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# A GENTEEL ACADEMY: THE EDINBURGH DRAWING INSTITUTION 1825-1836

HELEN SMAILES

IN 1826 ROBERT STEVENSON, civil engineer, of 1 Baxter Place, Edinburgh, applied to the Secretary of the Board of Trustees for Manufactures in Scotland for further information regarding admission procedures for the Board's drawing school, then commonly known as the Trustees' Academy. Stevenson's enquiry was submitted on behalf of his second son and namesake, a trainee surgeon, for whom proficiency in draughtsmanship would have been an essential prerequisite of professional advancement. The Trustees' Academy had been set up in 1760 as a pioneering (although strictly utilitarian) enterprise which was dedicated to the improvement of applied design in Scotland through the institution of formalised elementary art education. Initially the curriculum had excluded life drawing and painting in oils, the majority of the Academy's students being apprentice tradesmen – carvers, gilders, house-painters, weavers and embroiderers. During the closing years of the eighteenth century, however, the remit of the drawing school had evolved, organically but definitively, towards the provision of a more advanced type of instruction. In 1798 the newly appointed Master, John Graham, had reformed the school on the model of the Royal Academy Schools in London. His subsequent introduction of premiums for oil painting and inauguration of a sizeable collection of plaster casts after the antique were legitimised by the presence among the student body of an increasing number of aspiring figure or landscape painters and engravers who had sought or were currently seeking to acquire the rudiments of their profession through a

two-year studentship at the Trustees' Academy.<sup>1</sup>

The progressive re-orientation of the Academy's objectives and the related diversification of its clientèle were reflected in the following response which Robert Stevenson received from the Board Secretary on 24 January 1826:<sup>2</sup>

I beg to inform you that the privilege of attending the Board's Drawing Academy is only allowed to those young men whose parents are in that rank of life, which incapacitates them for paying Teachers of Drawing: and not to the sons of Gentlemen like yourself. Mr. Dundas, Accountant of Excise, applied very lately for admission to his son, which the Board reluctantly refused, and they could not with any consistency grant to you what they denied to him. In a former note to Sir William [Arbuthnot], you (misunderstanding I presume what he had written) stated your willingness to pay for your Son: but on that footing no one is admitted. The Academy is generally quite fitted up with Engravers, coach painters, monumental, portrait and landscape painters, & young men engaged in Drawing for figured manufactures, carvers etc. There is no regulation for excluding Surgeons, if they are unable to pay elsewhere.

A Society of gentlemen intend very soon to open an Academy for teaching Drawing in all its branches to the sons and daughters of Gentlemen, for moderate fees: I believe you may find a prospectus respecting it at Constable's. I imagine you will find that an eligible seminary for your son.

The select private drawing school to which the Board Secretary alluded was the Edinburgh Drawing Institution, which originated at a public meeting hosted by the Royal Society of Edinburgh on 1 December 1824. The Institution was to be underwritten by the subscriptions of individual shareholders to the extent of £2500, comprising two hundred and fifty shares. Following the publication of a *Prospectus* in 1825, the directors elected by the

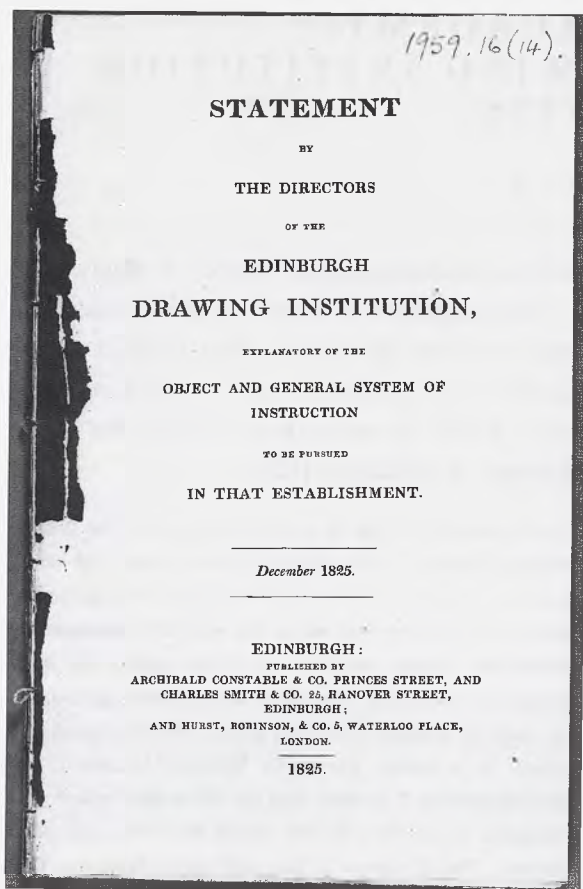


Fig. 1. Title page of the *Statement by the Directors of the Edinburgh Drawing Institution, 1825*. (Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.)

shareholders issued a printed *Statement* (fig. 1). In their exposition of the aims and constitution of the new academy they claimed the credit for a radical innovation:

In preparing a system which might regulate the Edinburgh Drawing Institution, considerable difficulty has been experienced from there being no similar establishment to serve as a model to the Directors in their deliberations.

The surviving documentation concerning the directors' philanthropic-cum-commercial enterprise is limited to the above-mentioned *Prospectus* and *Statement*, a tendentious review in *The Edinburgh Magazine* of February 1826 and sporadic press

advertisements. These testimonials, such as they are, concern objectives rather than achievements, and any material evidence of achievements has yet to be located. Nonetheless, the surviving documentary evidence, when evaluated collectively in the wider context of educational provision for the amateur artist in nineteenth-century Scotland, does provide a partial vindication of the claims advanced by the directors in 1825.<sup>3</sup>

According to the *Prospectus* of 1825, the Drawing Institution was to be governed by an elected directorate of fifteen drawn from the general body of subscribers, of whom three were to retire by annual rotation. The directors apparently assumed the additional authority of trustees and were legally and financially accountable for all aspects of management including the appointment of the teaching staff.<sup>4</sup> As a perquisite for this actual or prospective responsibility, preferential admission was granted to the children or wards of subscribers. Thereafter, discretionary admissions were subject to the exclusive personal recommendation of subscribers. A predictable predominance of the medical, mercantile and legal élite among the corps of founder-subscribers determined the social status of the Institution's clientèle as being that of the 'higher classes' for whom drawing must be considered 'an essential department' of general education, whether as 'an accomplishment' or as 'a useful acquirement'.

