing so tenderly with the pictures already in the Gallery, we trust that both for the sake of art and truth the claims of future contributions will be carefully weighed before they are recorded under the names assigned to them by the donors' (*The Scotsman*, Saturday April 2 1859). All of which would have seriously affronted the Board's professional credo.

In response, the Board became more vigilant in verifying authenticity, especially with the older objects, using official catalogues and experts where possible. For the aura of the 'hand of the master' was paramount in conferring museological value on art; signatured objects became fetishized objects -- rare and luminous. The gallery's labels helped to secure a plethora of meanings relating to authenticity, legacy, ownership and taxonomy. They conveyed standard information for British galleries, including subject, name of artist, date of birth and date of death. Yet, on designating a picture as the work of a master, a label would have invited the visitor (where possible) to 'read' a more powerful set of connotations into the work-as-fetish. It is to this extent that a label operates as a 'system of classification' that in Jordanova's words, 'confers value and status, and thereby constructs a setting for the item' (1989: 24). This principle of individuation may at first sight appear to contradict the presentation of the collection as an aggregate. But the combination of universalism and particularism, of form and content, was at the very heart of the gallery's logic; as it was of modernity as a broader project. It was a matter of displaying the dual principles of totality and uniqueness; of the creator/painting and 'art' as an organic system (Negrin, 1991).

The small cabinet-sized octagon was entered via the second room. The room appeared to act rather as an ancillary space for less worthy, original or 'awkward' specimens, including Reinagle's copy of Rubens' *Crucifixion* and Urquhart's copy of Raphael's *Transfiguration*. While the procurement of sixty-three watercolour copies of Old Masters from European museums helped to supplement the gaps in the international canon, their status both as copies and non-oils undermined their aesthetic weight, so were consigned, with nine drawings after Fra Angelico's *Coronation of the Virgin*, to this octagon. Further, the room's obscurity helped to deal with art which appeared to offend delicate, official Victorian morality. In its depiction of the moment after St John had been beheaded, Feti's *Decollation of St John the Baptist* (now attributed to Terbrugghen) was one of the only 'originals' to be relegated to the room.

Seemingly, if the picture had represented the moment before the decollation, as it had with Etty's *Judith and Holofernes* or Van Dyck's *St Sebastian*, its repugnance would have been lessened. As it stood, the 'Feti' fell into the category of Old Masters who, while admired in the 'excellence of their art', were denigrated for 'the horrible details of suffering they have chosen to represent' (EUL: I* 15/2.6:78).3

Perhaps rather surprisingly, the biggest and most focal space of the gallery was given over to 'modern pictures'. The centre octagon, from which the rest of the collection branched and balanced out, displayed around fifty-five late eighteenth and early nineteenth century pictures of 'British Artists'. These were mainly Royal Scottish

Academy diploma pictures and some by notable English artists -- Lawrence, Reynolds, Wilson, Gainsborough and Etty. In effect, the centre-piece was little more than an extra forum for the Royal Scottish Academy, containing its most valued products and major purchases, and indicating the literal degree to which the Academy's interests lay at the heart of the gallery's evolution.

Figure 3: The Beheading of St John the Baptist, Henrik Terbrugghen (1588-1629), used with permission of the National Galleries of Scotland

The decision to dedicate the centre octagon to the modern appeared to rest on practical grounds, although the practical is never untouched by the ideological in these matters. In his memo to the Board of December 1858, William Johnstone focused on the peculiar size and nature of the central octagon, with its high walls and high skylights. For the curator, the tonal distribution of the room did not make it conducive to pictures hung on the line because the light had further to reach. As a result, many of the ancient pictures, it was declared, which were dark in tone (the Van Dyck's were mentioned in particular), but had to be hung on the line because of their size, would 'not be seen so well in the centre room as in any of the other octagons' (NG6/7/28).

