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David Octavius Hill (1802-1870) and the art of the personal

Submitted January 2001 for the Degree of Ph. D

School of Art History

Sara Stevenson



11-0806

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17 January 2001

Sara Stevenson

(ii) I was admitted as a candidate for the degree of PhD in October 1996; the study for which this is a record was carried out from the University of St Andrews between 1996 and 2000.

17 January 2001

Sara Stevenson

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(date) Professor Graham Smith

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17 January 2001

Acknowledgements

I have worked with Hill and Adamson's calotypes, in my professional capacity as the Curator of the Scottish National Photography Collection, for around twenty years. In effect, I became a photographic historian because I was asked to produce a catalogue of the five thousand negatives and positives in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery; Hill and Adamson's work was the beginning of my education in the field and they still continue to educate me.

The length of time I have worked with the subject means that I may well have forgotten individuals who have generously helped me with specific questions. The acknowledgements should, therefore be addressed, in a very broad sense to my friends and colleagues in the world of photography, history and photographic criticism, who have effectively collaborated with me on this project. It is an important part of my thesis that creativity may grow from sociability. It has certainly been my experience that much of the excitement and development of my own ideas has come from enlivening conversations rather than formal texts.

My first debt is to David Octavius Hill, whose mind I have attempted to occupy. He is one of the rare historical figures whose company is unfailingly attractive and whose art is a pleasurable extension of that attraction. Secondly, I am indebted to those scholars who preceded me in the field and communicated their enthusiasm to me; particularly David Bruce and Katherine Michaelson. I am more than grateful to the photographers, who have illuminated my understanding of the art of photography in relation to Hill and Adamson, especially Thomas Joshua Cooper, Robin Gillanders, Murray Johnston, Patricia Macdonald and David Williams. Amongst the international scholars, I would wish to acknowledge the generous enthusiasm of Keith Bell, Bodo Von Dewitz, Roy Flukinger, Françoise Heilbrun and Will Stapp. Within Britain, I am personally indebted to Janis Adams, James Berry, Alison Boocock, Duncan Forbes, Barbara Gray, Michael Gray, James Holloway, Julie Lawson, Alison Morrison-Low, Richard Ovenden, Allen Simpson, Helen Smailes and Mike Ware. I am more than grateful to my colleagues for their help and encouragement.

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Note on sources and abbreviations

This thesis aims to examine Hill's world and art in three combined ways. The visual evidence is offered by the Hill/Adamson calotypes and Hill's paintings and engravings – principally the material held in the National Galleries of Scotland and Glasgow University Library, Special Collections and with reference to the collections of the Royal Scottish Academy, the University of St Andrews, the National Museums of Scotland, the National Library of Scotland, the Gernsheim Collection in the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas and the Fox Talbot Museum. This is supported by cross-reference to the work of other photographers and of painters, particularly David Wilkie and J. M. W. Turner, whom we know to have influenced the artist. Because the partnership was established at the beginning of photography, much of the significant comparative photographic material, which may illuminate the subject of photography, comes afterwards. Some comparisons with the future are, therefore, explored to that end. There are practical difficulties in examining a representative body of Hill's paintings.¹ For example, much of *The Land of Burns* series was apparently destroyed by fire and the paintings were dispersed. I am, therefore, taking a selective view of his pictures, dependent on engravings and occasionally on descriptions and looking at the ideas behind them rather than their technical skill or success. It can reasonably be said that Hill was striving both for intelligible meaning and for skill in his work and we are therefore examining an ambition and an attempt to advance in the practice of landscape. If, in the final analysis, we may have to see him as a failure in his painting, it remains the purpose of this thesis to approach an understanding of Hill's ambitions through the serious intention of his work in both painting and photography.

The second source is the correspondence of Hill and his friends, official and private, which is largely in the collection of the National Library of Scotland, the Royal Scottish Academy and in private hands. The groups of Hill's correspondence which have proved particularly helpful are the letters relating to the Academy's affairs; Hill's letters to David Roberts, the Scottish landscape artist living in London; Hill's letters to Joseph Noel Paton; and the letters from the engineer, James Nasmyth, to Hill. These are principally in the Royal Scottish Academy Archives, the National

¹. Unfortunately, Katherine Michaelson's thesis on Hill's painting, undertaken in the 1970s, was never

Library of Scotland, the Royal Scottish Observatory and private collections.

Thirdly, the thesis refers to published writing, concentrating on those works written by people Hill knew and admired and, within that category, taking especial account of the people who appear in the portrait calotypes. Since it is clear that the study of Hill's life and work requires a greater spread of contemporary knowledge, it is intended to concentrate more on the documentation and publication of the time than on subsequent criticism. The introduction aims to offer examples of the considerable literature on Hill and Adamson rather than a bibliographical overview; other publications on Hill and Adamson's work were consulted and will be referred to both in the text and in the bibliography.

Abbreviations

Academy is assumed to be the Royal Scottish Academy

ECL	Edinburgh Central Library
FTM	Fox Talbot Museum
GUL	Glasgow University Library, Special Collections
NGS	National Gallery of Scotland
NLS	National Library of Scotland
RSM	Royal Scottish Museum
RSA	Royal Scottish Academy
SNPC	Scottish National Photography Collection
SRO	Scottish Record Office
UOE	University of Edinburgh Library
UOSA	University of St Andrews Library

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Illustrations

Abstract

David Octavius Hill (1802-1870) and the art of the personal

This thesis proposes to address the art and thinking of the painter and photographer, David Octavius Hill (1802-70), with a particular focus on his calotype partnership with Robert Adamson (1821-48), in Edinburgh between 1843 and 1847. It is partly advanced in response to twentieth-century criticism and its failure to illuminate the subject in historical terms.

The principal drive which emerges from a study of Hill's artworks in conjunction with his correspondence and the writing of his friends is personal, individual, local and national. The first three chapters provide a base for the argument: firstly, through a discussion of the interactions of society and the restraints and drive of ambition, as they relate to Hill and the cultural effectiveness of his sociable generosity; secondly, in the particular nature of the Scottish writing of the time, both factual and poetic, which affected and reflected its society. The next two chapters look at the way particular ideas – here, nationalism, time and mortality – may connect with Hill's art, in his painting, engraving and photography. Chapters six and seven examine Hill's practice and interests in the depiction of figures and landscape. The last two chapters are designed to distinguish the work of Hill and Adamson's calotype partnership. This will be done firstly in comparison with the opposed opinions of two of the leading figures in the field: Sir David Brewster and William Henry Fox Talbot. The last chapter looks at the calotype work in a broader setting, locates it in the critical context of contemporary art and considers its possible relation to practical history of painting. From that base, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the practice and aesthetic of Hill and Adamson's work and the impact of the calotypes on future photographic practice.

It is a principal concern of the thesis to offer a wider sense of the life and professional career of David Octavius Hill, with the intention of illuminating his work as an artist. Both his painting and his photography have an inherently personal character, which stems from the man and his own passionate enthusiasms; an understanding of these may help to offer an understanding of his art.

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1. David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson
David Octavius Hill, c. 1843
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Hugh Miller, 1843

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9. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Hugh Miller, 1844

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Whereabouts unknown, from a glass negative in Glasgow University Library,

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83. John Adamson

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Albumen print

Royal Scottish Museum, John Adamson album

Introduction

1. Hill and Adamson's calotypes: problems in critical analysis

The partnership of David Octavius Hill (1802-70) and Robert Adamson (1821-48) has been critically examined from its beginnings in 1843. Such criticism has varied in its respect and depth and has changed, according to the interest of the time, the location and the personal affections of the writers. The questions raised by the criticism will be addressed in a broader manner in the body of the thesis, but it would be appropriate here to look at examples of particular theoretical models, which may cause difficulties in approaching the subject. These are: the wish to divide the partnership; the examination of the unconscious; the proposal of a 'golden age of photography'; the removal or replacement of the 'author.'

Splitting the partnership

The calotype work was generated by a partnership, and one of the most intriguing challenges this has posed has proved to be defining the individual contribution of the two men. This question is addressed in Colin Ford and Roy Strong, *An Early Victorian Album. The photographic masterpieces (1843-1847) of David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson.*¹ Roy Strong's argument starts from portraits of Hill and Adamson (Figs. 1 and 2):

These "self-portraits" define the characters of the two men very precisely. Hill prefaces Volume I, elegantly leaning against a masonry wall, his left hand fingering his waistcoat buttons, his right at his side holding a top hat ... There is an element of chic, and a buttonhole sprouts from his lapel ... Adamson opens the last of the volumes. In contrast to Hill, he is pensive, his eyes downcast, seated with one arm resting upon a table piled with books ... These opening images sum up the nature of the relationship: Hill, theatrical in manner, extrovert in behaviour, a man preoccupied with surface appearances, Adamson, introvert, composed, contained, and controlled.²

¹. Colin Ford and Roy Strong, *An Early Victorian Album. The photographic masterpieces (1843-1847) of David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson*, New York 1976. These were the albums given by Hill to the Royal Academy and sold to the National Portrait Gallery, London, in 1972.

². Ibid., pp. 49-50.

Strong is proposing a rhetorical balance of opposites, defining Robert Adamson as the quiet man, overshadowed by the facile Hill. His argument is based on physiognomic analysis. The unreliability of this method of determining character may be simply demonstrated by Otto and Marlis Steinert, who employed a similar approach to a picture of Robert Adamson, taken by his brother, Dr John Adamson (1809-70), and concluded that he was romantically melancholy and world-weary.³

Strong proceeds with his argument about the calotypes:

Essentially they will forever remain the technical achievement of Robert Adamson, always the most shadowy figure, but, one would deduce, the man who possessed that ultra-sensitivity to character and atmosphere missing from the more prosaic Hill. Ironically, it was Hill who governed the visual repertory of the calotypes. He it was who posed the sitters, dictated their gestures, assembled and placed the props of table and chair, books and flowers, papers, as well as the more unusual impedimenta such as busts and casts from the Elgin Marbles. Although the expression of a moment in time, the poses were devised by a man whose visual imagination had been formed some twenty years before - in the 1820s. It is, in fact, accidental that Hill created anything new in his calotypes, for it is impossible to argue that he was anything more than an artist working within a tradition of picture-making created at the close of the eighteenth century and the opening of the nineteenth, a tradition which found its quintessential expression in the establishment in 1829 of what became the Royal Scottish Academy, of which Hill was the secretary for almost forty years. It is ironic that the year in which Adamson tragically died, and in which the studio ceased to operate, was the year in which the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood came into being in defiance of the type of art the academies represented.⁴

This disconcerting criticism may be judged from the first sentence, which awards Robert Adamson the words ‘essentially,’ ‘forever,’ ‘always’ and ‘ultra-sensitivity,’ leaving Hill with ‘more prosaic.’ Strong’s argument denies the creativity of the partnership.

Aesthetic analysis of the same two pictures has been used with equal confidence by Weston Naef, who reaches the same conclusion through an opposite reading.⁵ Naef

³. ‘Es zeigt einen dunkel haarigen, schwermütig aussehenden jungen Mann, dessen romantisch-melancholische Gesichtszüge und weltschmerzliche Pose an Lord Byron gemahnen.’ Otto and Marlis Steinert, *David Octavius Hill/Robert Adamson: Inkunabeln der Photographie*, exhibition catalogue, Museum Folkwang, Essen 1963, p. 7.

⁴. Strong (as in n.1), p. 50. The twentieth-century use of the word ‘academic,’ as a term of disparagement, is discussed by Paul Barlow, ‘Rewriting the Academic,’ *Art and the academy in the nineteenth century*, Manchester 2000, pp. 15-32.

⁵. Weston Naef, in a colloquium at the Getty Museum, August 1997, published in Anne Lyden, *In Focus: D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson*, Los Angeles 1999, p. 106.

argues that the man behind the camera was the creative personality. He identifies the academic picture as the one of Adamson. For Naef, the portrait of Hill is a non-academic, intuitive or photographic picture and is evidence that Adamson had a dynamic character diametrically opposed to Hill's.

The urge to divide the two contributions was also promoted by Helmut Gernsheim, when referring to the work of Hill's second experimental association with a photographer, Alexander MacGlashon (d. 1877), around 1861-2:

With one or two exceptions they fall into the category of Victorian trash, for which Hill alone was responsible since the subjects were 'designed and arranged' by him and photographed by Macglashon using the collodion process ... The artistic failure of this short return to photography is perhaps also a proof that Adamson's contribution may have been more than merely that of technician.⁶

This question will be addressed in Chapter nine, but it should be noted that Gernsheim proposes that Hill is solely responsible for the artistic failure of one partnership and only partly responsible for the success of the other. It is, again, reinforced by the use of words, 'merely' and 'technician,' which we are expected to reject.

The pursuit of this separation has been principally directed to presenting Adamson as a photographer with an independent aesthetic drive, and is generally based on the assumption that he would be responding to a peculiarly photographic aesthetic, which would not come naturally to Hill. An example of this kind of reasoning may serve to illustrate the difficulties involved. Here the author ascribes the calotype, *Burnside* (Fig. 3), to Robert Adamson and addresses *Landscape with Fence - Colinton Wood* as his work:

Neither *Burnside* nor *Landscape with Fence* can be considered conventionally pictorial, for in each, Adamson concentrated his attention on a photographically bounded fragment, subordinating the secondary areas to the main subject. Nor can either properly be considered documentary, as it is not natural forms *per se* that Adamson was investigating but rather the interrelations among them. In all probability, photographs such as these were made for the use of artists who could appropriate from them visual patterns and information to be included in larger landscape compositions. In this way, they relate to the tradition of *plein-air* landscape studies made by many European artists in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.⁷

⁶. Helmut Gernsheim, 'The David Octavius Hill Memorial Lecture, delivered at Edinburgh University on 9 May 1970,' *Creative Camera* (September 1971): p. 305.

⁷. Richard R. Bretell and others, *Paper and Light: The Calotype in France and Great Britain, 1839-1870*, Boston 1984, p. 97. The evidence for *Burnside* as Adamson's independent work is a mounted

The flaws in this passage are evident. The author is using art historical terms, in a negative sense, to deny the relationship of the image to the art of the time, and then concludes that Adamson's aim is to satisfy a market among *plein-air* painters, without reference to Hill who was a *plein-air* painter.

Robert Adamson and Miss Mann

Since the difficulties presented by such criticism derive from an urge to invent Robert Adamson, the information we have about him, before he met David Octavius Hill, should be outlined. The closest we have to a picture of him in youth was written at the end of the century. It was published by John Miller Gray, who was born two years after Adamson's death, and it may have been a story told by Hill:

As a boy he was delicate in health and retiring in disposition, with a strong turn for the natural sciences, and an especial aptitude for mechanics; devoting all his spare time to the construction of various models, steam-engines, wheelbarrows and small schooners which he sailed on the burn that ran beside his father's house, and sometimes even building larger rowing-boats, to the no small danger, as we are informed, of those who ventured their persons therein upon the deep. At one time it seemed probable that he would adopt mechanics as a profession; and, indeed, with this in view, he worked for a year or two in a mill-wright and engineer's shop in Cupar, but his frame was hardly muscular enough, his health scarcely sufficiently robust to bear the severe physical strain involved in such a calling.⁸

The possibility that Hill told this story is supported by his reference to *Burnside*, after Adamson's death, as one of his favourite calotypes:

the subjects of these [calotypes] possess to me more than ordinary interest ...
The rocky stream is "Burnside" the youthful haunt of my amiable friend
Robert Adamson, who assisted so largely in the production of these calotypes.⁹

print in the Gernsheim collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, which bears his name and not Hill's. Given that Burnside was Adamson's home, this could have been his work alone. But since it is undated, we cannot assume that it was entirely independent of Hill's knowledge and teaching of aesthetics.

⁸. John M. Gray, 'Robert Adamson,' *Calotypes by D. O. Hill and R. Adamson Illustrating an Early Stage in the Development of Photography Selected from his Collection by Andrew Elliot*, Edinburgh 1928, p. 11. His information is likely to have come from Dr John Brown who, as a friend of Hill, could have heard it from him rather than directly from the Adamson family. Gray wrote Brown's obituary, in which he said that Brown was, at the time of his death, 'writing a Preface to a series of calotype portraits to be shortly published - a task for which he was specially qualified by his interest in art and his comprehensive knowledge of the Scottish society of the last generation.' *John Miller Gray. Memoir and Remains*, Edinburgh 1895, vol.1, p. 149.

⁹. Hill to Bicknell, 17 January 1849, George Eastman House Collection ms AC H645 acc 830.

In 1842, Adamson was encouraged by the physicist, Sir David Brewster (1781-1868), and his brother, John, to turn his attention to photography as a career. There are photographs taken in those first months in St Andrews, which can be specifically identified as his because he signed them in the negative (Fig. 4). The small album of their photographs sent by John Adamson, in November 1842, to William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-77) the inventor of the calotype process of photography, is principally a technical achievement.¹⁰ When Robert and John acquired the two larger cameras and which calotypes they took in St Andrews, between November and May of 1843, is not clear.¹¹

In May, Brewster reported:

Mr Adamson ... goes tomorrow to Edin to prosecute, as a Profession, the Calotype. He has made brilliant progress, and done some of the very finest things both in Portrait and Landscape.¹²

Adamson set up his studio in Edinburgh a few weeks before he met Hill, and, in that time, he may only have taken a handful of calotypes on and around the Calton Hill.¹³ No advertisement has yet been found to suggest he had commenced commercial operations, and the first public mention of his studio is made by Hugh Miller in an article published on 24 June, referring to: ‘the calotype, - an art introduced into Edinburgh, during the last fortnight, for the first time, by Mr Adamson of St Andrews.’¹⁴

The problem presented by this minimal account of Robert Adamson’s career before he met Hill is that even the practical facts about him are missing. We may speculate that he was apprenticed to John Annan, a millwright and flax-spinner at Dairsie in Fife, but the census returns for 1841 sank in the ferry on their way across

¹⁰. R. L. Harley Jr and J. I.. Harley, in their article, ‘The “Tartan Album” by John and Robert Adamson,’ *The History of Photography*, vol. 12 (1988): pp. 295-316, expound a belief in a profound philosophical basis for this album. I do not myself find their argument convincing. See S. Stevenson, ‘“The Tartan Album”,’ *The History of Photography*, vol. 13 (1989): pp. 267-8.