The constituency of the Drawing Institution may account for the otherwise remarkable fact that, as a private educational establishment for the privileged amateur, the Institution was regulated by an administrative constitution analogous, if not identical, to that of the Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Scotland. The latter Institution, which secured a Royal Charter in 1827, had been founded by an association of aristocrats and gentry committed to the amelioration

of public taste through the promotion of exhibitions of Old Master paintings selected primarily from their own private collections. Members of this self-perpetuating oligarchy qualified to become life-governors on payment of a voluntary subscription which further entitled them to elect the committee of directors. Of the first shareholder-directors of the Drawing Institution, Sir Walter Scott, the advocate Alexander Wood, Lord Meadowbank, James Hunter of Thurston, James Skene of Rubislaw, and James Russell, Professor of Clinical Surgery at the University of Edinburgh, were also life-governors of the Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts. A close friend of Scott and an influential figure in both literary and artistic circles in the Scottish capital, Skene was then Secretary to the latter Institution and in 1830 would assume the same office on the Board of Trustees for Manufactures. Furthermore, since Skene was rated by Scott and Sir David Brewster as 'the first amateur draughtsman in Scotland', he was pre-eminently qualified to advance the aims of the Drawing Institution.<sup>5</sup>

The presence of Skene and of the pioneering Edinburgh educationalist Leonard Horner on the governing body of the Drawing Institution suggests another connection which may or may not be fortuitous – that is, with the School of Arts, of which Skene was a founder-director and Horner himself, in collaboration with Brewster, the chief promoter. The School of Arts, which was accommodated in St Cecilia's Hall in Niddry Street by courtesy of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, was modelled on the Andersonian Institution in Glasgow and devoted to the liberal and technical education of mechanics. From the beginning in 1821 the School had enjoyed an unprecedented success, some four hundred students having registered during the inaugural year alone. This success was not unrelated to the funding strategy adopted by the founders. Although its

clientèle was drawn from the opposite end of the social spectrum, the School of Arts shared at least one significant common factor with the Drawing Institution. Both were supported by the private subscriptions of the intellectual and social élite of Edinburgh, supplemented by the modest class fees payable by the students.<sup>6</sup>

Through the membership of its governing body the Drawing Institution was also linked to the Board of Trustees for Manufactures. From this connection the new school was to derive immediate material advantage. The founder-directors of the Institution included Sir William Arbuthnot, the Board Secretary (on whose authority Robert Stevenson junior was refused admission to the Trustees' Academy and referred to the Drawing Institution in 1826) and Alexander Maconochie, Lord Meadowbank, a prominent commissioner or trustee of the Board, Vice-President of the Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts, and, as already noted, a life-governor of the same Institution.<sup>7</sup> It was through the intermediary of Lord Meadowbank that the directors applied to the Board for temporary accommodation in the tenement at 5 Picardy Place which was due to be vacated by the Trustees' Academy.

The Trustees had acknowledged the gravity of the accommodation crisis affecting *their* Academy as early as 1821. In December of that year they had commissioned from the painter Hugh 'Grecian' Williams and John Hay (later Sir John Hay, 6th Baronet of Smithfield and Hayston) a progress report on their cast collection, which had been inaugurated in 1798 by John Graham. In consultation with the sculptor Thomas Campbell, who was acting as the Board's agent in Italy, Hay and Williams produced a blueprint for the development of the cast collection which was sufficiently ambitious 'to fill our Academy twice over even tho' it were empty'. By



Fig. 2. Alexander Nasmyth, Princes Street with the commencement of the building of the Royal Institution, 1825. (*National Gallery of Scotland, NG 2542.*)

this time the Trustees were committed in practice – if not consistently in principle – to the promotion of the higher branches of art education at their Academy. Its makeshift accommodation in a garret in Picardy Place ‘at the top of a common stair and over a baker’s shop and a tavern, the smoke and dust from which penetrate into the room and injure the casts’ must have seemed doubly inappropriate.

A further catalyst for expansion had been introduced, coincidentally, by the founding of the Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in 1819. Three years later the Board engaged William Playfair to erect a Doric temple to the arts on Princes Street at its junction with Hanover Street (fig. 2). The massive expenditure thus incurred was offset by

negotiating leases with the same Institution and with the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and a tenancy agreement with the peripatetic Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Finally, in 1826, the Scottish Academy, which had been formed that year by a body of dissenting artists who seceded from the Institution, joined the sub-tenants of the Board. In March 1826 the Trustees’ cast collection was transferred to the new premises on Princes Street which became known in common parlance as ‘the Institution’.<sup>8</sup>

On 13 December 1825, when the Board of Trustees convened to discuss the disposal of the Picardy Place property, Lord Meadowbank announced that ‘he had been requested by the gentlemen who are associated for the purpose of



Fig. 3. Drawing of 19 Hill Street, by Thomas McCrae, 1932. (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.)

establishing a Drawing Academy for the children of gentlemen to propose to the Board, to rent their premises in Picardy Place for one year, by which time the Society expect to get access to the house which is preparing for them'. The Trustees readily agreed to defer the sale by one year.<sup>9</sup> By December 1825 the directors of the Drawing Institution had 'succeeded in obtaining a very central and eligible situation in Hill Street' commensurate with the social standing and academic aspirations of their academy.

The upper floors of the tenement at 19 Hill Street (fig. 3) were to be re-modelled in order to furnish 'one room of fifty-four feet by thirty, lighted from the top by a range of sky-lights; an apartment for the permanent exhibition of the works of pupils; a room for the Masters; with suitable accommodation for the Matron of the Establishment'.<sup>10</sup> In order to meet the financial exigencies of such an investment, the directors concluded an agreement with the

committee which had recently been appointed to establish a public baths in the New Town. Under the terms of this agreement the two principal floors were allocated to the baths which, like the Drawing Institution, were funded by subscription (fig. 4). George Angus was then engaged to re-structure the premises at 17-19 Hill Street to the specifications of the two interested parties, work being completed by 1828.<sup>11</sup> The Drawing Institution evidently took up residence in the course of 1827 since the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* of 5 January 1828 carried an advertisement for the recommencement of classes at 19 Hill Street.<sup>12</sup>

In the prefatory remarks to their *Prospectus* the directors justified their enterprise in the following terms:

It will be readily admitted by those conversant with the State of Education in Edinburgh, that although the means of cultivating almost every branch with advantage, and upon easy terms, are amply provided, there is notwithstanding a remarkable exception in regard to that of Drawing; which, while it is the most expensive, is at the same time, with some exceptions, the least successfully conducted of any one professed to be taught. The consequence of this deficiency in our system is naturally a very general disregard of that pursuit, either as a useful acquirement, or as an accomplishment of which the study, according to our present means, is likely to prove so little satisfactory.