On the other hand, good light was in evidence at higher levels upon the walls, where modern works in temporary exhibitions were accustomed to reside. In fact, in the Royal Scottish Academy side, Johnstone pointed out, it had 'always been found necessary in order to prevent the centre octagon having a base appearance to hang there one row more of pictures'. Evidently, then, the desire to cover the walls of this room tapestry-style was a safeguard against an adulteration of the overall effect of the collection; a fear indicated in Johnstone's later comment that he doubted there be enough ancient objects to make a

selection of pictures to fill up the centre octagon, in which case 'the general effect of the galleries would be marred' (NG6/7/28).4

As to the latent claims regarding the import of Scottish painters in the canon, nothing explicitly was done to connect the evolution of great art or of ancient masters to a consummation in Scottish art. Waagen and Schinkel's maxim that a gallery should show 'national painters who are at the same time great artists . . . as completely as possible' (Seling, 1967) did not, and could not materialise in Edinburgh. The centre octagon tended to stand on its own -- a collection within a collection that made no claims to summation. The catalogue, rather than extolling the virtues of the great and coherent 'Scottish School' within historical civilisation, tended to establish points of derivation and influence from the English and continental schools. Hence, John Thomson's manner was based on that of Poussin as well as the Dutch Masters, Patrick Gibson 'painted landscape compositions based on the style of Claude and Poussin' (EUL:I* 15/2.6:78:71); Raeburn's style was modelled on Reynolds'; and other artists were considered 'British' rather than 'Scottish' *tout court*.5 In no sense could the gallery be held to circulate an iconography of national glorification via the workings of its texts and visual installations. In keeping with its socio-genesis, and its twice removedness from the continental model, the iconographic programme was modest, straightforward, rational and professional; based in civic interests and factional struggles rather than state power and political upheaval (Prior, forthcoming).

'Museofication' in the National Gallery

'A Museum only begins when what is individual resolves into a new whole' (Hauser 1982: 498)

These last two rooms contained what was left of the collection. Room IV, a substantial octagon, was dedicated to the pictures collected by the Royal Institution before its accounts were wound up -- three important Van Dycks and sixteenth/eighteenth Venetian pictures, in particular. Room V, a less sizeable room, contained the Torrie collection. 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. On this realisation, it is apt to ask to what extent the gallery itself worked to resocialise its objects and why. How did acquisitions come to play a totally different role to that for which they had been originally assigned? And what does this say about the power of the space and the context in the conferral of value in the case of the gallery and its art?

Firstly, many of the smaller pictures in the Torrie collection, especially from the seventeenth-century 'Dutch school', were 'cabinet pictures'. That is to say, they were originally intended to fit into plain, domestic or intimate bourgeois interiors and to be viewed at close range. Even if, as is likely, these pictures were hung low down in Room V for close inspection (the less detailed and larger old masters would have been placed higher) the organic connection to primary utility was immediately dissolved.

Secondly, decorative works were abundant in the rooms. Many of the classical landscapes after Claude or Poussin would have been fitted up to match the feel of a seventeenth or eighteenth-century country house or palace. Their utility in a spatial scheme would have been subsumed under ideas of decorative or ornamental sentiment, not under statements on the stature of the seventeenth-century French landscape school. The fact that some of the pictures in the National Gallery had been previously cut down suggests the extent to which they were formerly treated akin to wallpaper.

Figure 4: The Finding of Moses, Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, 1738-40,
used with permission of the National Galleries of Scotland

Tiepolo's *Finding of Moses* (Room IV), for instance, an eighteenth-century fantasy piece with wooded landscape, was said to have been a decorative composition and has been both cut down at the top and separated from a large section from the right hand side which belonged to a separate collector until recently.

Closely related to decoration was personal glorification and many of the portraits in the collection were certainly meant as presents, mementos or objects of vanity; and often as part of a series of works. The 1957 catalogue, for instance, reports that Van Dyck's *Italian Noble* was one of a pair of portraits in the Palace of Giacomo Gentili which Wilkie later saw 'fitted into the wall' of a room in a Palazzo Lomellini. Equally, a Flemish landscape was claimed to be one of 'four panels representative of the periods of the day painted by Titian to decorate the bedstead of the Emperor Charles V, which was in the possession of the Vivaldi Pasqua family' (1957: 86).

Finally, a large proportion of these works were religious and originally located in a suitable environment -- churches, temples, monasteries and palaces. Pordenone's *Christ*

on the Mount of Olives, for instance, like others of this artist, may have been either for a cycle of religious pictures for an Italian cathedral, for a decorative project or for palatial glory. *The Last Supper* by Bonifazio was originally from a Carthusian monastery of San Andrea de Lido. 'Michaelangelo's' wax models were from the tombs of the Medici's from San Lorenzo, Florence. And in 1862 the Board borrowed from the National Gallery, London, an altarpiece 'with cuspidi or points and side pilasters' containing eighteen pictures on wood, some attributed to Andrea del Castagna (NG1/1/42). This came from the convent of St. John the Evangelist at Prato Vecchio in the Casenlino, Florence. Clearly, all of these objects would have formerly played spiritual, devotional, or decorative roles that were stripped on entry to the gallery.