¹¹. The album contains only the small square calotypes (about 4 x 3 11/16 inches), in the collection of the FTM. Presumably, they bought the two bigger cameras (taking calotypes about 6 1/4 x 4 1/2 inches and 8 1/4 x 6 inches) afterwards. There is a list of sites and times of day at the end of John Adamson’s scrapbook, in the collection of the RMS, which may have been test subjects.

¹². Brewster to Talbot, 9 May 1843, FTM, LA43-53.

¹³. A number of small, undated negatives of a tentative character and a negative of the Royal High School, which is dated 17 May (from the collection of the Edinburgh Photographic Society in the SNPC) are probably evidence of his work in these weeks.

¹⁴. Hugh Miller, ‘The Two Prints,’ *The Witness* (24 June 1843).

the Forth and no apprenticeship record has been found.¹⁵ It is, therefore, difficult to offer a straightforward view of Robert Adamson as an independent actor.

There is a further complication. In the course of the partnership, the engineer, James Nasmyth (1808-1890), wrote to Hill:

how goes on the divine solar art? and how does that worthy artist Mr Adamson the authentic contriver & manipulator in the art of light and darkness? and thrice worthy Miss Mann that most skillfull and zealous of assistants ... I have the remembrance of All on Em so clearly calotyped in my minds Eye as last I saw them in full manipulation of the divine art of light.¹⁶

Miss Mann is a wild card in the discussion of the partnership. Her role as Hill and Adamson's assistant has never been assessed at all. A very simple argument pointing to the periodic ill-health of both partners and the professional preoccupation of Hill with Academy affairs could be made to propose the almost invisible woman as a primary actor. The only positive mention we have of her is in James Nasmyth's letters. We know of one occasion, when neither Adamson nor Hill were there, and the King of Saxony and his entourage turned up at Rock House without warning. Two photographs were taken by 'an assistant.'¹⁷ The results were not particularly good. Assuming that the assistant on this occasion was Miss Mann, they might be a measure of her general competence as an independent photographer, but this was a thoroughly disconcerting occasion and therefore not an effective test.¹⁸

Miss Mann apparently also worked for the astronomer, Charles Piazzi Smyth (1819-1900), in the observatory on Calton Hill above Rock House, and it may be assumed that she was involved largely in printing the calotypes.¹⁹ The annotations on the negatives, presumably in Robert Adamson's hand, would appear to be printing instructions and may have been addressed to her. The question of Miss Mann's contribution is an interesting problem; we have no further evidence at present and the

¹⁵. The speculation is based on evidence from family correspondence that the Annan and Adamson families knew each other; Thomas Annan's sister was reported to be much distressed by Robert Adamson's death. For Thomas Annan's later connection to Hill, see Chapter nine.

¹⁶. Nasmyth to Hill, 27 March 1847, ROE.

¹⁷. Carl Gustav Carus, *The King of Saxony's Journey through England and Scotland in the year 1844*, trans. S. C. Davison, London 1846, p. 337.

¹⁸. Monica Thorp has suggested that the group of calotypes taken at Ballochmyle in 1847 or 8 may have involved Miss Mann rather than Robert Adamson. See Monica Thorp. 'Hill and Adamson without Adamson? The Ballochmyle Calotypes.' *Scottish Photography Bulletin*, no. 2 (1989): pp. 25-29.

¹⁹. I am indebted to Larry Schaaf for this information.

case cannot be intelligently argued. But even if this conjecture does nothing more, it qualifies Strong's opinion: 'Essentially they will forever remain the achievement of Robert Adamson.'

Future research may well discover more information in relation to both Robert Adamson and Miss Mann. However, it is assumed in the argument of this thesis, that Hill's prominence was not simply casting a shadow over these two people he worked with in photography, but that his capabilities and ideas both illuminated and led the work. The argument is also based on a concept of growth in partnership – an idea that creativity may expand rather than contract when minds and capabilities are brought together. Without being in a position to propose more for Adamson and Miss Mann than the evidence implies, it will be assumed that their skills were similarly inspiring to Hill.

The golden age

One of the most seductive proposals in photographic history is the idea of a golden age possessed by aesthetic innocence. Simply because Hill and Adamson's work stood at the beginning of photographic practice, there is a tendency to discuss the excellence of their work in these terms.

The Pictorialist photographer, J. Craig Annan (1864-1946), expressed his admiration of Hill and Adamson's photography in such a way:

He is indeed a fortunate man who, endowed with talent and courage, finds himself at work in a field where there are no precedents and who must simply follow the guidance of his own instinct ... Such productions are evolved as unconsciously and as directly from nature as are the trees and flowers, and constitute a pure product ... To present day pictorial photographers it is extremely interesting and almost humiliating to observe that on the very threshold of the photographic era there was one doing with no apparent effort what they would fain accomplish with eager strivings, and thinking so little of his achievements that when he returned to what he considered his serious work it was with a sense of having frittered away three solid years in following a most fascinating amusement.²⁰

There is an element of dramatic naïveté in this; Annan was verbally articulate and aware of the limitations of such rhetoric. He knew from his own experience that

²⁰. J. Craig Annan, 'David Octavius Hill, R.S.A. 1802-1870,' *Camera Work*, No. 11 (July 1905): p. 17.

photographing nature required profound attention and construction, and adds later in the article:

One becomes so fascinated by the interest of the persons who sat to Hill and by his magnificent characterization of them that it is only as a secondary consideration that one thinks of the artistic qualities of his pictures. This is really one of the highest compliments that one could pay them if it be true that 'the greatest art is that which conceals art,' for there is absolutely no appearance of conscious effort in the arrangement of his compositions, nor is there any feeling of affectation in the striking attitudes in which he frequently portrayed his subjects.²¹

Heinrich Schwartz developed Annan's idea:

Just as Gutenberg's printings have remained the outstanding creations of typography, so are Hill's calotypes examples of photography so brilliant that by the side of them everything which has taken place since pales. As though photography, in the first hours of its existence, had wished to manifest and unfold all its possibilities, as though it had hoped at once to approach all but the farthest reaches of the attainable. Hill's calotypes stand isolated and unequalled at the dawn of a new art ... From the very insufficiencies of this man's technical equipment grew the subtlest artistic achievements. Alone in a new world of graphic representation, he sensed instinctively all the secrets of a new vision.²²

The arguments, put by Annan and Schwartz, are appealing because of their wholehearted appreciation. But, as Annan himself indicated, they are open to question. How far may the work of the partnership be described as instinctive? Did Hill really see the three years he devoted to photography as 'frittered away' in an amusement?

The concept of a golden age of photography was inverted by the poet, Hugh MacDiarmid (1892-1978). From his point of view, society itself was in a healthier condition in the 1840s, and Hill and Adamson's calotypes were evidence of the wholesale degeneration of the Scots since that time. He reported a conversation with:

two of the finest portrait photographers in Scotland who both lamented the appalling dearth of faces really worth photographing ... And they agreed with me at once when I said that it was only necessary to ruffle through the wonderful studies of Scots men and women taken by an early photographer

²¹. Ibid., p. 19. The importance of this idea to Annan may be seen in the bookplate etched for him by D. Y. Cameron, which bore the motto, 'Ars est celare artem.' This is illustrated in William Buchanan, *The Art of the Photographer: J. Craig Annan 1864-1946*, exhibition catalogue, National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh 1992, p. 19.

²². Heinrich Schwartz, *David Octavius Hill, Master of Photography*, trans. Helene Fraenkel, London 1932, p. 18.

like D[avid] Octavius Hill to see how terrible the process of degeneration in the interval had been – how all the qualities of moral strength, experience of life, high intelligence, strong purpose, good judgement, individual character, force and dignity had been eliminated in the course of the past century from the faces of nearly all our people.²³

This is a brisk version of Walter Benjamin's theory that early photography and its subjects were somehow in harmony, which blends the Modernist admiration of truth to the process with socio-political commentary:

Orlik talks about 'the coherent illumination' brought about by their long exposure times, which 'gives these early photographs their greatness' ... that aura was by no means the mere product of a primitive camera. Rather, in that early period subject and technique were as exactly congruent as they became incongruent in the period of decline that immediately followed ... After 1880, though, photographers made it their business to simulate ... the aura which had been banished from the picture with the rout of darkness through faster lenses, exactly as it was banished from reality by the deepening degeneration of the imperialist bourgeoisie.²⁴

The further proposal that it was somehow easier for Hill and Adamson, because the sitters were photographically innocent – unresisting objects of the artists' vision - may be read in Weston Naef's criticism of a Newhaven group (Fig. 5):

Never before had photographers wandered through the streets prospecting for subjects who were part of an unfolding situation and were not static objects. It is unlikely that even one of the eleven top-hatted fishermen had ever seen a photograph before the day this picture was made. Their ignorance of being immortalized is signaled by their poses and the lack of recognition on their faces.²⁵

It is a reasonable supposition that the photographs are good because they are in some sense natural. But it cannot be assumed that the consistent and expressive appearance of nature in photography is necessarily the responsibility of the subject, or contingency, rather than the photographers. The difficulty of such ideas is that they may avoid the critical issues and here is one of immense importance: just how did Hill and Adamson achieve such aesthetic and technical success at the very beginning of

²³. Quoted in Kenneth Buthlay, 'Hugh MacDiarmid: Where Extremes Meet,' *MacDiarmid: An Illustrated Biography*, Edinburgh 1977, p. 9.

²⁴. Walter Benjamin, 'A small history of photography,' *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, London 1979, p. 248.

²⁵. Weston J. Naef, *The J. Paul Getty Museum Handbook of the Photographs Collection*, Malibu 1995, p. 24.

photography? These questions will be addressed in general terms throughout this thesis.

The photographic subconscious

The idea of the subconscious motive has opened up the field of speculation yet further in the history of photography. The problem of the argument may be expressed from the writing of Walter Benjamin. Here he talks of Hill and Adamson's Disruption portraits and then goes on to address this question, using a calotype of a Newhaven fishwife as a model of an anonymous, unposed subject (Fig. 6):

In Hill's Newhaven fishwife, her eyes cast down in such indolent, seductive modesty, there remains something that goes beyond testimony to the photographer's art, something that cannot be silenced, that fills you with an unruly desire to know what her name was, the woman who was alive there, who even now is still real and will never consent to be wholly absorbed into art. And I ask: 'how did the beauty of that hair, those eyes, beguile our forebears: how did that mouth kiss, to which desire curls up senseless as smoke without fire'... No matter how artful the photographer, no matter how carefully posed his subject, the beholder feels an irresistible urge to search such a picture for the tiny spark of contingency, of the Here and Now, with which reality has so to speak seared the subject, to find the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment, the future subsists so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it.²⁶

Benjamin is seeking a direct connection or communication with the subject of the picture – a point of contact which eliminates the photographer. He assumes that his response is distinct from Hill's intention, and that this was to collect a generalised image for a secondary purpose. But is this so, and at what point may we identify and claim the fragile independence of the subject's identity?

Stephen Bann criticises Benjamin's passage from within Benjamin's framework:

Does she cast down her eyes with "casual seductive shame"? The idea is a delightful one, but it is almost wholly the result of our own projection. Does the "something that cannot be silenced" - which we take to be the ontological insistence of the photographic document - really demand the *name* of the anonymous fish-wife? Does it really require that we supply a civil status for that reticent body? Let us suppose that we found out, through a small miracle of archival research, that she was called Mary Macpherson. Would that in any way palliate the mute challenge of the image?²⁷

²⁶. Benjamin (as in n. 24), pp. 242-3.

²⁷. Stephen Bann, 'Erased Physiognomy: Theodore Géricault, Paul Strand and Garry Winogrand,' *The Portrait in Photography*, London 1992, pp. 39-40.

There is a simple way of testing this, and no miracle of archival labour is called for.²⁸ Hill, who certainly regarded his sitter as *A Newhaven Beauty*, knew her name, which he recorded in the calotype albums. It is not a trivial point. To Hill, the calotype was a portrait of Mrs Elizabeth Johnstone Hall, seen not just as a beautiful model but as an actual, admirable woman: a confident subject not simply an object and, neither in the Scottish nor the academic sense, a ‘reticent body.’ The challenge is not mute. The very success of the photograph is based on a combined respect for the photograph as an aesthetically truthful medium and for the subject as a person as well as a potential ideal representation. This proposal is intended as a significant drive of this thesis.

Reframing the calotypes

The arguments so far expressed imply a pleasurable interest in the calotype work. The most distanced criticism of the calotypes is that which reframes them. A psychological, philosophical and political argument of this kind may be seen combined in the example of David Bate’s article, ‘Photography and the Colonial Vision.’²⁹ It causes problems which are indicated by one of Bate’s introductory paragraphs:

The Scottish partnership is represented as taking the canonical baton from Fox Talbot as bearer of aesthetic excellence in the talbotype or calotype image. Having turned history into Nature, the history of photography is ‘over’ and thus put beyond analysis. Through the repetition of the same ‘facts,’ the history of photography becomes exhausted by its own boredom. Archives are the representations out of which the past is produced, but when the history of photography focuses on archives it (usually) treats photographs as objects rather than as the residue of discursive practices. As objects, historians have been too quick to imagine that they are looking through photographs into the past as a nostalgic projection to re-live the struggles – and therefore ‘greatness’ – of their authors. Rather than this fetishisation of the author, this archival material has to be brought into the field of those social relations in which its meanings were produced and circulated.³⁰

²⁸. The name of the fishwife was published in Katherine Michaelson, *A Centenary Exhibition of the Work of David Octavius Hill 1802-1870 and Robert Adamson 1821-1848*, exhibition catalogue, Scottish Arts Council, Edinburgh 1970; David Bruce, *Sun Pictures: The Hill-Adamson calotypes*, London 1973; Colin Ford and Roy Strong (as in n. 1); John Ward and Sara Stevenson, *Printed Light. The Scientific Art of William Henry Fox Talbot and David Octavius Hill with Robert Adamson*, Edinburgh 1986; Sara Stevenson, *Hill and Adamson's 'Fishermen and Women of the Firth of Forth'*, Edinburgh 1992.

²⁹. David Bate, ‘Photography and the Colonial Vision,’ *Third Text*, no. 22 (Spring 1993): pp. 81-91.

³⁰. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

Bate's article is concerned with three photographs of men dressed in Eastern clothes, two of which are by Hill and Adamson. They figure in the British Library album of the calotypes, which Hill gave as a handsome present to the politician, James Wilson (1805-60) in 1859, in gratitude for his assistance in setting up the National Gallery of Scotland (see Chapter two). Bate describes the album to present an overblown sense of luxury. The description includes an uncredited paraphrase of a letter by Hill written in 1848, specifying the paper and binding he wished Colnaghi's to use for the albums they were then preparing.³¹ Bate has slightly re-written Hill's instructions; for example, 'a somewhat extravagant style of binding – morocco gilt edge' appears as, 'pages edged with Moroccan gilt.' However, 'morocco' refers to the leather of the binding, not to a particular Moroccan kind of gilding. Bate also quotes Hill's inscription in the album as 'Heaven speed the Chameleon.' The word is not 'Chameleon' but 'Chancellor'; Wilson was taking up the appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer for India. Such misreadings imply a reliance on factual noise as a tool of argument.

The importance of context, as an area of debate and exploration, is indisputable. However, Bate's essay relies on an idea of context with the historical authors removed, and his uncertain grasp of his facts offers an immediate problem in the practical usefulness of the idea. His arguments are based on Roland Barthes's philosophical proposal of 'The Death of the Author,' and are buttressed by the theories of other twentieth-century authorities, like Walter Benjamin, Jacques Lacan, Sigmund Freud and Edward Said.³² This replaces the personal motivation of the nineteenth-century photographers with the interests of twentieth-century writers, which may not efficiently combine as a framework for the examination of history. Denying the photographers' role takes the photograph out of history and leaves a gap at the heart of the context.

Moreover, the attempt to remove the personality and the authorship from Hill and Adamson's work has a particular irony. Hill's art and life were informed by an opposite both of the generality and the self-reference of twentieth-century critical thinking. He was attracted and influenced by the personality and particularity of

³¹. Hill to Scott, 24 October 1848, inserted in an album of calotypes, NLS.

others. This thesis, therefore, also aims to show that Hill's affections and motivation were directed by the character of individual people and their mortality, by local society and landscape and by nationality. His art was an inherently personal art, which attempted to take the intense emotions of personal reaction and make them public. His work was designed to give the force of intimacy to fine art and it is this which makes it both remarkable and effective.

All of the broad approaches to Hill and Adamson's work can be profitably reassessed in the light of new information. David Bate's argument, that the repetition of the same documents or facts in the many histories of photography is liable to result in boredom, is valid.³³ This thesis proposes to widen the spectrum of literature, which can be explored in relation to Hill's life and thinking, in the hopes of illuminating and reanimating the subject.