In order to remedy this situation the directors devised a course of tuition which was explicitly adapted from the graduated system favoured by most eighteenth-century European drawing academies and which was ultimately derived from the practice of the Académie Royale in Paris (see fig. 5).<sup>13</sup>

To an extent, the conception and conduct of the Drawing Institution recalled a practice which had already been current at the Trustees' Academy for almost half a century and which had been sanctioned, although not actively encouraged, by the Board of Trustees. In 1788 David Allan, as Master of the Trustees' Academy, had advertised in the *Caledonian*

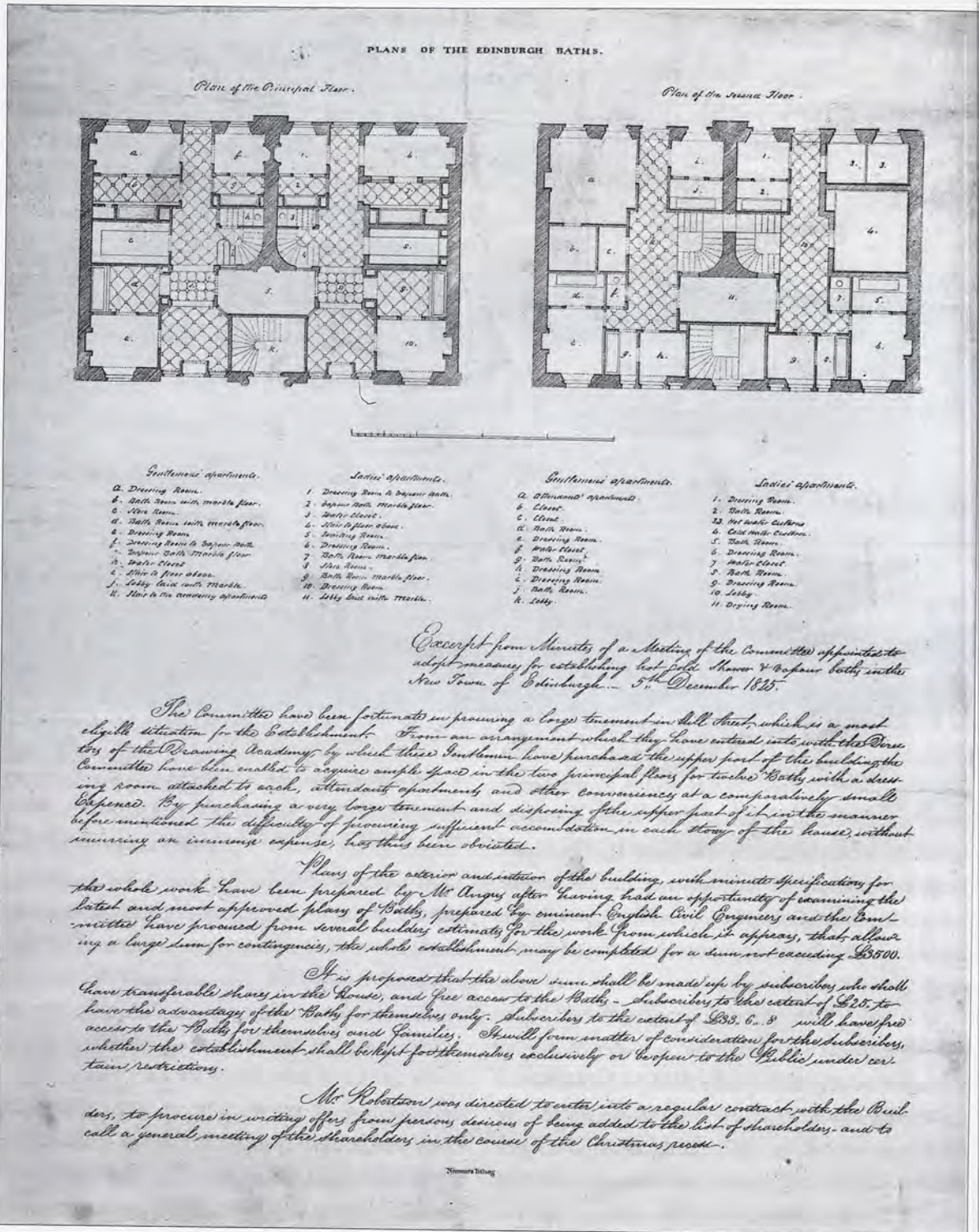


Fig. 4. Plan of the Subscription Baths at 19 Hill Street, 1825. (Private collection; photograph, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.)

*Mercury* a series of fee-paying private classes in drawing to be held at his own residence and conducted independently of the classes undertaken for the Academy proper to which admission was gratis. Similarly, in 1799, his successor John Graham's press advertisement for the reformed Trustees' Academy carried the following footnote: 'Mr Graham respectfully informs the public, that besides the Class for the Hon. Board of Trustees, he is to open two extra classes; one for ladies, the other for gentlemen ...' Indeed, in advocating Graham's appointment in 1798, the banker Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo, then a Commissioner of the Board, had asserted that:<sup>14</sup>

Were a Master to be established under the patronage of the Board, capable of instructing his Pupils in drawing Academy figures and in Historical composition, there can be no doubt that not only the Mechanick Arts would derive further benefit, but that at the same time, persons in a higher rank of life would be able to enjoy an opportunity which they have not at present of perfecting themselves in one of the most pleasing of all the imitative Arts.

The extra-mural classes offered by Allan and Graham were quite clearly designed to meet the rising expectations of a middle and upper class clientèle which, in 1825, would be attracted to the Edinburgh Drawing Institution.

The curriculum of the Institution, as outlined in the *Prospectus* of 1825, encompassed chalk and pencil drawing, military pen drawing and landscape painting in oils and in watercolour. All of these options were available equally to both sexes in separate classes and on a variable scale of charges (the one significant exclusion – which also still obtained at the Trustees' Academy at this period – was that of life drawing, one of the concluding stages in the Continental model of advanced art education). In addition the directors sought to foster a spirit of competition conducive to higher attainments by providing for an annual public examination and an exhibition of work by the male pupils together with a related system of premiums.

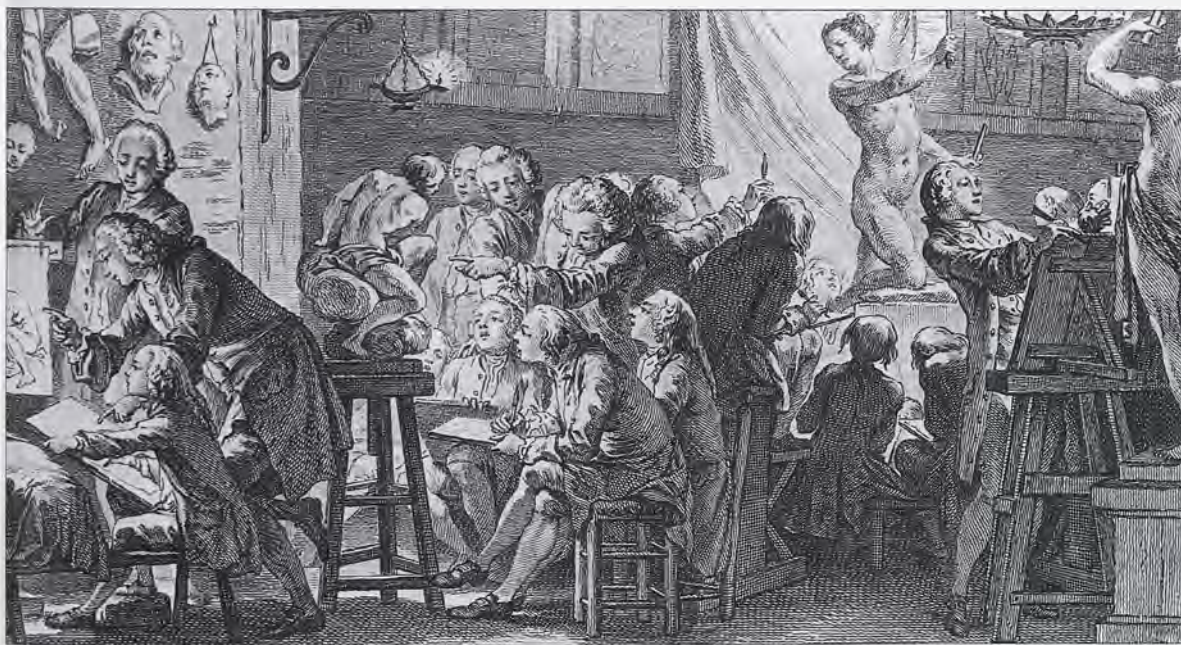


Fig. 5. 'Dessein', from Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, 1763. (Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.)