And yet this is exactly what the project of the museum was about -- extracting objects from their veridical settings and turning them into museum pieces. It was about establishing meaningful connections between disparate objects like altar pieces and modern pictures such that they begin to denote a similar sign -- 'art', with canonised figures 'artists'.6 It was about making a nominally public display piece out of an entity that may have only been for select eyes. It was about resocialising, objectifying and fetishizing cultural monads as symbols of a higher reality. It was about cutting up the world into categories, periods and schools in order to provide a 'cultural cohesion of dominant styles' (Sherman and Rogoff, 1994: xi). In short, it was about the (re)presentation of objects via space and its attendants.

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 were 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 epistemology 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 the works that, particularly in Rooms IV and V, 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 a possible sense of direct contact with the artist and the act of creation.

The 'naive' and the 'educated' in the National Gallery

'The naive 'beholder' differs from the art historian in that the latter is conscious of the situation' (Panofsky, cited in Bourdieu, 1993 :218).

But as Bourdieu does, 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? 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 (*habitus*) and the 'naive' or 'uneducated' who could be physically present but made to feel obviated or at least could not operate at the levels of perception that were valorised in the gallery.

Apart from the varying gallery times themselves (with, in 'descending' order, but with increasing consternation on the Board's count; private views, sixpence days, copy days and free days), one way in which such a hierarchy 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 authors as well as critical remarks on particular styles and schools. By appearing to summarise 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, the catalogue was an ideologically active 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 had been accompanied by a plush, high-quality catalogue. On the one hand, in keeping with its historical role as art educator, its challenge to the narrow privacy of the old aristocratic faction, and in response to pressures from London, 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 specialised and professionalised 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, my emphasis).

The educated middle and upper classes were offered a superior set of cultural references because this satisfied their socially accumulated hunger for aesthetic works. 'But common people' wrote the Board, '*would be satisfied with much less*' (ibid., my emphasis) and a restricted, inferior catalogue was produced for this social constituency. Those who probably needed as much assistance to reception as possible 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 label (subject, name, date of birth/death) would have been enough for such visitors 'who are contented

with these particulars [and] need not incur the expense of a catalogue' (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 working class, 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 knowledge base or 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 of course). There was 'truth and simplicity of treatment' in Bassano, whose greens 'had a kind of vitreous sparkling appearance'; Giorgione's 'pictures bear the impress of great power and have a luminousness and internal glow contrasted with a solemn and dignified repose'; Bonifazio's 'style is broad and simple, and in colour he nearly approaches Titian'; Bordone 'looked much at the works of Giorgione'; 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). On British artists the catalogue was slightly less lofty and polysyllabic. Greater description was given over to historical events, recognisable subjects, details on costumes and so on. But overall, the catalogue was geared towards the informed visitor and a technology of seeing that fell in with the middle-class *habitus*.

Thus, at the level of knowledge, the national gallery was patterned according to an intertextual or relational system of comparisons and differences. Consider the following typical statement in the catalogue: 'Guido . . . displayed more originality in his works than any other pupil of the Caracci, and was the great opponent of Caravaggio, and the naturalisti of that period, aiming at lightness in his colouring and elegance in his forms' (EUL, I* 15/2.6). A visitor could only make sense of this knowledge if s/he was possessed of the codes of classification, the stylistic indices, the generic codes, that made it possible to differentiate the 'naturalisti' from 'Caracci' and 'Caravaggio' and apprehend the meaning of 'lightness' and 'elegance' in painting. Without these codes there merely exists a cacophony of indecipherables -- words, lines, colours that refuse to cohere into a system. In this case, visitors feel displaced, precluded, 'out of their depth' (Bourdieu, 1993: 225). In the absence of a historical hang even chronology was omitted as a possible precept of organisation for the uninitiated. In short, nothing in the morphology of the gallery made it easy for this constituency of visitor.

Codes And Modes Of Conduct

> 'A picture gallery appears to be thought of as a fair, whereas what it should be is a temple, a temple where, in silent and unspeaking humility and in inspiring solitude, one may admire artists as the highest among mortals' (Tieck and Wackenroder, cited in Hudson, 1987 :43).