It is obvious, as Michael Baxandall has pointed out in his efficient analysis of the problems of intention in art, that I will be substituting my own subjective ideas for those of my predecessors.³⁴ Since the end purpose of a work of art is not the object but the impact on its audience, this is to a degree a proper and inevitable response. But I hope to provide a greater focus on the time by concentrating on contemporary sources and with a particular emphasis on the writing of Hill's friends. We cannot be certain of the thoughts passing through Hill's mind during his adult life of forty years, but it is possible to suggest the kind of ideas which probably influenced and excited him and to look at the ways in which that influence may have operated in his art. Part of the purpose of this examination is to illuminate areas unfamiliar to us in modern life: those ideas and influences which may have been different in character or weight from our own and where modern experience is deficient – religion is an obvious area of importance; phrenology is worth considering for its contemporary impact.

³². Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author,' *The Rustle of Language*, Oxford 1986, pp. 49-55.

³³. It may be an expression of this boredom that a recent work offering an overview of 'conceptual issues relating to photography' from a British perspective mentions Hill and Adamson in half a sentence within a footnote about the calotype process. See *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Liz Wells, London and New York 2000, p.126.

³⁴. Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures*, New Haven and London 1985.

2. Further written sources: the contemporary material

The correspondence

The introduction of the penny post in 1840 freed correspondents to use letters as a casual method of communication. The impact of the new service may be judged by the statistics; the number of letters carried within Britain rose from about 75 million to 196 million in 1842, and by 1849 nearly 329 million letters were posted.³⁵ As a consequence it is possible, for the first time in history, to hear people conversing through letters on a large scale. Hill and Adamson's two calotypes of Newhaven fishwives reading a letter (Fig. 7) are distinguished from the Netherlandish seventeenth-century and French eighteenth-century paintings of the same idea, because the readers are no longer 'fine ladies,' they are working women. The pictures celebrate both a new literacy and a new emotional satisfaction - the ability to communicate with absent members of the working community, distant from home. In the surviving letters we meet people on different levels of seriousness and can achieve a sense of the individuality of the writers. It is coincidental that photography and the freeing of correspondence came together, but that conjunction has fascinating implications.

In the time that David Octavius Hill worked as Secretary of the Royal Scottish Academy, nearly forty years from 1830 to 1869, he undertook a considerable correspondence, all in his own hand, sometimes late at night and even in bed. The impact of this is qualified because much of the correspondence is business and of limited interest. The letters do not all survive and certain important ones are still conspicuously missing, including a large portion of the Academy correspondence from the 1850s. The letters to his close friend, James Nasmyth, which should relate to the calotype partnership and may be assumed from Nasmyth's replies to have contained both personal information and opinions, have not been located. Nasmyth's wife was so impressed by their charm that:

she repeats long passages off by heart to me so well doth she know and appreciate the real D. O. spirit that pervades them.³⁶

³⁵. Richard L. Hills, *Papermaking in Britain 1488-1988*, London 1988, p. 123.

³⁶. Nasmyth to Hill, 5 August 1845, ROE.

The effect of the letters is limited to a degree by their character. Hill was not always very competent in expressing his strongly held beliefs, which included his views on art. The problem is compounded because Hill's handwriting, described by a friend in 1836 as 'your well known illegible hand,' was liable to deteriorate when discussing matters of particular importance.³⁷ We are, moreover, almost entirely dependent, when looking at the work of the calotype partnership, on the writing of Hill and his friends. I know of no letters by Robert Adamson and only of two or three by John.³⁸

The literary reference

Hill was a man who thought not just in pictorial but in literary terms and moved in literary circles. His father, Thomas Hill (d. 1826), was a Perth bookseller, who established a branch with Hill's brother, Thomas, in Edinburgh in 1825.³⁹ It is remarkable that the bibliographer and librarian, John Taylor Brown (d. 1901), said that Hill's 'knowledge of Shakespeare and Scott was greater than of any man I ever knew.'⁴⁰ Familiarity with these two authors alone would imply a wide range of poetic inspiration and knowledge. It is a comment and a warning against mining Hill's letters too precisely for their meaning that he did not blatantly display this knowledge – the extravagant use of quotations in his letter to Jane Macdonald (quoted in Chapter one) is exceptional. It is arguably a problem that there is too much literature, manuscript and published, which might be consulted here. The choice of sources is necessarily selective but is essentially made by concentrating on work that we know Hill admired, which includes such obvious, large-scale bodies of writing as the works of William

³⁷. John Macrone to Hill, 10 January 1836, NLS Acc 11782.

³⁸. The Adamson family appear to have been particularly reticent. Even Robert Adamson's death is only noticed by Hill in writing. There seems to have been no notice in the newspapers and he and other members of his family were only added to the family tombstone in the churchyard of St Andrews Cathedral, *en bloc* at the end of the century.

³⁹. 'Thomas Hill & Sons, booksellers, stationers & music sellers, 53 South Bridge.' *The Post Office Annual Directory for 1825-6*, Edinburgh 1825. The following year, Thomas Hill and Alexander Hill, 'of T. Hill and Sons,' appear, Thomas living at 27 Elder Street, where D. O. Hill is listed as 'landscape painter & teacher of drawing,' and Alexander at 17 Montague Street. Thomas Hill & Sons is listed in the directory until 1827-28 and in 1828-9 Alexander and Thomas junior are both listed as 'bookseller, stationer, artist & colourman,' one at 50 Princes Street, and the other at 53 South Bridge.

⁴⁰. John Taylor Brown, *Dr John Brown. A Biography and Criticism*, London 1903, p. 70.

Shakespeare, Robert Burns and Walter Scott, and work by people he knew well and liked.

Hill's affection for puns and parody, as well as his more serious interest in poetry and song (which will be discussed in Chapters three and four) may introduce an element of confusion, which is compounded by the way he used quotations without strict reference to their context. The photograph of Elizabeth Johnstone Hall is captioned in the album put together for James Wilson: 'It's no fish ye're buying, it's men's lives.'⁴¹ This was a part of the fishwives' general rhetoric, heard in the streets of Edinburgh. In James Nasmyth's account: 'After a stormy night, during which the husbands and sons had toiled to catch the fish, on the usual question being asked, "Weel, Janet, hoo's haddies the day?" "Haddies, mem? Ou, *haddies is men's lives the day!*"'⁴² But the familiar literary reference was a quote from Maggie Mucklebackit, the cross-grained, middle-aged fishwife in Walter Scott's *The Antiquary*, who in no sense resembles Elizabeth Hall. The thought Hill wanted to propose was: here is a beautiful woman and here also is the risk and the heroism that stands within her trade and her affections. It is that thought that makes her beautiful in a real sense adding the touching strength of her partnership with the man, often absent at sea and absent from the photograph.

This example may indicate some difficulty in unravelling Hill's intentions. In the analysis of literary intention, the direction of thought is commonly tri-partite: divided between the subject, the writer and the reader.⁴³ Hill's interest in literature gives us a fourth component in the intermediary reader, who makes his own art and then divides the audience in two as viewer/reader. Hill himself offers an exaggerated example of this. He published a series of paintings as *The Land of Burns* in 1840 (see Chapter seven). The text was written by Professor John Wilson and Robert Chambers after he had painted the pictures. Wilson looked at the frontispiece of Volume 1, *The Poet's Dream at Lincluden* (Fig. 30), referred to it as a 'somewhat bold *capriccio*', and handed it back to Hill, who wrote a lengthy explanation, which begins:

Perhaps you will say the picture should describe itself; but the subject is a *dream*, and the best dreams on record have after all required interpretations

⁴¹. Walter Scott, *The Antiquary, Waverley Novels*, Edinburgh and London, vol. 5, p. 161. The album is now in the British Library.

⁴². James Nasmyth, *Engineer. An Autobiography*, ed. Samuel Smiles, London 1891, p. 76.

⁴³. See David Newton-de-Molina, editor, *On Literary Intention*, Edinburgh 1976.

and these were sometimes supplied by the dreamers themselves; under which high examples, as well as that memorable one afforded by the learned author of the Spanish Armada, a historical tragedy, when he found it necessary to interpret what Lord Burleigh meant by shaking his head, I take shelter, while I attempt to describe and interpret the Poet's Dream at Lincluden.⁴⁴

If we take this jocular reference seriously, it connects both to Richard Brinsley Sheridan and to Walter Scott. Sheridan's play, *The Critic*, contains the following:

Enter Burleigh, goes slowly to a chair and sits.

Puff: Hush! - vastly well, Sir! vastly well! a most interesting gravity!

Dangle: What isn't he to speak at all?

Puff: Egad, I thought you'd ask me that - yes it is a very likely thing – that a Minister in his situation, with the whole affairs of the nation on his head, should have time to talk! - but hush! or you'll put him out ... Why, by that shake of the head, he gave you to understand that even tho' they had more justice in their cause and wisdom in their measures - yet, if there was not a greater spirit shown on the part of the people - the country would at last fall sacrifice to the hostile ambition of the Spanish monarchy.

Sneer: The devil! - did he mean all that by shaking his head?

Puff: Every word of it - If he shook his head as I taught him.⁴⁵

Mr Puff is both the critic and the author of this silent act. Scott attached this passage to the art of painting in *The Bride of Lammermoor*, when the nominal author in the introductory chapter is expressing cynicism about the painter's illustration of a dramatic scene:

"If her looks express all this, my dear Tinto," replied I, interrupting him, "your pencil rivals the dramatic art of Mr Puff in the *Critic*, who crammed a whole complicated sentence into the expressive shake of Lord Burleigh's head."⁴⁶

Hill, Scott and Sheridan were all making a serious point about the expression of meaning – although Sheridan's passage is a satire on naturalism, and Hill and Scott are proposing the need for written explication of complicated pictures. Hill is also indicating an interest in the Romantic confusion of dreams, which he connects in this picture to Shakespeare (see Chapter seven) but may well connect with his own experience (see Chapter one).

⁴⁴. D. O. Hill, *The Land of Burns, A series of landscapes and portraits, illustrative of the life and writings of the Scottish poet...*, text by John Wilson and Robert Chambers, vol. 1, Glasgow, Edinburgh and London 1840, p. 103.

⁴⁵. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Critic* (1779), Act III, Scene 1.

The issue is further complicated by the historic discussion of the classical alliance between poetry and painting, in the familiar quotation from Horace, ‘Ut pictura poesis.’⁴⁷ This connection had assumed a weight of importance, simply because there was no appropriate classical criticism of painting; the link enabled the visual arts to adopt classical opinion. The difficulties this created in the formal assessment of aesthetic standards and the choice of subject matter were acknowledged and undermined in the eighteenth century with the increased interest in naturalism, as opposed to the depiction of the ideal and traditional subjects. Both Scott and Hill were here advocating the elementary advantage of bringing words and pictures together and bridging that division.

The discussions of intention focused on literature have suggested a model, in which the artist’s intention is irrelevant, on the grounds that, if he has failed, the work will not reveal what those intentions were and external evidence will not implant meaning into the work; whereas, if he has succeeded, then the intention and the success will be unified and clear.⁴⁸ There are obvious problems with such an exclusive approach, which relies on our ability to recognise success and to understand the language of the work, whether it is writing, painting or photography. Creative intention is not static and the end product is not necessarily finite or temporarily fixed. The intention may shift, and generally does in the practice of an art, and the process is also a matter of interest. Hill had, ‘a rich, versatile, rapid, facile mind, crowded with thick-coming fancies,’ but, added another friend, ‘somehow, when he came to handle the brush, the result was not always satisfactory.’⁴⁹ Hill was noticeably a man who failed in some areas of his art. However, his intention, even in these areas, is of interest to his success in others. Indeed, the proposals of failure and success are not

⁴⁶. Walter Scott, *The Bride of Lammermoor. Waverley Novels*, Edinburgh and London 1831, p. 276.

⁴⁷. ‘Pictoribus atque poetis/ Quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas’ (Poets and painters have had an equal licence in invention) and ‘Ut pictura poesis’ (as in painting so in poetry), Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 4, vs 9 and 361. See Rensselaer W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting*, New York 1967.

⁴⁸. W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley, ‘The Intentional Fallacy,’ discussed in Newton-de-Molina (as in n. 43), p. vii.. According to Graham Hough: ‘This critical monument has by now disintegrated ... but the ruined site remains, haunted by the memory of an ill-defined New Critical doctrine, that the intention of the author (which sometimes means his biography, sometimes his plan of work) is irrelevant.’ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. ix. See also Baxandall (as in n. 34).

⁴⁹. John Brown, review of the RSA exhibition, *The Witness* (22 April 1846), the phrase, ‘thick-coming fancies,’ comes from Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act 5, scene 3, 39; and James Nasmyth, *James Nasmyth, Engineer, An Autobiography*, ed. Samuel Smiles, London 1891, p. 336.

absolutely necessary or attractive to the interest that his work may generate. In his painting, we may not immediately see what he meant, but the connection with the written word means we might hear it, and that connection might prove enlivening. This proposal would also justify the reconstruction of a work or its intention, to express a completion. For example, individual images from the *Fishermen and Women* series are unquestionably admired, but the series as a whole was not completed because of the technical failure of a number of negatives. Examination of those negatives restores or recreates that wholeness. In the opinion of Alastair Fowler, ‘The status of the published version can be exaggerated.⁵⁰ It is worth looking beyond our own perceptions in the hope of finding the author’s.

Lord Cockburn, John Brown, Hugh Miller and Elizabeth Rigby

The generally introspective art of photography was, at its inception, a matter of such intelligent fascination that it was surrounded by discussion. It is somewhat ironic, that Hill himself says so little in writing about photography that it is difficult to decide where to put his thoughts within this thesis. But the irony is reasonable. Most of Hill’s thinking about this new art is encompassed in the act of creation; the results were satisfactory without words. There is, however, a more specific way of broadening our knowledge and vocabulary for Hill’s thought process. There were in Hill’s life in the 1840s four authors who were his friends and whom he photographed. Three wrote critical passages on photography and all four were fluent and enjoyable writers of prose; more generally their writing helps to give us an instructive and articulate method of approach to Hill’s life, art and times.

Henry Cockburn (1779-1854) was a law lord and worked with Hill as advisor to the Academy, a role of particular importance in the 1840s when the Academy was in dispute with the Royal Institution and the Board of Manufactures (outlined in Chapter two). Cockburn was a Whig and a Reformer. He was also an antiquarian, passionately devoted to the remains of Scottish history, and a fervent protector of landscape and architecture. His writing was not designed for immediate publication, although its intention was to offer an account of his time. He explained in 1840:

⁵⁰. Alastair Fowler, ‘Intention Floreat,’ *On Literary Intention* (as in n. 43), p. 243.

It occurred to me, several years ago, as a pity, that no private account should be preserved of the distinguished men or important events that had marked the progress of Scotland, or at least of Edinburgh, during my day ... about 1821 I began to recollect and to inquire.⁵¹

He was writing a personal record, which is informative, humorous and concerned.

Hugh Miller (1802-56) began his working life as a mason, took to the carving of churchyard monuments, attempted poetry, became a best selling writer of prose, worked as a banker and was a successful writer on geology and a significant collector of fossils.⁵² In the 1840s, he was the Editor and principal writer for the Free Church newspaper, *The Witness*. He was an enthusiastic and passionate man in all he did.

Elizabeth Rigby (1809-3), later Lady Eastlake, was a critic, often acidly witty, a Tory and a supporter of the Established Church. She was a journalist, who wrote for many years for the *Quarterly Review*. She left Edinburgh in 1849, to marry the painter, Charles Eastlake.

John Brown (1810-82) was a medical doctor and essayist, who became a best-selling author with a book about a dog, a carter and his wife, called *Rab and his Friends* (1859). He became an art critic for Hugh Miller and *The Witness* in 1846, partly at Hill's urging. Brown was a friend of William Makepeace Thackeray and, through his criticism, also became a friend of John Ruskin. His cousin said of him:

Few men have in life been more generally beloved ... [His writing] served to withdraw the physician from exclusive recognition of science in the exercise of his profession, and bring him tenderly back to humanity ... He had a singular power of attaching both men and animals to himself.⁵³

His sentimental streak of affection for animals and children was tempered with a fatalism, which was both Christian and medical. Brown wrote two passages of importance to Hill's painting and photography. The first was published in *The Witness* in 1846 and concludes that the calotypes show Hill's 'true genius for art.'⁵⁴ The other

⁵¹. Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of his Time*, Edinburgh 1856, p. iii, and *Circuit Journeys by the late Lord Cockburn*, Edinburgh 1888 .

⁵². 'Geology enjoyed a remarkable popular success in Victorian England ... Hugh Miller's works sold like fashionable novels; geological imagery graced poems, plays and common speech.' James A. Secord, *Controversy in Victorian Geology*, Princeton 1986, p.14.

⁵³. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵⁴. John Brown, review of Hill's pictures in the Academy exhibition, *The Witness* (22 April 1846).

relates to Hill's second public association with a photographer, Alexander MacGlashon, in the exhibition of the Photographic Society of Scotland in 1862.⁵⁵

It is a comment on Hill's sociable affections that he could accommodate and involve the opinionated Tory confidence of Elizabeth Rigby, the Whig liberalism of Cockburn and the evangelical sympathies of Miller and Brown. The common thread between these four was their warmth, enthusiasm and humour. They will all be quoted generally in the course of this thesis, but the work of Miller and Rigby may be examined as a preliminary example of the link between Hill's ideas and their writing, and the way the calotypes may relate to specific texts and to Hill's personal knowledge of his subjects.