The directors' *Statement* of 1825 indicated that their academy's stock would comprise:

actual drawings, and not engraved or lithographic copies, as in such the touch, so important to be acquired with precision, and to be invariably practised, in order to give facility and freedom to the hand, is reversed. In addition to these examples, which will not be selected until the co-operation of the Master be obtained, we are procuring a collection of superior drawings, in chalk copies, from the best masters, and also original drawings.

In essence these proposals conformed to the customary practice of many drawing masters in Scotland. As the Board of Trustees had observed when debating the appointment of John Graham in 1798:<sup>15</sup>

Those who have pursued the Study of Art, either as an amusement or as a Profession, have for the most part contented themselves with drawing from other Drawings, or painting from other Pictures. And Drawing Masters too generally follow this line of teaching because it is very easy for the Scholar, and satisfies the people who are superficially acquainted with Art; but the fact is notorious, that most of the Young Persons who at the drawing School produce very tolerable copies from Drawings or Pictures, when left to themselves and desired to draw from Nature, can scarcely do any thing!

As a corrective to such malpractices, the Trustees had resolved to begin a cast collection. By the 1790s they had become convinced that:

It is well known that Drawing from Nature, or from the Antique Statues, or from both, is universally considered by those conversant with the Art, to be the only proper mode of obtaining correctness and truth in drawing, and the only approved method of forming an Artist; at least that Nature, or Statues, ought to be much more copied than Pictures or Drawings. It is equally certain however that this mode of study has yet been scarcely practised.

Similar, if not identical, considerations must have underlain the directors' policy in supplying a cast collection for the Drawing Institution and thereby offering to their amateur pupils of the 1820s a range of facilities which had not become available to the

intending professional artist at the Trustees' Academy until 1798. By 1825, the Trustees' expanding cast collection – which had necessitated the removal of their Academy from Picardy Place – was already widely recognised as a major resource for the formation of the professional artist. It cannot have failed to provide a topical incentive for emulation at 19 Hill Street.<sup>16</sup>

In formulating a curriculum derived from Continental practice, the directors conceded that certain modifications would be inevitable in order to accommodate the special needs of their female pupils. The admission of women to the Drawing Institution raises some complex issues concerning private educational provision for the woman artist in nineteenth-century Scotland. The legitimacy of differentiating between the 'amateur' and the intending 'professional' exclusively in terms of such provision is called into question by the range of options then available and the limitations which these imposed *a priori*. As defined by the directors, the clientèle of the Drawing Institution was theoretically amateur and avowedly upper class. Equally – assuming that the curriculum laid out in the *Prospectus* was indeed followed to the letter – attendance at the Institution offered the woman artist in general a rare opportunity to acquire a systematic, as distinct from informal, grounding in the rudiments of her profession.<sup>17</sup>

By the 1820s, women no longer qualified for entry to the Trustees' Academy, to which admission, by personal reference, was gratis. At the outset in 1760 both sexes had been eligible for admission to the public classes of the Academy. In addition the first Master William Delacour had conducted an alternative fee-paying class with separate facilities for 'girls of rank'. In 1774, during the tenure of Alexander Runciman, the Trustees had re-emphasised the primacy of vocational education by

resolving to exclude from their Academy 'those who only make drawing an amusement'. Under Runciman's successor David Allan, women no longer featured among the ordinary students, although Allan continued to teach female pupils privately, if not in conjunction with his official public responsibilities. As noted above, this dual arrangement appears to have been maintained by successive masters of the reformed Academy from John Graham to Andrew Wilson.<sup>18</sup>

The presence of the landscape painter Andrew Wilson (1780-1848) among the founder-subscribers to the Drawing Institution is particularly intriguing. At the time Wilson had been Master of the Trustees'

Academy since 1818. From 1826 he pursued his alternative career in Italy as an expatriate dealer and, in this capacity, became one of the principal architects of the Old Master painting collection which was amassed by the Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts. Apart from his public duties at the Trustees' Academy, Wilson held private classes in drawing and oil painting at his own studio. His lady pupils included Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus whose detailed recollections of Wilson's teaching methods were incorporated in her *Memoirs of a Highland Lady*. Among her contemporaries in Wilson's classes she singled out for special mention Marianne or Mary



Fig. 6. D. O. Hill, The Nasmyth Family at 47 York Place, 1829. (*Scottish National Portrait Gallery*, PG 2729a.)

Anne Grant of Kilgraston, the sister of Sir Francis Grant (1803–1878), the society portrait painter and future President of the Royal Academy, and of John Grant, a competent amateur portrait and landscape painter in oils.<sup>19</sup>

Wilson's class exemplified one type of contemporary facility for the woman artist – of a certain social status – to which the creation of the Drawing Institution posed a direct challenge with its systematised curriculum. Of other enterprises comparable to Wilson's, the most influential was undoubtedly the academy conducted by Alexander Nasmyth and his daughters at the tenement at 47 York Place, which he occupied from 1799 (fig. 6). Mary Somerville, the internationally celebrated mathematician, was among the upper-class lady amateurs who benefited from a modified version of the atelier system of training at Nasmyth's academy. In the establishment of this academy she discerned 'a proof of the gradual improvement which was taking place in the education of the higher classes; my mother very willingly allowed me to attend it. The class was very full. I was not taught to draw, but looked on while Nasmyth painted; then a picture was given to me to copy, the master correcting the faults'.<sup>20</sup>

The scale of the general demand to which Wilson, Nasmyth and the founders of the Drawing Institution were responding may be gauged from the eloquent testimony contained in a letter written by the landscape painter George Walker to the 11th Earl of Buchan in 1806. Walker, who exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1800 and 1815, formed a private collection of some distinction which was dispersed at sales in London in 1807 and 1814. His drawing academy for young ladies was based initially at 1 Hunter Square in Edinburgh and continued at various other addresses in the city until the artist's death in 1815. On 12 April 1806 he informed Buchan that:

It is now about 25 years since my worthy friend Mr Alexander Runciman sent me my first Pupil (Captain Bradshaw). At that time there were only two other persons excepting my worthy old Master who filled the first situation with so much credit to himself and Honour to his Country who gave lessons in Drawing the Number of whose Pupils did not exceed a dozen and whose productions if any of them are preserved could if now examined afford but little pleasure to their more refined Taste in Works of Art. There are at present in Edinburgh, I am creditably informed, about 30 persons of both sexes who give instruction in the various branches dependant on Design.