Working coterminously with the gallery's internal spatial effect were 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 antecedents 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, 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 organisation of the visiting space, from which certain assumptions on its audience can be drawn. In particular, it is possible to look at the gallery's position on security arrangements, and on the Board's reaction to certain events or accidents which disrupted the refined and respectable space, as coded incidents of an informal set of prohibitions. This indexed the same ideo-logics which served to distinguish those who 'naturally' felt at ease in the gallery and obeyed its rules without thinking, from those who were less congruent with the codes, and who were often posed as a threat to the gentility of the space.

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 commensurate with 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. In fact, in a fit of pique the Board complained to the police that unless more officers were given at their disposal on public holidays, the National Gallery would not be able to open at all, as 'the articles in the collections are to be exposed to injury from disorderly visitors' (NG1/1/44). 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, who were constantly drafted in by the Board (NG1/2/28); 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 either kept distant or controlled. The image potential of the low and transgressive was enough to spark the Board into marginalising the order and visibility of this constituency 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 subsequent representation of elements of the 'Great Unwashed' -- the sewer, the rat, 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 collectivised 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 civilisation process had instilled in this class, raising the stakes of manners and codes of conduct in such a way that mapped the cultural primacy of the bourgeois subject onto the space of contemplation.[7]

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). The proposition was rejected but, interestingly, 'Babies in arms' were excluded. Presumably the possible disruption caused by the holding of a baby, in the eyes of the Board, was lessened if the baby was cot-ridden (the risk of the infant's touch, or bodily fluids, were lessened if it was confined in this way). In effect, of course, this would have served to interdict those working class mothers who could not afford such amenities. 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). Indeed, the Board's antipathy to dirt, as well as its desire to subject the 'unruly' to discipline and public regulation was 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).8

Still, the pictures remained a constant security scare for the Board. Guards were increasingly ordered to keep watch and suppress any physical tendencies. But additional measures were required for some pictures. By the mid 1860s it was revealed that Noel Paton's *Quarell* and *Reconciliation of Oberon and Titania* attracted much attention of an extrinsic nature. The detail in the pictures was a particular source of fascination for visitors, depicting as they did, the fantastical minutiae of lizards, plants, snails, foliage, spiders, and sprites from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Figure 5: The Quarrel of Oberon and Titania, Sir Joseph Noel Paton, 1849,
used with permission of the National Galleries of Scotland

The Board's discomfort, here, hinged on the fact that it did not want to appear to distrust a public it had welcomed by intimating such a behaviour. For the respectable public, this was all supposed to have gone without saying. Overt labels, on this count, 'would be *unbecoming in the National Gallery*' and anyway, were 'not usual in the great National Galleries of Europe' (NG1/3/28, my emphasis). On the other hand, the Board still had to safeguard its objects and discourage 'recklessness towards fine works of art' (NG1/3/28). Touching pictures, in other words, had to be put down. So increased vigilance was stressed with regard to Paton's pictures and guards were instructed to prevent any inclination towards corporeal involvement beyond the ocular and contemplative. This reiterated the ideals of the civilised *habitus*, to control the boundaries

of the body -- touching, eating, defecating, spitting, expelling mucus -- (Elias, 1978; 1982) and to keep the socially inadmissible in check. 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): while its later decision to cover the two Paton pictures with glass was an additional safeguard against tactile promiscuity (NG1/1/43).

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, most probably 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'.