The writing of Hugh Miller

Miller was involved in the early stage of Hill and Adamson's experiments, which led to the partnership. He was one of the first to pose for Hill and Adamson and his article on 'The Calotype' was written in June and published in July 1843. His text already offers a sophisticated view of the calotype. There are two calotypes taken at this time of Miller (Fig. 8). He described one of these in his article:

a bonneted mechanic rests over his mallet on a tombstone - his one arm bared above his elbow; the other wrapped up in the well-indicated shirt folds, and resting on a piece of grotesque sculpture. There is a powerful sun; the somewhat rigid folds in the dress of coarse stuff are well-marked; one half the face is in deep shade, the other in strong light; the churchyard wall throws a broad shadow behind, while in the foreground there is a gracefully chequered breadth of intermingled dark and light in the form of a mass of rank grass and foliage. Had an old thin man of striking figure and features been selected and some study-worn scholar introduced in front of him, the result would have been a design ready for the engraver when employed in illustrating the Old Mortality of Sir Walter.⁵⁶

The justification of the portrait may lie, not so much in the idea of illustrating Walter Scott, as in a moral proposal Miller had expressed in 1835:

Perhaps no personage of real life can be more properly regarded as a hermit of the churchyard than the itinerant sculptor, who wanders from one country burying-ground to another, recording on his tablets of stone the tears of the living and the worth of the dead ... How often have I suffered my mallet to rest on the unfinished epitaph, when listening to some friend of the buried

⁵⁵. John Brown 'Mr Hill's Calotypes,' *The Scotsman* (10 February 1862).

⁵⁶. Hugh Miller, 'The Calotype,' *The Witness* (12 July 1843).

expatiating, with all the eloquence of grief, on the mysterious warning - and the sad deathbed - on the worth that had departed - and the sorrow that remained behind! ... I have risen from my employment to mark the shadow of tombstone and burial-mound creeping over the sward at my feet, and have been rendered serious by the reflection, that as those gnomons of the dead marked out no line of hours, though the hours passed as the shadows moved, so, in that eternity in which the dead exist, there is a nameless tide of continuity, but no division of time.⁵⁷

The first pictures which present Miller as a stonemason are made with a small camera. Hill and Adamson commissioned a large camera in 1844, and this image or conception of Miller was so important that they re-staged the picture (Fig. 9). Here, the background trees are masked off to remove the distraction; Miller's bonnet is off, allowing the characteristic springing bush of his hair to be seen, his shirt sleeves are rolled up and his waistcoat is open to the waist to allow a more muscular pose. The effect is a far more successful rendering of a working sculptor and a clearer idea of Miller's own pride in his size and strength.

At the time Hill and Adamson photographed him, Miller was the Editor of *The Witness*. But it was not a role he was happy with - 'the editor writes in sand when the tide is coming in,' he said.⁵⁸ The calotype of him as a sculptural mason shows him not as he was in the past, but in the way he preferred to see himself: the man of strength and skill, and the modern philosopher. Two other considerations would be personal, but Hill, as a friend, would have known them.⁵⁹ Miller's future wife first met him working as a mason in a Cromarty churchyard, at a time when he was known as a local poet. The graveyard took on a minor character as a salon, with knowledgeable ladies turning up to talk to this engaging young man. Lydia Fraser, ten years his junior, arrived and returned:

finding me a sort of dictionary of fact, ready of access, and with explanatory notes attached, that became long or short just as she pleased to draw them out

⁵⁷. Hugh Miller, *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland*, Edinburgh 1994, pp. 412-3.

⁵⁸. Hugh Miller, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, Edinburgh 1879, p. 554.

⁵⁹. Miller refers to Hill arbitrarily as a friend when talking of the 'Scuir,' the great central cliff on the island of Eigg. 'Viewed endways, it resembles a tall massy tower, - such a tower as my friend Mr D.O.Hill would delight to draw, and give delight by drawing - a tower three hundred feet in breadth by four hundred and seventy feet in height.' Hugh Miller, *The Cruise of the Betsey or A Summer Holiday in the Hebrides*, (first published in parts in *The Witness* in the 1840s), Edinburgh 1870, p. 31.

by her queries, she had, in the course of her amateur studies, frequent occasion to consult me.⁶⁰

This was a romantic memory. The second memory was of grief - the last stone he carved was for his beloved little daughter who died in 1839. The calotypes of Miller have therefore a kind of geological layering - past within present - with the man presented simultaneously as a private, as a public figure and in an impersonal role as a potential *genre* illustration.

Miller remarks of another calotype, 'The drawing is truth itself; but there are cases in which mere truth might be no great merit.' The idea of a broad or generous truth was critical to Hill's art. Despite the fact that Hugh Miller was an editor rather than a stonemason when the picture was taken, the idea of truth stands firm. This one point is worth emphasising here because it has been challenged in relation to these calotypes of Miller. Michael Shortland has analysed them in these terms:

Here was a man earning £400 per annum adopting the pose of a stonemason lucky to earn £40, a man on terms of easy acquaintance with the leading intellectual, political and religious figures of his day presenting himself as a humble mechanic. The photographs thus reveal a man engaged in a complicated process of self-modelling, in which truth somehow emerged - or was intended to emerge - from deceit and duplicity.⁶¹

Miller lived a life of conscious modesty. He approved of humility as a Christian virtue. He did not dress up as a stonemason, he simply took off his jacket and cravat and picked up a mallet. In Hill's terms, such admirable simplicity was a key to the true nature of the man and a demonstration of the truth of the calotype. The point of the picture lies in Miller's conviction that the man earning £40 could be the better man. Miller wrote: 'he is but a sorry, weak fellow who measures himself by the conventional status of the labour by which he lives.'⁶² These calotypes of Miller express that pride in and respect for physical work, which allowed that it could be united with intelligence and philosophy - that it was not necessary for the man to 'rise' in society, to be paid more and sit at a desk.

⁶⁰. Miller (as in n. 58), p. 501.

⁶¹. Michael Shortland, 'Bonneted Mechanic and Narrative Hero,' *Hugh Miller and the Controversies of Victorian Science*, ed. Michael Shortland, Oxford 1996, p. 15.

⁶². Hugh Miller, 'An Unspoken Speech,' *Leading Articles on Various Subjects*, ed. Rev. John Davidson, Edinburgh 1870, pp. 276-7. The editor thanks Hill for the frontispiece portrait, which is a lithograph taken from the large calotype of Miller as a mason.

Miller's article takes a preliminary but knowledgeable look at the new medium. Clearly, the article and the photographs are a result of an active discussion between him, Hill and Adamson, and Miller's words are not just his own thoughts but are a text for this experimental period. The active, collaborative engagement between the three men, Hill, Adamson and Miller is an extraordinary example of thinking through discussion and such practical experiment.

Elizabeth Rigby

The partnership had a similar relationship with Elizabeth Rigby who was one of their most enthusiastic collaborators. After Hill himself, she is the individual who is photographed most often. Her contemporary appraisal of the Hill and Adamson calotypes showed her caught up in a love of the process as a demonstration of aesthetic truth. This has not received the attention of her more cynical article on the developments of photography published in 1857.⁶³ It will be quoted in full in Chapter nine.

Her writing offers other connections. In 1847, she wrote an article on 'The Art of Dress,' which provides a context for the calotypes of her mother, Mrs Rigby (Fig. 10).⁶⁴ She wrote that 'all women have a right divine to be picturesque by the very nature of old age':

Let us look for a moment at the portrait of the old woman who is an old woman indeed. See the plaited border, or the full ruche of the cap, white as snow, circling close round the face, as if jealous to preserve the oval that age has lost; the hair peeping from beneath, finer and more silken than ever, but white as that border, or grey as the shadow thrown by it; the complexion withered and faded, yet being relieved, as Nature has appointed it to be, by the still more faded tints of the hair, in a certain degree delicate and fresh; the eyes with most of their former fire extinguished, still, surrounded by the chastened hues of age, brighter than anything else in the face; the face itself, lined with deep wrinkles, but not one that the painter would spare; the full handkerchief, or rich bustling laces scrupulously covering neck and throat, reminding us that the modesty of her youth has survived, though not its charms; some deep sober shawl or scarf, which the French rightly call "le drapeau de vieille femme," carefully concealing the outline of the figure, though not its general feminine

⁶³. Reprinted in Beaumont Newhall, *Photography: Essays and Images*, London 1981, pp. 81-95.

⁶⁴. The relationship between this article and the portraits of Elizabeth Rigby herself has been discussed by Linda Wolk, 'Calotype Portraits of Elizabeth Rigby by David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson,' *History of Photography*, vol. 7 (1983): pp. 167-81.

proportions - all brilliant contrasts, as all violent passions, banished from the picture, and replaced by a harmony which is worth them all.

Think also of the moral charm exercised by such a face and figure over the circle where it belongs - the hallowing influence of one who, having performed all her active part in this world, now takes a passive, but a nobler one than any, and shows us *how to grow old*.⁶⁵

The calotypes show Mrs Rigby in gracious harmony with her surroundings, whether wearing a brocade dress with fine lace and standing between plants and a brocade curtain, or in the simpler and closer pictures, where the lace is more geometrical and the background simplified. The generalisation and the brown/black monochrome of the calotypes helps to site the pictures comfortably within a seventeenth-century Netherlandish tradition. J. Craig Annan later commented: 'We know of no sweeter presentment of old age by photography than this charming portrait of Mrs. Rigby.'⁶⁶ But the picture is more than that. Hill and Adamson's calotypes succeed in expressing Elizabeth Rigby's admiration for her mother, who had borne and educated twelve children.⁶⁷ They were looking through her eyes as well as their own. In these pictures, there was sympathetic understanding and mutual purpose – a practical aesthetic debate.

Any assumption that Hill was waiting, sponge-like, to adopt the thinking of his friends can be neatly corrected from this same article by Elizabeth Rigby. Her opinion of the male costume of the time was extremely low. She said that the stove pipe hat was 'a mysterious combination of the inconvenient and the unpicturesque, which except in the light of a retribution, it is puzzling to account for.' Top hats and other details of modern male dress are handled with full confidence in the calotypes and the hats are a definite source of compositional design and pleasure in *The Fishermen and Women* series.

Elizabeth Rigby's approach to the Newhaven fishwife was also distinguished from Hill and Adamson's. She wrote an admiring passage in her journal in 1843, which nevertheless shows an element of patronage - the lady distributing advice:

Went down to look at Jinny [Jeanie] Wilson - a tremendously hot day, and she with as heavy a load of petticoats as of fish: a lovely blooming creature, with a

⁶⁵. Elizabeth Rigby, 'The Art of Dress,' (first published in *Quarterly Review*, March 1847), republished as *Music and the Art of Dress*, London 1852, pp. 90-2.

⁶⁶. Annan (as in n. 20), p. 20. Annan reinterpreted the calotype as a photogravure.

⁶⁷. Marion Lochead, *Elizabeth Rigby, Lady Eastlake*, London 1961, p. 1.

complexion of that transparent kind of which our aristocracy are most proud; her eye laughing, her hair, without any figure of speech, golden - such a colour as an indoor life never permits. She was laden with clothes, petticoat over petticoat, striped and whole colour, all of the thickest woollen material, and one of a kind of dreadnought frieze; also a tremendous serge coat with long sleeves, that hung flat upon her back, over it a striped butcher's apron "To wipe ma haunds" - and she made a graceful gesture over her shoulder with a fine pair, full in the palm and slender in the fingers - perfect pictures.

Altogether, guessing roughly, I should say she was carrying to the amount of five ordinary box-coats, or fifteen conventional flannel petticoats. She wore, she told us "sax on common days, four at hame, and twa of a Sunday, and nae cheap, thirteen shillings the pair," and she had "sax pair."... She told me that this quantity of apparel was necessary to prevent the creel from hurting her back, and I suggested a pad for the necessary part, and a little less weight of material, and expenditure of shillings upon the rest; but Jinny had an unanswerable: "It was verra true - a piece upon the bock might be better, but ye ken it's juist the fashion o' the place."⁶⁸

This text offers some illumination on the calotype of Jeanie Wilson (Fig. 11). If it is a casual record of the voice of a working woman, it is an astonishing coincidence.

Elizabeth Rigby clearly recognised not just the beauty but the confident authority of the other woman. She records the dismissive riposte, and her own interest in fashion is calmly reflected back by Jeanie Wilson's remark, which illustrates the impressive readiness of both men and women to make their lives more difficult by wearing fashionable clothes.⁶⁹ A sympathy or perhaps tolerance seems to have been established between the two, who shared the fact that they were both independent and earning their own livings. Rigby was witty and analytical, but she was wholeheartedly involved in the calotype work.

⁶⁸. *Memoirs and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake*, ed. by Charles Eastlake Smith, London 1895, p. 92.

⁶⁹. 'The large numbers of petticoats worn at this period prevented women from pursuing any activities without fatigue.' James Laver, *A Concise History of Costume*, London 1969, p. 172.

Chapter one

Edinburgh society as subject and motive

1. The sociable city

In the first half of the nineteenth century Edinburgh, which was a far smaller city than London, was still a coherently sociable society.¹ That the character and the inherent enthusiasm of that sociability were eccentric is shown by the reaction of the English history painter, Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846), visiting in 1820. He commented:

Their hospitality and heartiness were indisputable. Their knowledge and literature were eminent, but their simplicity was the most striking. The greater part of the middle classes believed London was a great, overgrown beast of a city, not to be compared to Edinburgh in point of intelligence, but owing its rank entirely to the accident of its being the seat of government, and not to its enterprise, its skill, its capital or its genius ... The season in Edinburgh is the severest part of the winter. Princes Street in a clear sunset with the Castle and the Pentland Hills in radiant glory, and the crowd illumined by the setting sun, was a sight perfectly original.

First you would see limping Sir Walter [Scott], talking as he walked with Lord Meadowbank; then tripped [Francis] Jeffrey, keen, restless, and fidgety; you next met [John] Wilson or [John Gibson] Lockhart, or [William] Allan, or [George] Thompson, or [Henry] Raeburn, as if all had agreed to make their appearance at once. It was a striking scene, - foreigners were impressed like myself.²

At this point Edinburgh seems to have had a public, outdoor society, open in its sociability. The mathematician, Mary Somerville (1780-1872), remarked on the difference between the Edinburgh of her youth and later years:

Girls had perfect liberty at that time in Edinburgh ... We walked together in Princes Street, the fashionable promenade, and were joined by our dancing partners. We occasionally gave little supper parties and presented these young men to our parents as they came in.³

Lord Cockburn makes the surprising point about domesticity in his time that supper was a constantly sociable occasion:

¹. Between the beginning and the middle of the century, the population of Edinburgh more than doubled, while the population of Glasgow quadrupled. See D. F. MacDonald, *Scotland's shifting population 1770-1850*, Glasgow 1937.

². *Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter, from his Autobiography and Journals*, ed. Tom Taylor, vol. 1, London 1853, pp. 381 and 3.

³. Quoted in Rosalind K. Marshall, *Virgins and Viragos. A History of Women in Scotland from 1080 to 1980*, London 1983, p. 178. Mary Somerville was a pupil of Alexander Nasmyth at this time.

Almost all my set, which is perhaps the merriest, the most intellectual, and not the most severely abstemious in Edinburgh, are addicted to it. I doubt if from the year 1811, when I married, I have closed above one day in the month, of my town life, at home and alone. It is always some scene of domestic conviviality, either in my own house or in a friend's. And this is the habit of all my best friends.⁴

The household of the landscape painter, Alexander Nasmyth (1758-1840), in York Place to the north of Princes Street, was part of this general movement, which involved social meetings in private houses, inns and hotels. At the beginning of the century, his house was a focal point of a wide intellectual group. His son, the engineer James Nasmyth (1808-90), gave an account:

When the day's work was over, friends looked in to have a fireside crack - sometimes scientific men, sometimes artists, often both ... There was no formality about their visits ... Among the most agreeable visitors were Professor [John] Leslie, James Jardine, C.E., and Dr [David] Brewster ... They brought up the last new thing in science, in discovery, in history, or in campaigning, for the war was then raging through Europe.

The artists were a most welcome addition to the family group. Many a time did they set the table in a roar with their quaint and droll delineations of character. These unostentatious gatherings of friends about our fireside were a delightful social institution ... I fear they have disappeared in the more showy and costly tastes that have sprung up in the progress of what is called "modern society."⁵

Hill came into contact with the Nasmyth household around ten years after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. He was a contemporary of the young James, who wrote of him:

"D. O. Hill," as he was generally called, was much attached to my father. He was a very frequent visitor at our Edinburgh fireside, and was ever ready to join in our extemporised walks and jaunts, when he would overflow with his kindly sympathy and humour.⁶

Hill's active recollection of the family is reflected in a letter from James Nasmyth in 1845:

your calotype description of the joys at 47 York Place as of old is beyond all laudation. It made us all live over again many happy joys gone by, in those days. What a pity it is that as time rolls on those who gave character and worth to such times melt away one by one from the picture of living life.⁷

⁴. Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of his Time*, Edinburgh 1856, p. 41. The text was written between 1821 and 1830.

⁵. *James Nasmyth, Engineer, An Autobiography*, ed. Samuel Smiles, London 1891, p. 53.

⁶. *Ibid.*, p. 336.

⁷. Nasmyth to Hill, 5 August 1845, ROE.