By Walker's reckoning this implied a total of some nine hundred prospective students. He himself had almost one hundred 'public and private' pupils before he finished 'giving lessons abroad'.<sup>21</sup>

The business monopoly previously enjoyed by such artists' private academies or classes managed by peripatetic drawing masters was challenged both by the introduction of a formal curriculum and the scale of charges levied at the Drawing Institution. In their *Statement* issued in 1825 the directors emphasised the competitiveness of their class fees by comparison with 'the ordinary charges of drawing-schools which are necessarily high in a small class'.<sup>22</sup>

In 1825 the directors envisaged a staff complement of two principal and two assistant masters. In addition, the dictates of propriety required the appointment of a resident matron-cum-housekeeper who was to receive free board and lodging and an annual salary of sixty guineas for supervising the female pupils in class and escorting them from the Institution. In order to attract 'Masters of eminence', the directors proposed to offer each of the principal tutors a starting salary of £200. Thereafter, annual increments were to be determined by relative performance. Candidates for teaching posts were invited to submit applications by 1 February 1826, including among their testimonials specimens of drawing and documentary evidence concerning any former pupils of distinction. As a

condition of employment, each master was required to provide the Institution with two autograph finished drawings which were to be integrated into the Institution's permanent stock and supplemented by an annual contribution of one drawing for the duration of his appointment.<sup>23</sup>

An immediate precedent for this stipulation – despite the divergence in stated objectives and the absence of any utilitarian motive in the establishment of the Drawing Institution – may be found in the conditions of employment then attached to the Mastership of the Trustees' Academy. Given the close links between the governing bodies of the two drawing schools, it was to be expected that the directors of the new academy should look to the constitution of the Trustees' Academy for a model susceptible to adaptation. Following the revision of the Academy's constitution in 1786, the Master, whatever his precise professional status, had been obliged to lodge with the Board of Manufactures two industrial designs of his own composition for the benefit of Scottish manufacturers. This regulation evidently still applied during the 1820s, when the Trustees' Academy was increasingly orientated towards the provision of advanced art education. Thus, on 4 June 1820, Andrew Wilson penned a vigorous protest against this imposition, arguing that his predecessor John Graham had flouted the regulations in response to the consistent failure of Scottish manufacturers to exploit the designs thus provided and that since he, Wilson, lacked the appropriate skills, 'I question much if Mr Playfair or Mr Burns would be much benefited by my exertions on a chimney piece or cornice, or Mr Trotter with my draperies!'<sup>24</sup>

Of the original staff engaged in 1825, James Stewart occupied one of the two posts of Principal Master of the Drawing Institution. This Stewart is probably synonymous with the engraver of Allan and

Wilkie, who had studied under John Graham at the Trustees' Academy, earned some reputation as a painter of domestic genre and became one of the early Scottish Academicians.<sup>25</sup> The first of the two complementary posts of Assistant Master was secured by Andrew Somerville, a later pupil of the Trustees' Academy and of William Simson RSA (1800-1847) – himself a former student of Andrew Wilson of the Trustees' Academy – by whom Somerville may have been recommended to the directorate of the Drawing Institution. Somerville, whose brief career would be terminated by his premature death in 1834, was also an aspiring painter of literary genre and exhibited at the (Royal) Scottish Academy from 1830.<sup>26</sup>

The two remaining teaching positions of first Principal and second Assistant Master were obtained by Simson's two brothers, the landscape and genre painter George Simson (1791-1862) and the sculptor and landscape painter David Simson (1803-1874). The former, by his own testimony, had found employment as a drawing master in Edinburgh from about 1817 and would later be described in the Royal Scottish Academy's obituary notice as 'one of the most popular teachers of Art in Edinburgh'. His younger brother David would appear to have made his professional début as a portrait sculptor during the period under discussion since he contributed to the exhibitions of the Royal Scottish Academy in this capacity between 1831 and 1834. He would therefore have been well qualified to assist in the formation of the projected collection of busts and casts which was advertised in the *Statement* by the directors in 1825.<sup>27</sup>

In spite of the opportunities which might have been afforded by the engagement of David Simson, tuition in modelling – as distinct from drawing from the cast – was not available within the official curriculum of the Edinburgh Drawing Institution. The Institution's constituency was, by definition, that of the gifted, if not

excessively affluent, amateur. In 1825 localised educational facilities for the aspiring *professional* Scottish figure sculptor were essentially limited to a traditional apprenticeship with a monumental mason or wood carver, supplemented by a studentship at the Trustees' Academy. It is all the more surprising that this contentious issue of the deficient training and patronage of the intending professional sculptor and its retardatory influence on the development of an indigenous school of Scottish sculpture should have been debated in the context of the Drawing Institution. Yet in the discursive feature article which appeared in the *Edinburgh Magazine* in February 1826,<sup>28</sup> the writer, while welcoming the advent of the new institution, censured the limitations of its curriculum and advocated the 'formulation of an Academy for the study of the Fine Arts generally, on a much more comprehensive plan'. Furthermore, he opined that:

An establishment for Sculpture should be joined to the Drawing Institution now formed . . . Hitherto, sculptural talent in this part of the country has been but very partially developed. But we venture to predict, that on its once obtaining a footing among us, it will obtain the pre-eminence.

The topicality of such debate may well have played a part in the Simsons' precipitate and otherwise unexplained departure from the Institution in 1831. During that year the brothers issued a prospectus for their own alternative Drawing Academy which was to operate from George Simson's residence at 53 North Frederick Street, Edinburgh, with effect from 1 October (fig. 7). Among the credentials cited by George Simson in this prospectus was his engagement as First Master of the Drawing Institution during the previous five years! The curriculum for the Simsons' rival establishment – to which both sexes were admitted on a fee-paying basis – was virtually identical to that of the Institution apart from two notable amendments. Firstly, David Simson introduced a

class in modelling both from busts (that is, presumably from casts and/or from his own original productions in portraiture) and 'from Nature'. Secondly, George Simson was to conduct classes in life drawing for the most proficient pupils. Since it was not until 1829 that a life class was inaugurated in Edinburgh for the prospective *professional* artist under the auspices of the Royal Institution, the Simsons' venture represented a remarkably innovatory advancement of the type of educational provision for the amateur which had been formalised at a more elementary level in the curriculum of the Drawing Institution.<sup>29</sup>

Following the defection of the Simson brothers, Arthur Perigal senior (1784–1847) apparently succeeded George Simson as first Principal Master of the Drawing Institution. A prize-winning student of Füssli at the Royal Academy Schools, Perigal had practised as a portrait and historical painter in London, exhibiting regularly from 1810 at the Academy and the British Institution. By 1830 he had migrated to Manchester where he played a formative role in the establishment of the Associated Artists and, as President, entered into correspondence with the Royal Institution in Edinburgh.<sup>30</sup> It is conceivable that Perigal secured his appointment in Edinburgh through influential connections associated with the Royal Institution. At all events, by 1832 he had settled at 6 St Vincent Street and in the following year took up residence at 19 Hill Street. In January 1834, as Master of the Drawing Institution, he advertised a course of lectures on the history and principles of painting, illustrated by 'an extensive Collection of Prints from the most celebrated Pictures'. These lectures were apparently open to the general public, either singly or serially, on payment of an admission fee.<sup>31</sup>

According to the account of Perigal in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, he obtained a

# New Drawing Academy,

(to be opened 1<sup>st</sup> October 1831.)