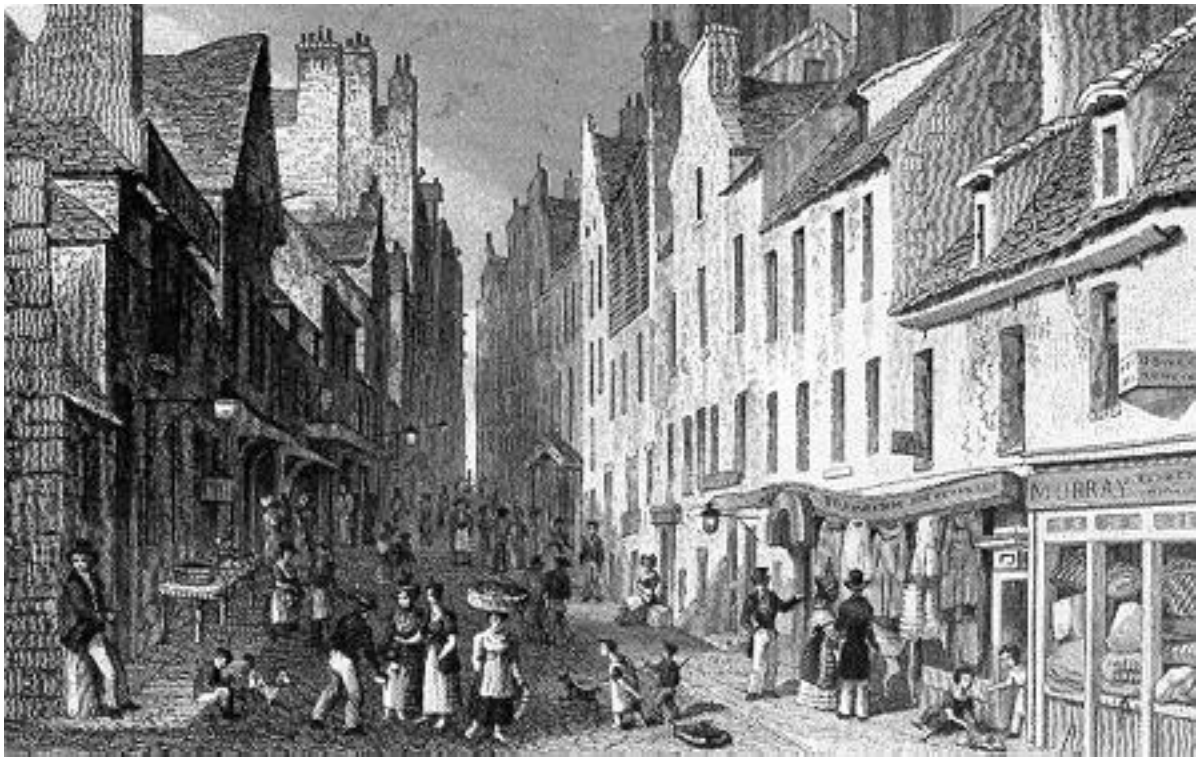

Figure 6: St Mary's Wynd, from the Pleasance, drawn by T.H. Shepherd, used with permission of the National Galleries of Scotland.

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-classicism, 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 wynds 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.

In a broader sense, at the gallery's scene of reception, 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 . . . clambering up its Pillars'. '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, my emphasis). In short, carnival was severed, folk culture extricated from the visual field, leaving an unsullied space where bourgeois recognised bourgeois, but in relative hush.

Or rather, we should say, folk culture in its *overt* and *palpable* materiality was extricated from the National Gallery of Scotland. For the genre scenes of the Dutch Masters in Room V (Lingelbach's *Figures at a Door of an Alehouse* and Teniers' *Peasants playing at Skittles*, for instance); of the modern Scottish genre scenes of Walter Geickie and others in Room III; as well as the later acquisitions of David Allan and David Wilkie; all of these depicted the rural and labouring poor and scenes from popular celebrations such as weddings.

The repressed or unpalatable, however, had returned in nostalgic or palatable form. The characters had been bowdlerised, sentimentalised 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, once-removed, voyeuristic, unreal; as 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 judgment . . . 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).

Figure 7: Pitlessie Fair, Sir David Wilkie, 1804,
used with permission of the National Galleries of Scotland

Conclusion

On 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*, Wednesday March 23 1859). The trustees and their catalogue reiterated this idea of universal accessibility. The collection was said to admit of the industrial worker, the intelligent student and the amateur a capacity to make inferences 'by comparison, calculated to advance him in the theory and practice of art' (EUL, I* 15/2.6). 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 sewed.

Administrators assumed a public that, whilst being structurally and experientially differentiated in the gallery, was held up as an unproblematic whole. Rarely did the gallery's idea of its public coincide with the actual community it served most naturally. Only in a limited sense did the gallery cater for and invite a universal populace. In contrast to some of the science and technology-based projects of the 'popular enlightenment' in Scotland, 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-radicalise 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 symbolised 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 and disconnected. Indeed, the Prince's Street Garden area, of which the National Gallery was a part was declared in the 1850s 'to keep from the too close view of the New Town gentry the poor population of the Old Town' (cited in Youngson, 1966: 256).