It would appear that Hill himself continued this kind of open welcome. In 1836, he entertained the bibliographer, Thomas Dibdin, who was well-pleased with his reception:

It was at the breakfast-table of Mr Hill, in London-Street, that I once sat down in the society of very many of the choice artists of Edinburgh. It was a joyous morning and an abundant breakfast.⁸

A continued reference to Hill's sociability runs through his life and is cited affectionately in his obituaries:

As a friend and companion he will ever be remembered by those who knew him as one possessed of admirable talents for promoting the happiness of the society in which he moved.⁹

This hospitality, combined with his official position in the Academy, means that Hill occupied a central position in Edinburgh society. People constantly referred to him and strangers were directed to him, with the confidence that he would give them a hospitable welcome. This amiability gave Hill access to an extraordinary range of people, and later enabled him to define the practice of the calotype work; the photographs are largely of people of significance to Hill and those who felt positive affection for him.

The balance of humour

In the times he lived through, which were thoroughly exciting in many areas of change and equally distressing in others, Hill maintained his balance most clearly through humour. It was an essential element in his sociability, in generating and maintaining a sympathetic and open response. From the letters, it would appear to be true, as his obituary says, that he combined: 'kindness, wit, and humour, with an innate modesty and propriety which never allowed him to say anything hard or uncharitable of any one.'¹⁰ He was not a gossip or a cynic and his writing is less incisive and less entertaining than that of his more acidly critical friends, like Elizabeth Rigby or Lord Cockburn. He was tender-hearted and facetious. James Nasmyth addressed him jocularly, in 1845, as: 'my Dear Friend that rare composition

⁸. Thomas Froggall Dibdin, *A Bibliographical Tour in the North Counties of England and Scotland*, vol. II, London 1838, p. 578.

⁹. *Edinburgh Evening Courant* (18 May 1870).

¹⁰. *Ibid.*

of side shaking jaw wraxing fun and quaint Drollery and sincere and deep feeling for the most serious of subjects.¹¹

The arguably trivial area of his humour may be examined both for our idea of the man and of his concerns. His taste for surrealism may be illustrated by a story told in his obituary:

We have seen, for example, on an occasion when he forgot the day of a party to which he was invited, and appeared in full costume the following evening, a pen-and-ink sketch by him most happily and truthfully representing himself entering the drawing-room and finding the ladies of the family relieving their lassitude by a comfortable nap on the sofas.¹²

His sense of humour caused him to pay attention to oddity and the twists in rationality that life offers. It seems likely that the engaging drawing of himself (Fig. 12) being pulled in four directions by winged horses and in a fifth by ‘a Powerful Magnet’ derives from the Academy’s brief foray into the commercial world.¹³ The Edinburgh lithographers, Schenck and Macfarlane, ‘offered £200 to be permitted to print & sell the Catalogue with advertisements appended - this is £100 more than the Academy has made by the Catalogue.’¹⁴ The catalogue was engulfed in comprehensive advertisements from the Liverpool Steam Biscuit Company to Binyon’s Patent Chest Expanders and probably came as a severe shock to the Academicians.¹⁵ Lurking in the middle of the advertisements is a statement:

THE EARTH is supported by Magnetism. The Magnet is Divine; and it points *not* to Pole of Earth, *but over it* - direct to Heaven. The Dip is at 20L. 30D; at 30L. 45D; at 40L. 56D.; at 51L. 70D.; and at 65 Lat. 80 Deg. from Horizon. Read in No 1, London Great Exhibition *Illustrated Catalogue of Orrery Globe*, which gives Joshua’s Miracle Time, May 22, 2548, - which Globe is to be seen at the Royal Polytechnic Institution, London.¹⁶

This has the true virtue of nonsense - a splendid idea, a divine magnet pointing directly to heaven - clothed in incontrovertible, incoherent fact and holding itself up by its own, illogical premises. I could see it would appeal to Hill.

¹¹. Nasmyth to Hill, 30 April 1845, ROE.

¹². Anon, ‘Death of Mr D. O. Hill, R. S. A.,’ *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 18 May 1870.

¹³. Hill to Paton, 19 August 1852, NLS Acc 11315.

¹⁴. Hill to Paton, 16 December 1851, NLS Acc 11315.

¹⁵. A full copy of this 1852 exhibition catalogue is preserved in the RSA library.

¹⁶. Ibid., ‘The Catalogue Advertiser,’ p. 12.

It is an interesting coincidence that Hill and Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, ‘Lewis Carroll’ (1832-1898), had a taste both for photography and nonsense. Hill’s pleasure in parody and his talking animals (Fig. 13) draw attention to that coincidence. In letters to the painter, Joseph Noël Paton (1821-1901), in 1853 and 4, Hill referred to an intransigent client as ‘Hunty Dunty.’ This was Mr Hunt of Pittencrieff and his palace wall was the wall of Dunfermline Palace, which Hunt had asked Hill to paint. When Hill finished this large-scale picture, Hunt denied the commission. At the time, Hill was painfully short of money and his distress was fuelled by his original, generous response. He wrote angrily: ‘Indignation is not the thing and ridicule is not the thing for such an animal.’¹⁷ Eventually, the situation was resolved by Mr Hunt and his family accepting responsibility for a piece of senile forgetfulness. This was for Hill an experience of the distorted world of old age, where the authority of the adult is mixed with the irresponsibility of the child; where the words, the denial and insistence that it is the other who is wrong, spread confusion and increase the injury. The accidental connection between Hill’s and Dodgson’s Humpty Dumpty (as opposed to the familiar nursery rhyme) is this use of words as flat statement, against good sense or morality:

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean, - neither more nor less.”¹⁸

Hill and Dodgson shared a pleasure in entertaining the young and in puns. Hill reported in 1853:

The 13th being Hope Finlays birthday and that of another little boy ... we had the 3 eldest young Finlays & 3 other youthies to tea ... I came out after supper as an Improvisator disdaining to drink any bodys health but in lofty rhyme. I was considered to make some decided hits, especially in proposing the health of Mrs Orr’s new Babby under the name of Nuggetina - but dont be afraid - I am not the least spoiled by such flattering encomiums.¹⁹

The Finlays were Hill’s great nephews and nieces, who appear in the engaging calotype, *At the Minnow Pool* (Fig. 14). Humour is an important factor in the

¹⁷. Hill to Paton, undated, Autumn 1853, NLS Acc 11315.

¹⁸. ‘Lewis Carroll’ (C. L. Dodgson), *The Annotated Alice: Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking Glass*, intro. and notes by Martin Gardiner, London 1960, p. 269. Gardiner points out that for Dodgson, an Oxford academic, Humpty Dumpty’s argument was mediaeval nominalism; he may have encompassed senility within that idea.

¹⁹. Hill to Paton, 17 January 1853, NLS Acc 11315.

recognition that people's appearance changes in response to their company – the ability to make a child laugh links to the ability to charm it into posing with an appearance of nature for a photograph.

There is no evidence to propose a direct connection between Hill and Dodgson, but there is a relationship between photography and nonsense. The understanding that the translation of visual experience into a photograph was an uncertain business may be said to be common ground between Hill and Dodgson. The latter's comic essay on photography, 'A Photographer's Day Out,' contains a description of a photographic group, showing:

The three younger girls, as they would have appeared, if by any possibility a black dose could have been administered to each of them at the same moment, and the three tied together by the hair ... I kept this view of the subject to myself, and merely said that it "reminded me of a picture of the three Graces," but the sentence ended in an involuntary groan, which I had the greatest difficulty in converting into a cough.²⁰

This, rather more than the generality of Hill and Adamson's calotype groups, could be regarded as a natural result; it was certainly a common result. Henry Peach Robinson's rules of practice for photographers, published later in the century, were intended to be serious. They are inadvertently a ludicrous expression of the difficulty in catching the grace of nature. His approach to a Welsh girl is as inept as Dodgson's comic invention, and equally doomed: 'Knowing how shy the Welsh peasant is, I got the gamekeeper who carried my camera to speak to her first, and I approached the subject warily by beginning an agricultural talk with her mother.'²¹ 'Old people,' he added helpfully, 'are often very useful in landscapes. With them, as with children, you may take the real native. It is between the age of ten and thirty that the genuine peasant is so difficult to manage.'²² Robinson's social incompetence serves to illuminate Hill's sociable skill.

²⁰. C. L. Dodgson, 'A Photographer's Day Out,' quoted in Helmut Gernsheim, *Lewis Carroll – Photographer*, London 1949, p. 118.

²¹. Henry Peach Robinson, *Picture-Making by Photography*, London 1897, p. 52.

²². *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Picturing women

Robinson's popularity as a writer on photography was greatly assisted by his readiness to abandon social problems. He did not see or photograph people as they necessarily were, so much as how he wanted them to be. Should they prove unable to fit his Picturesque mould, he rejected them. Hill and Adamson's pictures of women are, like their portraits of men, remarkable for individuality and the avoidance of cliché. Roy Strong takes the opposite view. He writes of the women's portraits:

These are keepsake images calculated to evoke the quintessential ideal of female beauty in the 1840s: fragile and wilting, early Victorian, upper class ladies with huge soulful eyes, upturned noses, dimpled cheeks, and tiny lips, long necks and small waists, forever deployed in poses of contemplative yet seductive resignation.²³

Strong argues that Hill's model for female portraits came from such watery publications as *Heath's Book of Beauty*. He discusses Canova, Ingres and the delicate engravings after watercolours by Daniel Maclise and Alfred Chalon, and ends with the remark, 'one is struck most by the utter plainness of Hill's lady sitters - early Victorian ladies deprived of any cosmetic help - in spite of their efforts to achieve the contrary.' That is to say, Hill and his sitters were aiming at the keepsake mark, and failed to hit it. This is unlikely. Hill's lack of interest in the elegant distancing proposed here may be demonstrated by the framing of the calotypes. While there are portraits of delicate beauty and restrained elegance amongst the calotypes, even the young girls - the Misses Binney and Monro (Fig. 15) - fill the picture: they are not made to look fragile, they are made to look young and close.

The idea that women should be treated differently *en bloc* has been a long-standing fallacy in the profession of portraiture. David Brewster believed that a smoother surface in the calotypes would be more fitting to the prettiness of women. He may have persuaded the photographer, Thomas Rodger (1833-83), who was in a sense Robert Adamson's professional heir, to make this distinction. In 1857, Rodger talked of his practice of using two different solutions for developing:

In portraits of gentlemen, No. 1 is also specially applicable ... as without approaching to hardness, I obtain by it a very pleasing decisiveness of light

²³. Colin Ford and Roy Strong, *An Early Victorian Album. The photographic masterpieces (1843-1847) of David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson*, New York 1976, p. 54.

and shadow. But for ladies, I think too much care cannot be taken to avoid a rapid passage from lights to shadows in photographs.²⁴

The significant point about Hill and Adamson's photographs of women is that they are not all of one type or taken in a particular style. The personality of their sitters is respected - whether they are men, women or children. Hill was clearly a man happy in the company of women and with no nervous impulse to stereotype them.²⁵ In contrast to the photographs of the Misses Binney, such a photograph as *Miss Kemp* (Fig. 16) is so strong in its treatment and so lacking in winsome prettiness, as to appear outside its historical context. The women Hill knew and liked were of active intelligence and independence. His daughter and nieces were well educated at the Scottish Institution for the Education of Young Ladies in Moray Place in Edinburgh, where the impressive curriculum included drawing and perspective, taught by an Academician, geology and mineralogy, and chemistry taught by Dr George Wilson, FRSE.²⁶ He talked with affection of a friend of his sister, Mary Watson, who:

yesterday lost one of her very dearest friends a lady with a somewhat stern face & manner - and one of the most feeling hearts that ever beat - a true Scotchwoman of the old world type - tender & true.²⁷

Amongst the women who appear in the calotypes, the art historian, Anna Jamesone (1794-1860), unnerved Thomas Carlyle, who wrote to his wife in 1833 that she was:

A little, hard, proud, red-haired, freckled, fierce-eyed, square-mouthed woman, shrewd, harsh, cockneyish – irrational: it was from the first moment apparent that, without mutual loss, we might ‘adieu and wave our lily hands.²⁸

To Hill she was, ‘My friend Mrs Jamesone, the accomplished authoress.’²⁹ Hill was clearly a popular guest with the amateur painter, Lady Ruthven (1789-1885), ‘one of those racy and original types of character of which contemporary society seems

²⁴. Thomas Rodger, ‘The Collodion Process,’ *Journal of the Photographic Society* (21 May 1857): p. 278.

²⁵. In 1841, he was living with four women and a two year-old daughter and, in 1851, the household included five women and two teenage girls. See below, footnotes 53 and 60.

²⁶. Hill refers to the ‘Lady Superintendent,’ as ‘Our kind friend Miss Murray of the Institution.’ Hill to Paton, 6 January 1852, NLS Acc 11315. The fees were £21 a year, reduced for families of three, advertisement in *The Fife Herald* (10 September 1846).

²⁷. Hill to Paton, 11 August 1852, NLS Acc 11315.

²⁸. Thomas to Jane Welsh Carlyle, *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, ed. Charles Richard Sanders, vol. 7, Durham, North Carolina 1977, p. 150. Carlyle reversed his opinion and in 1840 spoke of her as ‘No bad person at all; a great deal of *heart* in her, a kind of unsubduable courage, which is the ground root of all.’ *Ibid.*, vol. 12, p. 79.

perhaps less prolific than was that of our great-grandfathers,³⁰ who was stone deaf in old age and ‘could only be communicated with by writing on a slate … [she] possessed a monkey, which chattered and seemed able to converse with the deaf lady, who made suitable replies.³¹ He could enjoy the company of women of ribald and acid mind, like: ‘my old sweetheart, Elizabeth Rigby - the tallest, cleverest & best girl of these parts,’ who worked so closely with the partnership.³² And the direct and strong-minded fishwives of Newhaven seem eminently comfortable in his photographic company.

Emotional life

In 1851, Hill attempted a little inept matchmaking for his young friend, Noël Paton, but he was cautious in urging the case:

you once I thought was a little in earnest in saying that Miss Dodds had made an impression on you. Now I have reason to believe that she has refused more than one - that she is disengaged - and that you by taking the proper means might perhaps carry that prize ... But dear Noll - let there be no mistake in the matter - if you have not a real leaning that way let what I have written sink into oblivion out of respect to the young lady whose name though I know her not, I have presumed to mention in this strange way. I am serious & trust to your honor.³³

It then became clear that Hill had misunderstood Paton’s feelings, and Hill was thoroughly embarrassed and apologetic. The misunderstanding was based on the natural caution still required in courtship: making a decision was difficult and changing your mind could be destructive, not simply unkind to the woman but potentially damaging to her reputation and status; commitment might require years of constraint before the couple could afford marriage. In a situation where the expression of love and affection for the opposite sex is constricted by these dangers, the same expression could find an outlet in the safer expression of love for the same sex and for children. A tender and even physical friendship could be, socially speaking, expressed between men or women, which could not be expressed with the same freedom for unmarried members of the opposite sex. A man could embrace another man, where he

²⁹. Hill to Mr and Mrs Nasmyth, 24 November 1852, ms in a private collection.

³⁰. Anon, ‘Death of Mr D. O. Hill,’ *The Scotsman* (7 April 1885).

³¹. Thomas Wemyss Reid, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Lyon Playfair*, Ilkley 1976, p. 196.

³². Hill to Macdonald, July 1853, NLS Acc 11782.

might not risk embracing that man's sister. This may be seen in the photographs, where Hill can, without implication other than friendship, prop men up on each other for physical support and to indicate their intellectual connection. It may be read in the letters, where he can address Noël Paton in emotional terms that he could not use towards his sister.

However, Hill was an emotional man. It should perhaps be remembered that he and his contemporaries were only Victorian by adoption. Hill was born during the reign of George III, only two years away from the eighteenth century, and he was 35 when the young Victoria succeeded to the throne. 'Manliness' did not yet rule out emotional reaction. The stultifying concept of the stiff upper lip, which descended from the earlier traditions of physical courage but stripped that courage of emotion, belongs rather to the other end of Victoria's reign. J. Craig Annan's admiration of the portrait calotypes turns from the interest of the individuals they depicted to this point:

Breeding is said to be the art of concealing one's feelings, and so highly has our breeding developed nowadays that our faces have almost assumed the uniformity of our clothes. That this was not so in Hill's time is very evident from his photographs.³⁴

The Evangelist movement was consciously dependent on the exercise of powerful emotion. The lectures of the Evangelist minister, the Rev. Dr Thomas Guthrie (1803-73), were designed to evoke this response. The Rev. Dr James McCosh (1811-91), who later became the President of the University of Princeton, records his admiration of the first time he heard Guthrie speak at a missionary meeting, when he began by telling a funny story:

The people began to laugh, and, as he continued, the laughing on the part of the entire audience became so oppressive that an old man of seventy drew himself up, holding his sides, and with some difficulty got out the request, "Please, Maister Guthrie, *stap*, we can stand this nae langer." The speaker at once changed his tune, and described a shipwreck which had happened on their coast. The young women began to hide their tears, and at last the whole audience bowed their heads like bulrushes, with the tears flowing from their eyes.³⁵

The common experience of grief around this time stemmed from the high mortality rate. The very familiarity of the experience, however, should not be taken to imply a

³³. Hill to Paton, 25 October 1851, NLS Acc 11315.