NEW COLLEGE  
CHA. 4. 168. 19  
EDINBURGH

Mr. George Simson, P.A. has the honour of announcing to his friends and the public, that, having resigned his situation as First Master of the Edinburgh Drawing Institution, he intends, with the assistance of his brother, Mr. David Simson, Sculptor, to open an Academy for Drawing, Painting, and Modelling, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October next.

Mr. Simson has now taught in Edinburgh upwards of 14 years, for the last 5 of which he has been engaged as First Master in the Drawing Institution. — The system he has followed both in that Establishment and previously, he intends to continue in his Academy. — By this method the Study is made an agreeable recreation. — The many beautiful Specimens of Portraits and other subjects which have been executed by those who have honoured Mr. S. with their attendance, are proofs of its success.

Mr. S. will open Classes for advanced Pupils, for Drawing from the Life; those attending them will therefore, in addition to the Examples provided by him, have an opportunity of executing, under his directions, the Portrait of any friend they may bring to the Academy.

An impression prevails, that it is necessary to have a genius for Drawing, in order to acquire any proficiency — this may be true when a professional life is contemplated; but a moderate share of perseverance will almost always command such a knowledge of the Art, as to render it not only an agreeable, but a useful accomplishment.

An entirely new collection of Examples in all the branches of the Art are, in course of preparation; and Specimens of them may be seen at Mr. Simson's house, 53 North Frederick Street; and Mr. Gilli, Bookseller, 50 Princes Street.

Modelling from Busts and from Nature will be taught by Mr. D. Simson.

Mr. Simson will always be present during the Ladies hours of instruction.

Private Teaching will commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, and at the same time Two Public Classes will be opened for those who may not be able to attend during the Winter.

Edinburgh, 53 North Frederick Street, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1831.

Fig. 7. Prospectus for the Simsons' New Drawing Academy, 1831. (Edinburgh University, New College Library, CHA.4.168.19.)

'very good connection as a teacher of drawing' in Edinburgh. Yet by the time of his appointment, the governing body of the Drawing Institution had been forced to take drastic measures in order to ensure its survival by mortgaging the premises at 19 Hill Street as security for a capital loan of £1000 from the Honourable Elizabeth Charlotte Mackenzie, daughter of Lord Seaforth. This loan was redeemed and the property duly recovered by the Trustees of the Drawing Institution in November 1835. However, this transaction would seem to have been an essential preliminary to the cessation of the Institution's operations under its original management. On 11 May 1836 the teaching and residential accommodation of the Drawing Institution premises at 19 Hill Street was sold by public roup.<sup>32</sup>

Although the Drawing Institution itself had presumably ceased to be financially viable, Perigal was nonetheless able to capitalise on the connections which it had provided in order to set up his own private academy in an adjacent building in Hill Street. In 1836 *Gray's Annual Directory* and the *Post Office Directory* for Edinburgh and Leith carried identical advertisements announcing Perigal's removal to 21 Hill Street and the continuation of public classes and private instruction in drawing, watercolour and oil painting. In this new venture he was assisted by his son and namesake, then at the outset of a prolific career as a landscape painter in oils and watercolour. On the death of Perigal senior

in the autumn of 1847, his son re-launched their private academy in his own name under the title of the 'Drawing Institution', a title which the Perigals had continued to exploit ever since the closure of the Institution proper.<sup>33</sup>

The demise of the original Drawing Institution and the appropriation of its clientèle by the Perigals marked a reversion to the earlier and flourishing tradition of flexible, non-institutionalised tuition by freelance peripatetic masters with both aspiring and relatively established artists seeking to supplement their regular income through a lucrative sideline in studio-based instruction for the amateur. Although the directors' assertions regarding the uniqueness of their Institution were to be invalidated, retrospectively, by the establishment of the Simson brothers' secessionist Drawing Academy, the Drawing Institution did indeed represent an exceptional and arguably pioneering attempt to override the usual distinction between the amateur and the professional artist, in terms of educational provision if not of the resulting achievements. Material or archival evidence of those achievements has yet to be discovered. However, the original top-lit classroom of the Institution, as built to order in 1825, would appear to have survived successive changes of ownership and attendant interior modifications of the premises at 19 Hill Street. This classroom is currently in use as the Chapel of the Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel No. 1) who acquired the property in 1893.<sup>34</sup>

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

For permission to quote from the correspondence of George Walker with the 11th Earl of Buchan, I am grateful to the Special Collections Department of Edinburgh University Library. I am particularly indebted to Francina Irwin for her generous encouragement, and also to Mungo Campbell, John Gifford, Ian Gow and Allen Simpson for advice and information. James Duncan, Secretary to the Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel No. 1), kindly allowed me access to the premises at 19 Hill Street.