In his essay on the '*musée*', Bataille characterises the museum project, and the Louvre in particular, as bearing the marks of blood that the guillotine had 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 objects it displayed. For regardless of the differences between the political impulses underpinning 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 organisation of space is a highly potent mode of establishing identities, boundaries and subject positions. Places embody, but also circulate and hierarchise social interests. They can, therefore, be 'read', or 'deconstructed' if you like, as cultural 'texts' themselves, with audiences, idioms, narratives, socially located readers, methods of distribution, and socio-cultural genealogies. The task of organising 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 which elevate them beyond the reaches of the collective. We make and remake space but not in circumstances of our own choosing, 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 Bourdieu formally defines the *habitus* as follows: 'the strategy generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforseen and ever-changing situation . . . a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moments as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions that makes possible the achievement' (1977: 72, 95). Some core features are worth emphasizing. 1) Schemes of perception, the ability to classify, de-code or understand practices and texts are acquired or learnt. Cumulative exposure to particular social conditions, formal/informal education, for instance, instills in the individual a matrix of dispositions and strategies which generate behaviours and reactions to familiar 'events'. 2) These competences are so bound up with the conditions in which they are acquired that they lay outside the apprehension of the actor. Behaviour appears to take the form of objectively guided ends -- 'agents to some extent fall into the practice that is theirs' (Bourdieu, 1990:90). 3) *Habitus* is essentially a corporeal quality in that it exists in and through the bodily practices of individuals -- ways of talking, dressing, holding oneself, moving, looking.

2 Next door in the Royal Scottish Academy suite of rooms, things appeared even more crowded. At times eight hundred and fifty pictures hung in virtually the same available space as the National Gallery, although temporary exhibitions such as the Royal Scottish Academy's attracted smaller pictures (the walls of middle class town houses, where many of the pictures ended up, could probably not have taken large canvases).

3 The room's relative isolation also made it less visible to the curators. In the Board's view, the room was therefore at greater risk from the 'careless or mischievous visitor' and it was logical to dispose less valuable works here (NG6/7/28).

4 The order, it was said, arose out of 'necessity' and of the need to 'add to the general appearance of the galleries' (NG6/7/28). Indeed, without the capacity to parade a comprehensive historical assemblage, the Board was somewhat pressed to make good of what it had; and what it had in abundance was the fruit of a flowering academy at the height of its powers.

5 There is uncertainty as to the precise meaning of the category 'Scottish art' at this time, as in the catalogue's claim that David Allan, the eighteenth-century genre painter 'was the first in Scotland who imparted to it a national feeling, and introduced the style that Wilkie followed out so successfully' (EUL: I* 15/2.6:78:60); or that Wilkie himself rejected the grand and ideal in favour of 'the simplest of national styles, which, however, he elevated to a higher point than any former artist had carried it' (EUL: I* 15/2.6:78:99). But, clearly, the sense in which an obdurate and ancient tradition of Scottish art had been constituted by the early twentieth century -- with deep structures and essences, philosophical modalities and preoccupations and national aesthetic threads and forms -- was not in evidence in the mid nineteenth century. In fact, 'national' when related to art appeared not as a deep immanence but as a more or less coherent set of themes or subjects. Surface concerns arose especially in the depiction of Scottish characters in genre scenes or of Scottish portraits (portraits *of* Scottish people rather than portraits *in* a

national style); and in scenes from Scott, Burns and Scotland's religious history. All of which suggests the middle-class exhibition goers' proclivity for modern, local pictures in the modern style.

6 As Fyfe writes, 'it is Leonardo's Virgin to which the museum directs attention rather than the mother of Christ' (1993: 14).

7 The gallery, in other words, had become an index of what Stallybrass and White have called the 'great labour of bourgeois culture' (1986: 93), the attempt to discursively and symbolically territorialise a space 'separate from the court and the church on the one hand and the market square, alehouse, street and fairground on the other' (1986: 93-4). This was a space with refined laws and protocols of behaviour and language like the theatre, the law court, the library, and the drawing room, that embodied a 'subliminal elitism' (1986: 202) through which the bourgeois class, especially in countries like Scotland with its Protestant morality of clean living, marked itself as salubrious, distinctive and superior.

8 'For even if the bourgeoisie could establish the purity of their own gaze, the stare of the urban poor themselves was rarely felt as one of deference and respect. On the contrary, it was more frequently seen as an aggressive and humiliating act of physical contact' (Stallybrass and White, 1986: 135).

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