³⁴. J. Craig Annan, 'David Octavius Hill, R. S. A. - 1802-1870,' *Camera Work*, no. 11 (July 1905): p. 19.

hardening to the experience of death.³⁶ Mourning had its own rules and rituals, but I would take issue with Lawrence Stone's argument, applied to the period before 1800:

The omnipresence of death coloured affective relations at all levels of society, by reducing the amount of emotional capital available for prudent investment in any single individual, especially in such ephemeral creatures as infants.³⁷

Hill's sadness in the face of infant mortality may be perhaps be more resigned by the end of his life, but it remains intense. He wrote of his niece and her family in 1869:

You will have heard of poor Tom & Sarah Gardiner, and how they have had taken from them the two little people. One was to have been D. O. but poor little fellow he has been taken, with his little sister, where they both see the face of Christ. Poor dear people. Sarah's conduct has I believe been admirable. We wait the next letter with anxiety.³⁸

The early and mid nineteenth century coped with grief formally, but allowing and encouraging expression:

Death evoked the most intense emotions in family life, and Evangelicalism and Romanticism encouraged early and mid-Victorians to give full scope to their expression. They were able to talk and write freely of their sorrow as well as their joy and their love, with a simple sincerity. They were not shy about expressing the depth of their suffering in tears and in words.³⁹

However, it is equally true of Hugh Miller, the highly articulate journalist, as it is of the less effectively articulate Hill, that, on the death of a daughter, they retreated into a manual response - Miller picking up his mason's tools to make the child's headstone, Hill to paint two small, commemorative landscapes (see Chapter seven).

Hill's involvement with women is clearly brought out in a letter of sympathy, written when the Patons's mother died. Hill wrote with sorrow of his own mother and wife and of his sister-in-law's affections. The letter is a welling up of his sense of love and loss for the women in his life:

We have known the affliction of being bereaved of a most loving, self sacrificing, & pure hearted mother - and grieve over the desolation which God in his infinite wisdom & mysterious Providence has made in your fathers

³⁵. *The Life of James McCosh*, ed. William Milligan Sloane, Edinburgh 1896, pp. 61-2.

³⁶. For an illuminating discussion of this subject, see Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, Oxford 1996.

³⁷. Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, Harmondsworth 1989, pp. 651-2.

³⁸. Hill to John and Jane Macdonald, 29 December 1869, NLS Acc 11782.

³⁹. See Jalland (as in n. 36), p.4.

house. May the Great Being who has made the void, Himself fill it, by making his love & presence sensibly felt [?] by every member of your mourning family.⁴⁰

Witnessing and assisting in the suffering of others and taking practical responsibility or offering company to the distressed may, contrary to Stone's theory, develop the habit of tenderness. Hill was impressive in his presence, offering practical help, to the sick and the bereaved. This is shown in his visit to the dying David Scott and his help in the selling of Scott's masterpiece (see Chapter two). His correspondence closely follows the fatal illness of Thomas Duncan (1807-45), and he was there when Duncan died:

I came direct to our friend's house, from whence I now write, and had the sad privilege of watching by his bedside until all was over, which you will see from the notification sent to you, took place at 5 minutes to 9. All sensation had been gone since Tuesday Evening last, and the immediate cause of dissolution was adupression [?] of the brain. It was a sad sight to see the strong man thus [illegible], his weeping children around his bed - and his excellent wife, half dead from fever, exhaustion and sorrow lifted into the room that she might be present at a scene which could have killed her to have looked on. All was at length over, and bowing to the will of God she allowed herself to be removed to her room where in the midst of her affliction she has the consolation of reflecting on the spiritual state of mind which her husband had exhibited during his illness - it is now her great support that the Saviour was with him in his dark hour - and that he is in glory. -

Poor Duncan leaves 6 young children for whose maintenance and education it may be difficult to provide in any way approaching to their circumstances when during their fathers life. I have no doubt you will be their friend with the Royal Academy. Will you as a friend privately answer me this question as it has reference to an idea which as yet I have broached to no one. If any of Mr Duncans friends or countrymen here, were to make a fund to assist in educating the children - would the existence of such a fund make the Royal Academy lessen the assistance it would otherwise give the Widow from the Pension Fund? Any information in regard to the assistance Mrs D's friends might expect for her from your fund will be most acceptable. A universal feeling of sorrow prevails here - we know that we have lost one of our best and greatest. My loss is [terribly?] severe but what shall we say of that of the widow and their poor children!!!⁴¹

He was actively concerned for Duncan's family, and later displayed a similar concern for the education of the orphan child of the sculptor, Patric Park. This was a Christian

⁴⁰. Hill to Paton, 11 July 1853, NLS Acc 11315.

⁴¹. Hill to Roberts 26 April 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

interest in good works, visiting the sick and the dying or supporting the widow, but not undertaken in the conscious sense of duty.⁴²

The importance of religion

It is difficult to estimate the importance of religion in Hill's life, because it depended on a belief and faith, which are not necessarily open to us. Hill's correspondence does not express any particular standpoint in religion. When he speaks in religious terms it is generally in moments of stress or excitement, and his expression is fairly conventional. It is no measure of how intense his belief may have been.

The Disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1843 was clearly a climacteric for Hill, as for many others. He was obviously much impressed by the heroism of the Free Church and admired the Free Church leaders, Rev. Dr Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) and Thomas Guthrie, as well as his own brother-in-law, the Rev. Robert Macdonald (1813-93), minister of North Leith. Hugh Miller was clearly convinced of Hill's sincerity in undertaking his great painting of the Disruption (which will be discussed in later chapters), and he wrote an article which opposed a print by David Allan of a General Assembly of the Church in 1783 with the engraving Hill was planning, contrasting the characters of the two artists:

If Allan, with his quick perception of the ludicrous, his homely truth of character in all cases in which the character was not of an exalted cast, his enjoyment of the low, and his unideal plainness of conception ... was one of the best fitted in the world for taking the portrait of Moderatism when in its palmiest condition, - Evangelism in the present instance has been not less fortunate in its artist. The one principle required a caricaturist who could confine his love of the ludicrous within the limits of the just and the natural; and such a caricaturist it got. The other demands an artist of nice sensibilities, not unaffected by the moral sublime, and a master of character in its higher departments; and such an artist has it found in Mr Hill, - a gentleman of exquisite taste and fine genius.⁴³

⁴². There is a useful contrast to Hill's behaviour in the diaries of the Church Elder, James Gall, (who appears in one of the Newhaven photographs). These diaries demonstrate the damaging effect of the concept of 'good works' in the hands of an arrogant man – when Gall visited the sick and dying they were liable to bar the door against him. NLS Acc 5745.

⁴³. Hugh Miller, 'The Two Prints,' *The Witness* (24 June 1843). Hugh Paton had reissued Allan's print on the grounds that it illustrated the Assembly which had seen the last protest against the patronage, one of the causes of the Disruption.

Hill presumably attended the Free Church; he was married to Amelia Paton in 1862 by the Rev. Walter Smith of the Free Roxburgh Chapel.⁴⁴ However, it is important to remember that in the 1840s and under the leadership of men like Chalmers and Guthrie, it was not a narrow church but one founded on broad principles and connected to other dissenting groups. Hill's viewpoint seems to have been, to a degree, non-sectarian and led by the same principles which inform his art. In his relations with the Paton family, he may have been involved in their Quaker and Swedenborgian sympathies.⁴⁵

The religious principle Miller found in Hill's work probably underlies much of his thinking in art, and that idea will be followed in later chapters. Hill's interest in religious painting, which emerges in his correspondence with Noël Paton, takes him beyond his Presbyterian background and into a wider enthusiasm. He wrote of John Ruskin's lecture in Edinburgh in 1853:

He is a brave fellow & would be a martyr were it necessary. Was it not a bold thing to [illegible] such on conclusion - that in contrast with the representative Heroes of the Classic & Medieval ages Leonidas and St Louis whose principles of action were duty & religion - Nelson was actuated by duty & no religion. I hope I dont misrepresent what he said. And was it not quite as bold as to bring home to the people he was speaking to and the age to which they belonged - that they seemed to be distinguished by an almost total absence of a recognition of religion - in the creation of great structures or in the embellishment of their private homes.⁴⁶

Hill reacted with similar enthusiasm to the work of a French painter, Louis Janmot (1814-92), who was hoping to revive the Catholic faith with a series of allegorical paintings on the spiritual and physical progress of the soul.⁴⁷ Hill wrote to Paton:

Look into Hogg's Instructor for the present month - The letter from Paris contains an account of a Painter "Janmot" a new man worth your looking at. I thought it described a man - a good deal like a friend of mine. Janmot is to be here soon, and I am to know him - I think you and he are likely to be good friends. It is curious he has done some subjects such as I have repeatedly

⁴⁴. Information from a newspaper cutting in an album relating to Amelia Paton, collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum.

⁴⁵. D. G. Goyder, a phrenologist and Swedenborgian minister, described a visit to J. N. Paton, senior, 'then a member of the Society of Friends' and after a long conversation with him 'felt happy that my entertainer responded to my opinion in almost every particular.' D. G. Goyder, *My Battle for Life. The Autobiography of a Phrenologist*, London, 1857, pp. 274-6.

⁴⁶. Hill to Paton, 19 November 1853, NLS Acc 11315.

⁴⁷. See Dominique Brachlianoff, *Le Poème de l'âme. The Poem of the Soul. Louis Janmot*, Paris 1995.

spoke to you about as of those you could realize. The regions of Beautiful Spirits.⁴⁸

When Hill wrote this, Janmot had already spent fourteen years on his project, which may have induced a fellow feeling in Hill, still working on the Disruption Picture after eleven years. It is nevertheless evidence of his breadth of sympathy that Hill could consider a Catholic painter's work with such interest and urge his friendship on Paton.⁴⁹

Family life and affection

Hill's readiness to understand and indeed adjust to women as to men is expressed in the account of his first marriage:

I was warned by two or three most loving friends who knew me best, that the lady I married and I were not cut out to make each other happy and the lady herself was somewhat afraid of that and so was I a little - but we both after marriage found in each other qualities we did not look for - as well as those we did look for, and I think we were a very happy couple - and our friends were happy to find themselves wrong.⁵⁰

We know little of Ann Macdonald (1804-41), who was the daughter of a wine merchant in Perth and apparently a fine musician.⁵¹ They were married in 1837 and she probably became an invalid in or before 1840, perhaps as a result of childbearing. Hill speaks of their being confined by his wife's illness. He wrote to Mrs James Hogg, the widow of the poet, inviting her to spend the evening with 'this little friendly circle':

Mrs Hill's general state of health for some years, has made hermits of us in some degree, and I myself for this reason and others so long delayed calling on you that I grow ashamed to come at last. Should you come to us I will consider that you are inclined to forgive me.⁵²

⁴⁸. Hill to Paton, 18 September 1854, NLS Acc 11315.

⁴⁹. Janmot's work took a new direction in 1854-5. His first works were oil paintings, but at this time he turned to charcoal on paper. He had been and continued to be unsuccessful in his exhibitions of this work and eventually published the whole cycle in a set of carbon prints. Connections between his painting and that of the 'English Pre-Raphaelites' have been proposed, but 'no direct link has been established.' Brachlianoff (as in n. 47), p. 22. There is a possibility that he was influenced by either or both Hill and Paton and that the apparent Pre-Raphaelite connection could have been made in Edinburgh and Dunfermline.

⁵⁰. Hill to Paton, 11 December 1851, NLS Acc 11315.

⁵¹. Katherine Michaelson, *A Centenary Exhibition of the Work of David Octavius Hill 1802-1870 and Robert Adamson 1821-1848*, exhibition catalogue, Scottish Arts Council, Edinburgh 1970, p. 11.

⁵². Hill to Mrs James Hogg, undated c. 1840, NLS Ms 2245 fo. 305.

He had a tender concern for his invalid wife. It was a concern echoed in one of his wife's letters, when she was suffering in pain and pregnancy and Hill was to be absent in London for a fortnight: 'I shall weary for D. O. but must do the best I can Till he returns.'⁵³

Ann Hill died in 1841 and she was the eighth child of her generation to die.⁵⁴ Death was domestic and the women of the household in particular were expected to undertake the responsibilities of nursing. In reviewing an account by 'a delicately nurtured lady' from the Highlands of nursing in the Crimean War, Hugh Miller quotes her as saying, 'I did not feel ... that we were doing anything better or more praiseworthy than is done in a quiet, unostentatious way at home every day.'⁵⁵ Writing in 1853, Hill remembered his sister in law, Jane Macdonald (Fig. 17), at Ann's deathbed:

Tomorrow I have to go to Perth to be present at the wedding of my beloved sister in law Jane Macdonald whom I often think of as I used to see her sitting all day and every day by the open coffin which contained the remains of my poor wife. She used to say tranquilly "I like to be here" and she was - until all was over. I believe Chatty and myself have a very large share of her warm affection and I feel it to be a solemn affair to see her united to one she has long known & who will I think make her happy.⁵⁶

The calotype of Jane Macdonald was probably one of the early portraits, taken in 1843, close to Ann Hill's death. From Hill's account we can see her as a strongly self-contained woman, mourning her sister with her company. What may appear a distanced picture becomes, with this knowledge, a picture about generosity, love and restraint. This is a person Hill saw and admired and loved. Moreover, the connection he makes brings the picture into emotional proximity with another early photograph - the calotype of himself holding his daughter, Charlotte (1839-1862) (Fig. 18).

⁵³. Ann Hill to Jane Macdonald, 4 July 1840, NLS Acc 11782. Their second child, a daughter, died within hours of the birth about 23 July. The 1841 census records Hill, Ann and Charlotte, with Isabella Nasmyth, described as of 'independent means,' and two female servants, Elizabeth Hill and Margaret Donaldson living at 28 Inverleith Row.

⁵⁴. Her mother lived until 1850 and saw nine of her children die before her.

⁵⁵. Hugh Miller, 'Characteristics of the Crimean War,' *Leading Articles on Various Subjects*, ed. Rev. John Davidson, Edinburgh 1870, p. 298.

⁵⁶. Hill to Paton, 11 July 1853, NLS Acc 11315.

Jane Macdonald was married in 1853, when Hill sent her a letter with a wedding present. It is a letter in which he reveals the way in which his warmest affection may be expressed, somewhat disconcertingly, through the writing of others and through the facetious pun:

My Dear Love

I will not bother you with the reasons which decided me in selecting a gift in token of my true affection on so auspicious and interesting occasion as your marriage - a thing so very Professional as an Engraving. Had I been richer, my dear Jane, in little engraved Pictures illustrative of "Ye Banks and braes," it would have been my pride to have sung to you in irresistible notes

"and ye shall walk in silk attire

And siller hae to spare"

The voice being appropriately accompanied by beautiful rustlings of satins and golden chinkachinks. But alas my dearest sister, at this present now, I happen to be as poor as a Poet - though I have very good hopes of being somewhat richer very soon - but being as I said rich in one of the other attributes of the Poet, I here invoke "myself and all the muses" to "make oh make" my gift such as it is, to appear in your eyes- "eyes, which do eclipse morn" - estimable - poetical - beautiful seeing that "a thing of beauty is a joy forever." Well here it is! - an artist's proof - that is you know - or as an artist's sister you should know - one of the earliest impressions - signed by the Painter and Engraver - of Sir Charles Eastlake's [painter and Director of the National Gallery in London] (he, as married my old sweetheart Elizabeth Rigby - the tallest, cleverest & best girl of these parts) chef d [o]euvre - engraved by the best of modern Engravers Samuel Cousins - from whose portfolio I had it with some others, in exchange for some of my Calotypes - those "wood-notes-wild" of mine - which though esteemed by some of the initiated are I confess not so generally popular as the notes of "Ye Banks &c"...

And now my Dear Jane - I know your loving heart too well to think you will not value my gift - because it is not of such value as I wish it to be - may I [illegible] you will love it as you have done me and mine.

May Heaven smile on your union - my true sister, and bless John & you with as much happiness & prosperity as is good for you

Ever your affectionate Brother

D. O. Hill⁵⁷

The letters were written ten years after the calotype was taken and they offer us a view of the pictures from that historical perspective. Hill's love for her may have grown in the meantime, when she helped to fill the void left by Ann Hill's death, but his respect

⁵⁷. Hill to Macdonald, July 1853, NLS Acc 11782. This letter quotes Robert Burns, 'Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon,' Susanna Blamire, 'The Siller Crown,' John Keats, 'Endymion,' Milton, 'L'Allegro' and apparently parodies Shakespeare 'Take, O take those lips away,/ That so sweetly were forsworn/And those eyes, the break of day/ Lights that do mislead the morn.' *Measure for Measure*, Act 4, scene 1, 1.

for her command of grief may well have dominated his thoughts when he took the picture. She was probably still mourning, and her very restraint evades the strength and relaxed sympathy of Hill's best work - it is a distanced, but nevertheless a touching picture.

After Ann's death, Hill's immediate family was reduced to himself and his daughter. His love for the child is heard in an earlier letter to his wife: 'And now let me ask for Lady-bird, give her as many kisses as she will take from me. I long very much to see the little thing stotting along.'⁵⁸ It can also be seen in the early photographs of her - the sense of practical familiarity in the way he holds her is not that of a father who has handed over the responsibility for the child's upbringing. Another picture of her, still as a small child, shows her standing full of merry confidence, her father nearby although he is outside the range of the camera. His active responsibility is confirmed by the letter he wrote to her in 1850: a piece of foolishness to entertain the girl, but including a practical note about galoshes. It is dictated by the family cat, which has injured its paw, to a pigeon called William:

Along with William & Helen & Vicky & Albert & papa and the rest of the family I was delighted to hear that your cheeks are getting redder than they have been of late and that you were skipping & trundling a hoop at Milfield. I think if I were there I would prefer catching birds - but every one to their taste.