- 1 Robert Stevenson senior was, of course, the father of Thomas Stevenson and the grandfather of Robert Louis Stevenson. See Craig Mair, *A Star for Seamen: The Stevenson Family of Engineers* (London 1978), pp. 111-112, 119. On the evolution of the Trustees' Academy, see John Mason, 'The Edinburgh School of Design', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club (BOEC)*, 27 (1949), pp. 67-96; Francina and David Irwin, *Scottish Painters at Home and Abroad* (London 1975), pp. 90-97: see also Iain Gordon Brown, 'Robert Adam's Drawings: Edinburgh's Loss, London's Gain', *BOEC*, New Series 2 (1992), pp. 26-30.
- 2 Archives of the Board of Trustees for Manufactures in Scotland, Board Secretary's Letterbook, Scottish Record Office (SRO), NG1/3/23, p. 175.
- 3 *Prospectus of a Drawing Academy in Edinburgh* (Caledonian Mercury Press, Edinburgh 1825); *Statement by the Directors of the Edinburgh Drawing Institution explanatory of the Object and General System of Instruction to be pursued in that Establishment* (Edinburgh 1825); *The Edinburgh Magazine*, 18 (February 1826), pp. 190-193. Copies of the printed promotional material are rare. One copy of the final version of the *Prospectus* is held by the Fine Art Department of Edinburgh Central Library, another by Edinburgh University Library (EUL) and a draft variant by the Department of Manuscripts of the National Library of Scotland (NLS, Acc. 10608, Wilson papers). Copies of the *Statement* are in EUL and NLS. An otherwise unrecorded advertisement card for the Drawing Institution (undated but after 1825) is among the Skene of Rubislaw papers in the possession of Major P. I. C. Payne (National Register of Archives of Scotland, survey 0464, 1969).
- 4 A list of the trustees is given in the sasine of 19 July 1827 which concluded the purchase of the premises at 19 Hill Street: SRO, Register of Sasines, Edinburgh, RS27/1170, p. 274. It corresponds exactly to the list of directors elected during the Institution's inaugural year, as published in the *Statement* of 1825.
- 5 On the Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Scotland, see Colin Thompson, *Pictures for Scotland* (Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland 1972), chapter 2. Professor Russell was amongst the founder members. In the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* of 18 August 1836, his obituarist recalled that, 'as a leading director of the Royal Institution, and himself a draughtsman of no ordinary skill, his opinion in matters of art ... was much sought for, and highly valued - while his own collection of pictures is well known to contain some specimens of the greater masters, which, for beauty and value, are scarcely exceeded in this country'. For Skene, see the account in the *Dictionary of National Biography (DNB)* and the catalogue of the exhibition *A Selection of Watercolours and Drawings by the Artist, Traveller and Scholar, James Skene (1775-1864), of France, Germany, Greece and Italy, together with some of his Views of Edinburgh* (Arts Council of Great Britain, Scottish Committee, Edinburgh 1964); see also note 3.
- 6 *First Report of the Directors of the School of Arts of Edinburgh for the Education of Mechanics* (Edinburgh 1822); Katharine M. Lyell (ed.), *Memoir of Leonard Horner* (London 1890), I, p. 194ff. The extent to which the School of Arts duplicated some of the more elementary functions of the Trustees' Academy is debatable, especially after the introduction into the School's curriculum in 1836 of a modelling class conducted by the ornamental wood carver John Steell senior, father of the sculptor (Sir) John Steell. A revealing commentary on the respective contributions made by the two institutions was given by David Ramsay Hay in his evidence to the Select Committee of 1836 (*Parliamentary Papers, Session 4 February - 20 August 1836, IX, 1836: Report from the Select Committee on Arts and their Connection with Manufactures*, part II). The School of Arts eventually developed into Heriot Watt University: see J. Cameron Smail, 'James Watt and the Heriot-Watt College' (address to the Heriot Watt Club of Edinburgh 1949) and A. D. C. Simpson, 'An Edinburgh Intrigue: Brewster's Society of Arts and the Pantograph Dispute', *BOEC*, New Series 1 (1991), pp. 47-73.
- 7 The Commissioners or Trustees were effectively government appointees. Following the Act of Union of 1707, the Board of Trustees had been constituted by central government in 1727



- as an agency (or 'quango') entrusted with the administration of compensatory premiums to the staple industries of Scotland, i.e. the woollen and linen manufactures and fisheries. The creation of the Trustees' Academy in 1760 – the earliest school of 'Practical Art' in Britain to be maintained by public subsidy prior to the institution of the Government Schools of Design in 1837 – marked the initial stage in the gradual transformation of the Board's responsibilities. By the 1820s the Trustees had relinquished any formal connection with fisheries and were principally concerned with the promotion of the fine arts. It was to this same Lord Meadowbank that William Dyce and Charles Heath Wilson addressed their highly influential *Letter to Lord Meadowbank ... on the Best Means of Ameliorating the Arts and Manufactures of Scotland in Point of Taste* (Edinburgh 1837).
- 8 Helen E. Smailes, 'A History of the Statue Gallery at the Trustees' Academy in Edinburgh', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 3 (no. 2, 1991), pp. 125–143; letterbook of the Board of Trustees (SRO, NG1/3/22, p. 300); letter from the Board Secretary to Thomas Campbell, 1 December 1821, and Board Minutes, 18 December 1821 (SRO, NG1/1/34, pp. 288–289).
  - 9 Board Minutes (SRO, NG1/1/35). See also Mason, 'School of Design' (note 1), p. 84, which states that negotiations ended inconclusively and refers to the occupation of the premises by another tenant, Edward Mitchell, in 1830.
  - 10 See *Statement* (note 3), pp. 12–13.
  - 11 In his entry on Angus (c.1792–1845) in *A Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Architects 1600–1840* (London 1978), Howard Colvin cited Dean of Guild plans for 10 May 1825 (p. 67). These could not be located among the City of Edinburgh Archives in 1995. A plan of the Subscription Baths and a summary account of the agreement reached by the Committee of Management and the Directors of the Drawing Institution (fig. 4) was inserted in a bound volume entitled 'A Collection of Old Plans and Maps relating to Edinburgh and Leith' (c.1850), now in a private collection (copied in 1992 by the National Monuments Record of Scotland, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland).
  - 12 A precise description of the accommodation acquired for the Drawing Institution is given in the sasine registered on 20 July 1827, which confirmed the sale of the property to the Trustees of the Institution by Adam Ferguson of Woodhill (SRO, RS27/1170, p. 274).
  - 13 *Prospectus*, p. 3, and *Statement*, p. 14 (see note 3). For a discussion of the constitution and academic practice of Continental schools, see Nikolaus Pevsner, *Academies of Art, Past and Present* (Cambridge 1940); and Anton W. A. Boschloo *et al.* (eds), *Academies of Art Between Renaissance and Romanticism* (The Hague 1989), reprinted from the *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, V–VI (1986–1987).
  - 14 *Caledonian Mercury*, 15 November 1788; *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 21 November 1799; Board Minutes, 7 February 1798 (SRO, NG1/1/29). Forbes's statement is quoted by Hamish Miles in 'John Graham and the Trustees' Academy' (part 2), *The Scottish Art Review*, XV (no. 1, 1977), p. 19ff.
  - 15 *Statement* (note 3), p. 16; 'Regulations for the new Drawing Academy to be opened by Mr. Graham', in Board Minutes, 12 December 1798 (SRO, NG1/1/29).
  - 16 See also the review of the new Institution in the *Edinburgh Magazine* (note 3).
  - 17 *Statement* (note 3), p. 14.
  - 18 On the admission of women to the Trustees' Academy, see Patricia Brookes, *The Trustees' Academy, Edinburgh, 1760–1801: The Public Patronage of Art and Design in the Scottish Enlightenment* (PhD thesis, Syracuse University 1989, published by UMI 1989). This thesis includes an analysis by profession and gender of the early student complement. The formal instruction of women at the Academy seems to have resumed in 1854 when the Board of Trustees admitted eight female teachers seconded from the Northern District School under Government inspection (Board Minutes, 27 February, 19 November and 31 December 1855. SRO, NG1/1/40 and NG1/1/41). Their readmission on this occasion can probably be linked with the practice of the Government Schools of Design and the eventual reconstitution of the Trustees' Academy as the Government School of Design for Edinburgh in 1858.
  - 19 Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus, *Memoirs of a Highland Lady*, edited by Andrew Tod, 2 vols (Edinburgh 1988), II, pp. 94–95. Unfortunately, nothing further is known of Mary Anne Grant, who died in 1820, probably in childbirth, in the year following her marriage to Lieutenant-General James Lindsay of Balcarres. In the succeeding generation, her niece Mary (1831–1908), the daughter of John Grant, achieved a rare success as a society portrait sculptor (see *The Ladies' Field*, 15 July 1899).
  - 20 Martha Somerville (ed.), *Personal Recollections of Mary Somerville* (London 1873), p. 49; Samuel Smiles (ed.), *James Nasmyth: An Autobiography* (London 1883), pp. 55–57; J. C. B. Cooksey, *Alexander Nasmyth, H.R.S.A.: A Man of the*