Papa was sorry to leave you in bed on Tuesday morning - but he had made no preparation for staying - he will come and see you soon again - perhaps you would ask him to catch a blackbird or a mavis for me; I am told they are very good eating.

Papa sends your India Rubber shoes as you desire and some other things you may require. Let him know anything else you want and it shall be sent.⁵⁹

Hill was, in our terms, a single-parent, but he belonged to a large family. His experience was not unusual and demonstrates how families would reorganise to cope with death. At some stage, he and his widowed sister, Mary Watson, formed an alliance, taking on responsibility for each other's children. They shared Rock House in the 1850s, and the Hill/MacGlashon photograph of about 1860 shows them, arm in arm, looking much like a married couple.⁶⁰ In the ribald verse announcing the engagement of Sarah Watson in 1851, it is Hill who acts as her father:

⁵⁸. Hill to Ann Hill, 19 October 1840, NLS Acc 11608.

⁵⁹. Hill to Charlotte, 9 April 1850, negative copy of letter in GUL.

⁶⁰. A copy of the photograph is in the collection of the SNPC. The April 1851 census lists D. O. Hill as the head of the Calton Hill household (though he and Charlotte are away), with his sister, noted as a

Who'll give his consent?
I says Uncle David
And I'll whistle o'er the lave o't
And I'll give my consent
This is Uncle David
Whistling o'er the lave o't⁶¹

He drew himself lolling on the sofa with the lovers and the cat in attitudes of supplication (Fig. 19). His character, either as a disengaged Romantic or a Victorian *paterfamilias*, however, cannot be maintained. His niece's letter to Paton a month later is affectionate rather than respectful, offering an unexpected insight into the horrors of his dream life:

He has very sleepless nights, and is tormented with all sorts of nightmare fancies - last night he was terribly indignant at finding himself a Cheese which Mama had packed up and sent in a present to some one - I suppose he was to be "left till called for" at some Railway Station - He is on the whole very patient. Today he has been much worse as he has had a violent headache - You may be sure this has thrown a gloom over us all, and we are not thinking much of the usual gaieties of the season.⁶²

A lack of money probably delayed Hill's second marriage as well as his first. His correspondence in the 1850s displays particular financial anxiety. Charlotte's wedding was celebrated in 1861; Hill remarried in 1862, twenty years after the death of his first wife. In a life of sixty-eight years, he was only married for fourteen.

Hill's awareness of the disruptive dangers of a second marriage, that it might cause distress within the family, is expressed in a letter to Noël Paton when the Patons's father proposed to re-marry:

I am afraid that painful though it be to the children of the departed - it is their true wisdom to submit to the event as one arranged or permitted by providence - remembering that in Honouring our father and our mother there is the promise of reward here and hereafter ... It is ['is' doubly underlined] a trial for you all - but the laws of love and duty and Charity are wise Councillors and dear Noel let them not fail you in this exigency - nor shut you my friend your mind and heart to their teachings.⁶³

widow and 'annuitant,' with her daughters, Margaret aged 21, Sarah, aged 19, and Ann, aged 13, the two last described as scholars.

⁶¹. Hill to Paton, 19 November 1851, NLS Acc 11315. This is a parody of the Robert Burns's poem, 'Whistle oe'r the lave [shame or pity] o't,' *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. James Kinsley, Oxford 1968, p. 434.

⁶². Sarah Watson to Paton, 23 December 1851, NLS Acc 11315.

For himself, Hill had no such confidence in the moral force of duty and, to his credit, he was clearly not a man who would have cared for the submission of his family in preference to spontaneous love. In a letter to his sister in law, announcing his second marriage, Hill revealed several important points. It begins by expressing his anxiety, and presumably Amelia Paton's, that their marriage should not disrupt their family structure or affections. He was unable to take a high hand on the issue, almost to the point of absurdity, since it is obvious to him that everyone already knows their intention. He also expressed the same admiration for the tolerance of suffering, as he had in the letter describing Jane Macdonald's fortitude, and it is relevant to Hill's ability to sympathise with others that he actively admired this strength in two women he loved, rather than assuming that it was in some way easier or more appropriate for them. He wrote:

My Darling Sister Jane

I believe you know all about Amelia Paton and your unworthy brother having agreed some day or other to be man and wife. And since you do know thus all about it, I now venture cautiously to hint to you & uncle John, that such may possibly be the case ... In my great wisdom I resolved that for a time, it should be a secret - my reasons were I wished to have aunt Watson well & along with me - and Charlotte reconciled & cordial. I dare say both are now the latter - my dear sister I believe is - and dear Charlotte has behaved as I expected she would do, with the most affectionate tenderness, faithfulness and sincerity. All is well so far as those dear ones are concerned and for the first time I today communicate the probable event even to you & Aunt May - asking your sympathy and good wishes & meaning to assure you both, of a faithful & loving & true womanly nature in your new connection. Chatty and Walter know all I could wish to say on this subject. In the religious element I have reason to believe you will be satisfied - and I am indeed mistaken if you do not find that Amelia will do hearts homage to the worth of my dear sisters May & Jane and indeed to worth wherever she meets it - to say nothing of her desire to be beloved by my friends. That we will all like her better when we know her better I doubt it not, for she is a lady in her heart and feelings - and has had much trial and sorrow to bear in silence. All is for the best if we submit ourselves to the discipline of a loving Father, I believe she has done so and that she [illegible] all be blessed of Him. Then she is a good artist & knows artist life - and how to sympathize advise & aid me in my daily work. Her last finished work a bust of Lady Elgin in marble is worthy of any hand it is so good - and she is resolved that the Free [Church?] Picture shall be done! - What a good boy was I - Jack Horner - thou & thy Christmas pie & thy plum on it a discount - when didst thou ever put in thy thumb and pull out a wife

⁶³. Hill to Paton, 5 August 1854, NLS Acc 11315.

with perfections such as I have indicated! But seriously dear sister, do love Amelia - and I know she will love thee dearly.⁶⁴

This letter is arguably conventional in its admiration of Amelia Paton – she is loving, womanly and religious. However, the last compliment to her as an artist, not just able to sympathise and aid Hill but capable of excellent work in her own field, is more remarkable.

A late description of Amelia Paton gives us an account of a woman of confidence, character and appropriate generosity:

Mrs Hill is also vivacious in manner, and remarkable for conversational giftedness. She takes deep interest in questions of the day. Whether the subject is art or literature, sociology, occultism, or the natural sciences, Mrs Hill is quite at home. Her conversation is sometimes interspersed with enjoyable humour - especially was this noticeable when it ran into olden days on the other side of the Forth. It may be added that Newington Lodge is seldom without visitors, whom to hold converse with is considered high privilege. A more hospitable lady than Mrs Hill, and an artist willing and ready to give encouragement to novices in the art of painting and sculpture could not readily be found.⁶⁵

Amelia Paton was a sculptor, apparently self-taught. According to her friend, Elizabeth Sharp:

From girlhood she had worked with pencil, brush and chisel ... A friend, realising her possibilities, gave her some wax and a modeling tool, and she began to model little portrait heads in relief and in the round. Despite the fact that in those days women who aspired to a profession were frowned upon, this woman-artist persevered and trained herself in the handling of clay, and in due course became known in Scotland as a Portrait-sculptor.⁶⁶

It remains an irony that the passionate letters from Hill to her brother, Noël Paton, in the 1850s, urging and assisting his ambitions in sculpture, largely came to nothing. It proves to be Amelia who received the public sculpture commissions, emerging as a professional sculptor after she married Hill in 1862.⁶⁷ This is a tribute to Hill's sensitivity - that he encouraged his wife's career as an artist, at a time when women

⁶⁴. Hill to Macdonald, 23 September 1862, NLS Acc 11608.

⁶⁵. William Gifford, 'The Patons of Dunfermline,' *Dunfermline Press* (25 July 1903).

⁶⁶. Mrs William Sharp, 'D. O. Hill, R. S. A.,' *Camera Work*, no. 28 (October 1909): p. 18

⁶⁷. There were only two women sculptors in Scotland at the time, the other was Mary Brodie, who was also a member of a family of artists. See Robin Lee Woodward *Nineteenth-Century Scottish Sculpture*, Ph.D. thesis, Edinburgh University 1977, vol. 1, pp. 75-6. She comments 'So little is known of her work before her marriage ... that it is tempting to believe her interest in sculpture was inspired by Hill.'

sculptors were uncommon in Britain, and when convention would have suggested she live a purely domestic role.⁶⁸ There was a strong group of American women sculptors in Rome in the 1850s and 60s, but only one of this ‘sisterhood’ married. Another of the group, Harriet Hosmer, expressed the opinion:

Even if so inclined, an artist has no business to marry. For a man it may be well enough, but for a woman, on whom matrimonial duties and cares weigh more heavily, it is a moral wrong, I think, for she must either neglect her profession or her family.⁶⁹

In Sharp’s account, Amelia Hill built Newington Lodge, ‘out of the proceeds of her own art.’ Sharp added that Amelia worked alongside Hill in the studio and that the Disruption Picture was finished both with her urging and actual collaboration.⁷⁰ In one of his last letters, he wrote, with pleasure and mock modesty, of the portrait bust she had sculpted of him:

I whisper in a very low voice that the original was by very many considered the best Bust in the Royal Academy of last year - I mean London. Of course I must not say this but it was said to us by not a few people whose opinions were worth having.⁷¹

The relation between Hill and Amelia Paton gives unusual evidence of a creative relationship within the family context. Amelia may well have helped Hill to finish the Disruption Picture; he assisted and applauded her in her career as a sculptor. D. O. Hill seems to have been a rare man: one for whom ambition did not necessitate competition and also a man whose idea of creativity involved his family affections.

A family partnership

While the partnership between Hill and Adamson was nominally a business contract, it would have had a family character. John Adamson had educated and, presumably, he or his family set his brother up in business.⁷² The family, as a whole, would have

⁶⁸. Henrietta Ward, who married another painter when she was 17 in 1848, later wrote: ‘In my young days most people would have agreed ... that a wife and mother had no right to be a practitioner in paint, and I think in most households it would have been rendered impossible by the husband’s and relations’ combined antagonism to the idea,’ quoted in Pamela Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, London 1987, p. 137.

⁶⁹. Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, 2nd ed., London 1996, p. 217.

⁷⁰. Sharp (as in n. 66), p. 17.

⁷¹. Hill to John and Jane Macdonald, 29 December 1869, NLS Acc 11782. One copy of this bust is in the collection of the SNPG, another stands on his grave in the Dean Cemetery in Edinburgh.

⁷². See A. D. Morrison-Low, ‘Dr John Adamson and Robert Adamson: An Early Partnership

taken an active and careful interest in the proposal. In joining Hill, Robert Adamson was also making the connection to Hill's brother, Alexander, the publisher and printseller. Hill specifically referred to the Adamsons as friends in two critical letters to David Roberts, when he talked of their knowledge of the calotypes (see Chapter nine). Hill's feeling for Robert Adamson is expressed, as with his other affections, when he is distressed. After Adamson's funeral, he wrote:

I have today assisted in consigning to the cold earth all that was earthly of my amiable true & affectionate Robert Adamson. He died in the full hope of a blessed resurrection. His truehearted family are mourning sadly especially his brother the Doctor - who has watched [?] him as a child during his long illness. I have seldom seen such a deep & manly sorrow.

Poor Adamson has not left his like in his art of which he was so modest.⁷³

A year later, Hill sent an album of the pictures taken at Lord Cockburn's house (see Chapter three), to his daughter as a wedding present and wrote:

The gentleman on the title page [Hill] seems too much absorbed by his work to feel that he is an intruder - so you will perhaps pardon his presence. The portrait on the back of the same leaf [Adamson] - a pure & gentle spirit gone upwards - is well entitled to be where the Calotype is had in reverence.⁷⁴

This is, of course, the formal rhetoric of mourning, but it presumably had a basis in genuine affection.

It is difficult to find an exact parallel to the partnership of Hill and Adamson within the arts. Neither the partnership of Gilbert and Sullivan nor that of Gilbert and George seem wholly effective as a comparison – in one the roles are too clearly defined and in the other too nearly linked. It may be that a better comparison exists within the contemporary world of family business, where it was customary for the older, more knowledgeable or experienced partner to take the lead and adopt a relationship – paternal or fraternal, extending the idea of apprenticeship – towards the younger. Such alliances presumably worked on the generous principle that a responsive working relationship will allow for growth – Adamson was half Hill's age and Hill was a successful teacher (see Chapter two). In industry, at this time:

Partnerships were usually family or extended family concerns having close links through birth, marriage, community or religious affiliation. Mutual trust

in Scottish Photography.' *The Photographic Collector*, vol. 2 (1983): pp.198-214.

⁷³. Hill to Paton, 18 January 1848, NLS Acc 11315.

⁷⁴. Hill to Cleghorn, 12 May 1849, ms in a private collection.

between partners and knowledge of each other's business affairs and assets was important in the face of unlimited liability.⁷⁵

Their assistant, Miss Mann, came from Perth and may herself have been connected by friendship or blood to the Hill family. This was a more protective and amicable relationship than the idea of business partnership suggests nowadays, but it was an idea still operative at the core of the Industrial Revolution: 'Industry in Britain was essentially 'family capitalism' in which the aim was to maximise the welfare of the family rather than industrial growth and profitability.'⁷⁶ It may indeed be that Hill was partly caught by this sense of familiar obligation into staying with the partnership longer than he meant. He wrote, in February 1845: 'A little more of the Calotype in the Spring months & in all probability I will then leave it to be worked out by less occupied hands.'⁷⁷ Adamson's ill health may have added to and maintained his concern for the younger man.

There is an indication of Hill's continued sense of connection to the Adamsons in a calotype album, which he put together some time in or after the mid 1850s (Fig. 20).⁷⁸ For this, Hill painted a title page crowned with the sun, shining through the National Monument on Calton Hill. Below are three ovals, with portraits of John and Robert Adamson at the top and Hill below; from the photographs chosen, the two Adamsons appear to look down to Hill. The Adamsons's initials are joined in one monogram, with Hill's underneath, on the same shield. Behind the shield is a camera. The title reads: 'A Century of Sun Pictures/ By D. O. Hill, R. S. A. & R. Adamson/ Edinburgh.' The calotypes in the album are all by Hill and Robert Adamson (with the exception of the portrait of Hill used on the title page, which dates to the 1850s), but Hill is here acknowledging John's role in the development of the calotype and in his initial work with his brother. He may also be indicating a personal friendship with

⁷⁵. Pat Hudson, 'Financing Firms, 1700-1850,' *Business Enterprise in modern Britain from the eighteenth to the twentieth century*, ed. Maurice W. Kirkby and Mary B. Rose, London and New York 1994, p. 90. 'The principle of limited liability was finally adopted in 1855 only after heated debate.' P. L. Payne, *British Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed., London 1988, p.16.

⁷⁶. M. J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty. An Economic and Social History of Britain 1700-1850*, Oxford 1995, p. 246.

⁷⁷. Hill to Roberts, 25 February, 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

⁷⁸. In the collection of the Museum Ludwig, Cologne.

John Adamson, which may be deduced from photographs John took of Hill, his daughter and Amelia Paton, in the 1850s and 60s (Fig. 83).⁷⁹

The idea of relation and connection was clearly a dominant thread in Hill's life and work. His ambition was tempered and directed by this broader moral and social urge. The success of the calotype partnership depended on the warmth of a sociable creativity, which connects both to an amiable view of the workings of society and to theories of association in art, which will be explored in later chapters.

2. The unsociable city and the problem of the destitute

The work of the Hill and Adamson partnership was not circumscribed by the quiet confines of an artistic or literary circle. In the background of urban society, at the heart of the Old Town of Edinburgh, lay the endemic and appalling problem of the city's slums. By the 1840s the historic centre of the city was trapped in a cycle of fatal disease and destitution, fuelled by the attacks of the potato famine in the Highlands and in Ireland and by the regular economic slumps.

The human effects of this are described in a passionate sermon delivered by the Rev. Thomas Guthrie to Free St John's Church in Edinburgh. He began with a description of launching a boat on a calm, summer day and finding another world, in the mouldering vestige of a drowned forest below the water, which he then compared with the city slums:

Not a single house, nor a block of houses, but whole streets, once from end to end the homes of decency, and industry, and wealth, and rank, and piety, have been engulfed. A flood of ignorance, and misery, and sin, now breaks and roars above the top of their highest tenements. Nor do the old stumps of a forest, still standing up erect beneath the sea-wave, indicate a greater change, a deeper subsidence, than the relics of ancient grandeur and the touching memorials of piety which yet linger about these wretched dwellings, like evening twilight on the hills - like some traces of beauty on a corpse.⁸⁰

Lord Cockburn talked of the impact on society of such distress: the genuine sense of helplessness and fear it generated:

⁷⁹. See A. D. Morrison-Low, 'Dr John Adamson and Thomas Rodger: Amateur and Professional Photography in Nineteenth-Century St Andrews,' *Photography 1900: The Edinburgh Symposium*, ed. Julie Lawson, Ray McKenzie and A. D. Morrison-Low, Edinburgh 1992, pp. 19-37.

⁸⁰. Sermon published as an appendix to *Autobiography of Thomas Guthrie, D.D. and Memoir by his sons, Rev. David K. Guthrie and Charles J. Guthrie*, 3rd. ed., vol. 2, London 1874, pp. 417-9.