- Scottish Renaissance* (Whittingehame House Publishing 1991), p. 3ff. See especially Francina Irwin, 'Lady Amateurs and their Masters in Scott's Edinburgh', *Connoisseur*, CLXXXV (December 1974), pp. 230-237.
- 21 As early as 1782 Walker was advertising classes in Edinburgh at about the same time when, according to his own testimony, he received his first pupil from Runciman. I am grateful to Joe Rock, University of Edinburgh, for this reference to the advertisement placed by Walker in the *Caledonian Mercury*, 2 November 1782. See also the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 28 October 1797, 31 March 1798, 12 July and 11 October 1800, and 12 December 1801; *The Edinburgh Annual Register* 1816 (Edinburgh 1820), p. cclxxxvii; and correspondence of Walker with the 11th Earl of Buchan, 1804-1813 (EUL, Gen. 1429/22/3). Buchan's correspondent is not to be confused with George Walker senior, also a drawing master, whose death near Musselburgh on 28 June 1800 was reported in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 10 July 1800. The younger Walker may be synonymous with the 'Mr Walker' who advertised in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* of 19 December 1801 classes for Edinburgh University medical students in anatomical as well as landscape and figure drawing. These classes were to convene at 8 North St David Street, Edinburgh.
- 22 *Statement* (note 3), pp. 22-23.
- 23 *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25, 29-31, 32.
- 24 Mason, 'School of Design', and Irwin, *Scottish Painters*, p. 92 (see note 1). Letter from Wilson to George Thomson, Secretary to the Board of Trustees, 4 June 1820, discussed by the Board on 21 June (among uncatalogued Board correspondence in the National Galleries of Scotland, 1992).
- 25 The original staff complement is listed in the 1825 *Prospectus* (note 3). For James Stewart (1791-1863), see Robert Brydall, *Art in Scotland* (Edinburgh 1889), p. 204, and John C. Guy, 'Edinburgh Engravers', *BOEC*, 9 (1916), p. 99. Evidently Stewart's association with the Drawing Institution was shortlived as the advertisement card among the Skene of Rubislaw papers (see note 3) lists as assistant masters Andrew Somerville and 'Mr. Crawford'. Edmund Thornton Crawford RSA (1806-85) was a friend, student and sketching companion of William Simson. See the obituary of Crawford in the *Annual Report of the Royal Scottish Academy* (1885). During the 1840s he was offering private classes in drawing and painting in oils and watercolour (*Edinburgh and Leith Post Office Directory*, 1846-47, and *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 30 September 1847).
- 26 Brydall, *Art in Scotland*, p. 466 (with date of birth given as 1808). Somerville's activities as a drawing master are mentioned in a brief manuscript obituary inserted into a copy of the *7th Annual Report of the Royal Scottish Academy* (1834), held by the RSA Library. He is said to have been born in 1806 as the son of an Edinburgh wire-worker. In 1830 he was recorded in a ledger of students attending the Trustees' Academy (SRO, NG2/1/3). See also the posthumous inventory of his effects, drawn up by his brother James, an Edinburgh engraver. This refers to paintings sold at the Royal Manchester Institution (SRO, SC70/1/50, p. 724).
- 27 *Annual Report of the Royal Scottish Academy* (1862); Charles Baile de Laperriere (ed.), *The Royal Scottish Academy Exhibitors, 1826-1890*, vol. 4 (1991); *Statement* (note 3), p. 16. Significantly, in view of the close administrative connection between the Trustees' Academy and the Drawing Institution, both of the Simson brothers were recorded in a ledger of students attending the Trustees' Academy for the session 1828-29, and again in 1830 (SRO, NG2/1/3).
- 28 *Edinburgh Magazine* (note 3). See also a fascinating polemical commentary on the plight of contemporary Scottish sculptors published by George Cleghorn in *Remarks on Ancient and Modern Art in a Series of Essays by an Amateur* (Edinburgh 1837), p. 241ff.
- 29 The prospectus for the Simsons' Academy was discovered among the archives of New College, Edinburgh, by Fiona Pearson of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art (EUL, New College Library, CHA.4.168.19). All types of tuition - that is, chalk and pencil drawing, military pen drawing, the theory of perspective, oil painting, watercolour painting, modelling from the cast and from life - were available in a public class or by individual private instruction. William Simson placed at the disposal of his brothers for the Academy's stock 'a number of Sketches and Drawings, consisting of Studies from Nature, in Figures, Landscapes, Animals etc.' By 27 October 1832, when the *Scotsman* carried an advertisement for the Simsons' Academy, it had moved to 78 Queen Street and the Simsons had engaged a certain Robert Ross as their assistant. The Academy was still functioning in 1836 when it was advertised in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* of 6 October as the 'Institution for Drawing, Painting and Sculpture No. 2 Rutland Street'. George Simson (or possibly his son, George W. Simson) announced in the same newspaper on 1 January 1848 the re-opening of classes at the Institution for Drawing, Painting and Perspective at his residence at 54 North Frederick Street.
- 30 *DNB*; S. D. Cleveland, *The Royal Manchester Institution*

- (privately printed, 1931), pp. 3–5; SRO. Royal Institution correspondence.
- 31 *Gray's Edinburgh and Leith Directory* (Edinburgh 1832–1833 and 1833–1834); *Scotsman*, 1 January 1834.
- 32 Register of Sasines (Edinburgh), sasine 14 June 1830 in favour of the Honble. Miss Elizabeth Charlotte Mackenzie (SRO, RS27/1278, p. 88); Register of Sasines (Edinburgh), sasines 13 November 1835 in favour of the Trustees of the Edinburgh Drawing Institution (SRO, RS27/1522, p. 215); Register of Sasines (Edinburgh) (SRO, RS27/1469, p. 170); *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 8 February 1836 (preliminary notice of sale) and 14 April 1836 (notice of public roup scheduled for 11 May). One of the final advertisements for the Drawing Institution appeared in the *Post Office Directory* for 1835–36, and included a list of directors.
- 33 *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 2 October and 1 November 1847. For Arthur Perigal junior (1816–1884), see *DNB*; Brydall, *Art in Scotland* (note 25), p. 448; and an obituary in the *Scotsman*, 6 June 1884, which alludes to his 'highly successful' career as a drawing-master.
- 34 SRO, Index of Sasines (Edinburgh), 4384 No. 1, 12 June 1893. The third-floor schoolroom, which runs transversely across the building on the Hill Street Lane North elevation and has been adapted for use as the Lodge Chapel, is visible on Dean of Guild plans extracted on 12 June 1924 (City of Edinburgh Archives).