Of all the new features of modern society in Britain, none is so peculiar or frightful as the hordes of strong poor, always liable to be thrown out of employment by stagnation of trade ... In Edinburgh, besides its fullest complement of ordinary distress, we have a battalion of what are now known by the almost technical term of "Unemployed Poor" ... being congregated in numbers and distinguished by a title, they form a separate class, a new state.⁸¹

These passages are a part of a long debate about poverty, in which such figures as the Rev. Dr Thomas Chalmers, had been closely involved. Guthrie, in the sermon quoted above, was rousing his parishioners to undertake a mission to the desperate poor, and, in particular, to support his drive to establish 'ragged schools,' to take the children in from the streets.

It was not until 1845, with the continually exacerbated situation, that the Government passed the Scottish Poor Law Amendment Act, which enabled official interference. The resistance to this interference was not necessarily cynical - the Malthusian theory held that funding the poor would lead to a further rise in population which the country could not feed.⁸² The Presbyterian position was that personal responsibility and the need for active charity (both love and giving) were essential in society. Thomas Chalmers, in the preface to his *Christian and civic economy of large towns*, expresses this difficult idea:

It is right that justice should be enforced by law, but compassion ought to go free ... Whatever the calls may be which the poverty of a human being may have on the compassion of his fellows, it has no claim whatever on their justice. The confusion of these two virtues in the ethical system will tend to actual confusion and disorder where introduced into the laws and administration of human society. The proper remedy, or remedy of nature, for the wretchedness of the few is the kindness of the many.⁸³

Chalmers saw the personal attention of the rich to the poor as 'nature's own simple mechanism:' a moral responsibility, which should not be replaced by a cold political dole.⁸⁴ Both his and Malthus's theories were aimed at the future. They held that an

⁸¹. *Journal of Henry Cockburn 1831-1854*, vol. 2, Edinburgh 1874, p. 2.

⁸². The Rev. Thomas Malthus, in his *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), proposed the axiom that population increases in geometrical ratio, while subsistence only increases in arithmetical ratio, and believed that a legal entitlement to money would destroy the individual moral restraint that kept the population down.

⁸³. Quoted in Mrs Oliphant, *Thomas Chalmers*, London 1905, p. 102.

⁸⁴. *Ibid.* p. 129.

immediate palliative, however generous an impulse, would be destructive in the long run.

***Distressing for Rent* and innocent failure**

The particular problems brought on at an earlier date, by the Industrial Revolution and the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, were addressed pictorially by the genre and history painter, Sir David Wilkie (1785-1841), in his *Distressing for Rent* (Fig. 21), which is set in the context of the post-war agricultural depression.⁸⁵ It is a picture of failure in the face of broad economic and social disaster. This was a new idea and the contemporary reaction to the picture is an expression of the difficulty inherent in understanding such a subject.

When it was exhibited in 1815, B. R. Haydon wrote of the picture causing offence at the Royal Academy exhibition:

Beautiful as the picture was acknowledged to be, the aristocracy evidently thought it an attack on their rights. Sir George [Beaumont] was very sore on the private day, and said Wilkie should have shown why his landlord had distrained; he might be a dissipated tenant. I defended Wilkie as well as I could, but there was a decided set at the picture.⁸⁶

Wilkie presents his subjects as innocent victims: the obvious implication was that, if the tenant farmer was not at fault, then the landlord must be. To say, as we might, that it was nobody's fault, that the tenant was the victim of abstract economic circumstances, would have reduced the power of the painting.⁸⁷ *Distressing for Rent* was designed for public exhibition, and it is probable that Wilkie was intending to be contentious as well as original. It was set in the present, so the moral was not comfortably swaddled in antiquity, and it represented tragedy among the lower ranks of society. Whether he was intending a political comment is more open to question -

⁸⁵. 'Distressing' is an English legal term, which apparently gives the picture an English rather than Scottish context.

⁸⁶. *Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter, from his Autobiography and Journals*, ed. Tom Taylor, vol. 1, London 1853, p. 284.

⁸⁷. In *Little Dorrit* (which he thought of calling *Nobody's Fault*, in a letter quoted by Una Pope-Hennessy, *Charles Dickens*, Harmondsworth 1970, p. 487), Dickens addressed this idea that legal and bureaucratic procedure could be wholly opposed to moral right and the working of society. Part of what we think of as the sentimentality of the nineteenth century, in its concentration on the suffering of innocent individuals - Little Nell or Tiny Tim - springs from this important argument that forensic or economic logic could be morally skewed.

he was the son of a Scots Presbyterian minister and might well have been thinking in Thomas Chalmers's terms.

It is a painting about the effects of war. The chief protagonists are the bankrupt tenant farmer, the man who steers the plough and tends the flocks (notable symbols of peace), the wife and mother, the innocent children and even the miserable working dog. This was the human price of a wide-spread disaster. The thought that the landlord, who had benefitted from the boom of the war years, was not exhibiting grace in the lean years, is natural. The picture makes the point that the stout officers of the law have come to fulfill the letter of that law. The landlord is not in the picture, and that is a critical part of what is wrong. The landlords did not see or confront the distress their economically practical decisions were causing.

The picture expresses an anxiety voiced at a later date by the poet, James Hogg (1770-1835), who himself failed as a tenant farmer, of the distancing between man and employer. Hogg dates the rift to the Napoleonic Wars, when prices rose and:

made every farmer for the time a fine gentleman ... Now the foreman, or chief shepherd, waits on his master, and, receiving his instructions, goes forth and gives the orders as his own, generally in a peremptory and offensive manner. The menial of course feels that he is no more a member of a community, but a slave; a servant of servants, a mere tool of labour in the hand of a man whom he knows or deems inferior to himself, and the joy of his spirit is mildewed.⁸⁸

Wilkie's painting was in a real sense a problem picture - presenting the victims of another man's legal right. It seems likely that Wilkie sought to move the absent landlords to a sense of their responsibility, by facing them with innocent suffering. This was arguably the first of the pictorial attempts to move the social conscience - a conscience that could sleep well because of the divorce between the layers of society.⁸⁹ It is a forerunner of the paintings of the mid-century, like Richard Redgrave's *The Sempstress*, designed to draw attention to exploitation and the waste of youth. It heralds the engravings of Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (issued between 1851 and 1862), and the later drive of documentary photography as a tool of social reform. It is part of the same impulse that led to the

⁸⁸. James Hogg, 'On the changes in the habits, amusements and conditions of the Scottish peasantry,' first published in *Quarterly Journal of Agriculture* (1831-1832), reprinted in *A Shepherd's Delight. A James Hogg Anthology*, ed. Judy Steel, Edinburgh 1985, p. 41.

⁸⁹. William Hogarth's moral paintings were satirical and directed at the individual. Wilkie was widening the responsibility and looking at his subjects as real, unexaggerated people.

belated political recognition in the 1840s that Free Trade was not a socially workable proposal – that, in times of distress, such economic laws needed breaking and that people needed help beyond the reach of personal charity.

Wilkie had made a difficult picture and it was put out of sight for twenty years. When Hill succeeded in persuading the picture's owner to lend it for exhibition in the 1840s, John Brown's critical review took a simple moral position - it was in his eyes a painting about suffering bravely borne:

It is to our liking Wilkie's most perfect picture ... there is more of human nature, more of the human heart, in this than in any of the others. It is full of "the still, sad music of humanity," - still and sad, but yet musical, by reason of its true ideality, the painter acting his part as reconciler of men to their circumstances. This is one great end of poetry and painting.⁹⁰

It is not a painting of resignation (although that may have been in Wilkie's mind as the resolution of this moment); it is a picture of people reduced, stunned by despair. Hill recognised the intensity of that despair, that the mother in the painting was stricken out of her very nature and unable to respond to her infant children. He wrote: 'the unutterable woe of the wasted matron reminds me as I write of a still sadder scene.'⁹¹ He was speaking of Mrs Duncan's grief on the death of her husband, Thomas Duncan (quoted above).

The working solution

From Hill's letter to the landscape painter, David Roberts (1796-1864), when Wilkie's picture was hanging in the Academy exhibition of 1846, there is no reason to suppose that he had seen the picture before that date, although his admiration was considerable: 'We all agree with you in your appreciation of the Wilkie - never surely was passion and feeling and sorrow more intensely depicted than this.'⁹² It was a model he might have considered following in his own work.

The calotypes do not demonstrate an immediate concern for the dreadful conditions in the centre of Edinburgh; Hill and Adamson did not take a camera into the slums, either to record or draw attention to them. However, there is a case for

⁹⁰. John Brown, review of the Academy exhibition for *The Witness*, republished in a pamphlet for the Academy visitors, 1846.

⁹¹. Hill to Roberts, 25 March 1846, NLS microfilm 381.

⁹². Ibid.

saying that they did attempt to tackle the question. One of the officials involved in the working of the Poor Law was Hill's friend, Dr George Bell (d. 1888), 'an estimable, upright, and loving man,' who worked with Thomas Guthrie amongst the poor.⁹³ In 1849, Bell published a pamphlet on the problem. Taking the example of a single room in a slum tenement, he concluded with an impassioned statement:

It defies the graver of Hogarth, the pencil of David Scott, so familiar with nightmare horrors, the pen of Dickens, and the tongue of Guthrie. How would the artist manage the background and middle distance of the picture, so varied, so full of national history, so pregnant with dark biography? What could an uninstructed gazer make of the little sparks of light upon the black canvass, marking the morning beams of a mortal's day, which became dark as night before his sun had got a footing in the sky? Such lights would seem to him like falling stars - they would not light the gloom.⁹⁴

It takes little imagination to hear this as a serious conversation between Hill and George Bell and we have two calotypes, taken in 1846, which offer a view of such a discussion (Fig. 22). As a painter, Hill had a passion for light and for the physical freedom inherent in the idea of aerial perspective. Bell's sentence: 'How would the artist manage the background ...' is the voice of a landscape painter, concerned with moral and national history. Clearly the confinement and the darkness would have struck Hill with force, as an artist who worked with light and the pleasures of open landscape and sky.

George Bell and Hill figure together in the calotype, *Edinburgh Ale*, a sociable group with the poet and stained glass artist, James Ballantine (1808-77) (Fig. 23). It was a part of the inherent sympathy between the three men that Ballantine also expressed distress for slum conditions. The introduction to his book, *The Gaberlunzie's Wallet*, a popular combination of prose, verse and song, describes the misery in the Old Town and offers a sad poem about a little girl crouched in a doorway for shelter, suffering for her parents' poverty:

An' nae lawfu' bread can the wee thing win,
Wi' the brand o' shame on her shy wee face:-
O God! man has justice, but little grace!⁹⁵

⁹³. He trained as a doctor, but never practised. Obituary of Dr George William Bell, *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, vol. 34, no. 2 (1889): pp. 772-3.

⁹⁴. George Bell, *Day and Night in the Wynds*, Edinburgh 1849, p. 78.

⁹⁵. James Ballantine, 'Introductory Scraps,' *The Gaberlunzie's Wallet*, Edinburgh 1842.

The picturesque neighbourhood of this poverty was expressed by James Ballantine in his account of the High Street: ‘this emporium o’ character, wi’ its lang and tempting array o’ penny shows, ballad-singers, speech-criers, baskets o’ laces, combs, caps, shoe-ties, an’ twopenny mirrors, wi’ hurleys fu’ o’ cherry-cheikit apples an’ brown speldings.’⁹⁶ A description of this kind, which fits within the pictorial tradition of David Wilkie’s *Pitlessie Fair*, might have appealed to Hill as the idea of a *genre* or landscape painting, in a different context. However, there are not even street ‘types’ among the calotypes, of the kind familiar in the work of the Edinburgh engravers, John Kay (1742-1826) or Walter Geikie (1795-1837) and in later, commercial photography, which imply surface character and a certain humour in poverty.⁹⁷

It seems likely that Hill would not have thought it right to photograph the destitute. Hill’s interest in the calotypes was aesthetic, which connects them to the moral idea, inherent in Scottish art.⁹⁸ As examples of this, it is worth quoting both James Ballantine and the journalist, Robert Stephen Rintoul (1787-1858). At the beginning of *The Gaberlunzie’s Wallet*, James Ballantine wrote a note:

The practice of producing excitement by ransacking the records of crime is, I think, to be condemned; and I am persuaded that it will further the cause we ought all to have in view, namely, the promotion of brotherly kindness, and the elevation of moral sentiment, to draw our illustrations of life from Character, not from Crime, and to exhibit the beauties of Virtue, rather than the deformities of Vice.⁹⁹

Rintoul, in writing his account of the dispute between the Royal Scottish Academy and the Royal Institution (see Chapter two), defined the role of art as follows:

The contemplation of that which is beautiful and harmonious begets a disposition of mind harmonious and congenially alive to excellency, - a disposition which may be so cultivated as to grow into a habit. By a more

⁹⁶. Ibid.

⁹⁷. Walter Geikie etchings of street characters in the 1820s and 30s are lively and convincing likenesses. He was associated with the Academy and Hill owned a set of his engravings. See *Etchings illustrative of Scottish Character and Scenery by the late Walter Geikie*, ed. Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, Edinburgh, 1885 and Duncan Macmillan, *Walter Geikie*, exhibition catalogue, Talbot Rice Arts Centre, Edinburgh 1984. For John Kay, see *A Series of Original Portraits and Caricature Etchings by the late John Kay, Miniature Painter*, Edinburgh, 1837-8 and Hilary and Mary Evans, *John Kay of Edinburgh, Barber, miniaturist and social commentator 1742-1826*, Aberdeen 1973.

⁹⁸. Duncan Macmillan has traced the concern for the relation between actual and moral vision from the model of Allan Ramsay and Gavin Hamilton in the eighteenth century through David Wilkie and Alexander Nasmyth to the calotypes and Hill’s Disruption Picture in *Scottish Art, 1460-1990*, Edinburgh 1990, pp. 188-96.

⁹⁹. Ballantine (as in n. 95).

positive re-action, the continued familiarity with the aspect of dignity and grace tends to produce, through outward imitation, similar qualities. And those two processes set a third in motion: the mind, which is familiarized with excellence and harmony, acquires a keener perception of what is discordant and base, and revolts the more from it.¹⁰⁰

It is probably for such reasons that Hill gave us a picture of the socially successful, heroic working classes, in the series, *The Fishermen and Women of the Firth of Forth*, rather than the tragedy of destitution.¹⁰¹ Regrettably, Hill and Adamson never published this series in a separate volume, so the intention of this first ‘documentary photo-essay’ was not made clear at the time.¹⁰² I have argued that *The Fishermen and Women* is intended to offer the elevating example of a coherent, self-sufficient community, which had kept its feet and was flourishing during the depression. This would mean that the calotypes were offering an answer rather than the problem. It was an answer, which reflected Thomas Chalmers’s practical application of his social theory of the importance of personal charity and attention in the slums of Glasgow. A large part of the problem within the city slums derived from the influx of desperate people, seeking work or medical help. This distressed and driven population had no active, self-protecting community of the kind that can flourish in difficulty. Chalmers reconstructed the small-scale parish system, within the city. He deliberately closed his parish from outside poor relief - keeping ‘his people’ together, paying attention to them and encouraging the natural impulse of generosity and neighbourliness. He and his successor in the same parish succeeded in keeping the parish together for a surprisingly long time under onslaughts of economic disaster in the 1820s and 30s.

The fishing village of Newhaven had achieved that balance naturally and in the same exclusive way, because the fishermen and women married and made strong friendships within the community - justly arguing that only insiders could be expected

¹⁰⁰. R. S. Rintoul, ‘Encouragement of Art in Scotland,’ extract from the *Spectator*, no. 3 (1846), Hill had an offprint of this article, which is now in the ECL mss. C52527.

¹⁰¹. This is discussed more fully in Sara Stevenson Hill and Adamson’s ‘*Fishermen and Women of the Firth of Forth*,’ Edinburgh 1991.

¹⁰². It was advertised with five other volumes of calotypes ‘in a style of great elegance on a paper the size and quality of “Roberts’ Views in the Holy Land,”’ *Edinburgh Evening Courant* (3 August 1844). The others were to be *Highland Character and Costume*, *The Architectural Structures of Edinburgh*, *The Architectural Structures of Glasgow*, *Old Castles, Abbeys &c in Scotland*, *Portraits of Distinguished Scotchmen*. In his letter to David Roberts, 14 March 1845, NLS microfilm 381, Hill substituted *Greyfriars Monuments* for the Glasgow volume.

to take on such hard and strenuous work. This closed them off from what could be thought of as the economic facts of the time; it kept them successful as a society.

Photographing a working community as a model, rather than a desperate society as a problem, is also an answer to the twentieth-century concern about the potentially voyeuristic attitude of the wealthier classes to pictures of poverty. In *The Fishermen and Women* series, neither patronising concern nor dubious relish is invited, only admiration. This extended series of photographs has to be considered as a large-scale, serious work. It is not a set of distanced sketches by a purely aesthetic or anthropological observer; it is a close and loving study of a community which Hill greatly admired; here was an ideal and possibly here, if attention was paid, was a solution to a grievous problem.¹⁰³

It is clear from this concentrated essay that Hill, who admired the prominent figures who came to Rock House, did not adopt a narrow view of importance in society. Hill apparently shared Thomas Guthrie's belief that heroism and virtue came in different guises and that this was an element of social strength:

Christians have individual peculiarities which, as much as their faces, distinguish them from each other; and this is rather a beauty than a blemish - a charm rather than a fault ... It is a power, an element of the highest utility in the Church. Hence the mistake of those who would have all Christians modelled on their own pattern, as, for example, of some modest, retiring, gentle spirits, who cannot appreciate the worth and usefulness of those whom God has cast in a rough mould and made of stern stuff.¹⁰⁴

This was not a common view. Elizabeth Rigby said of Guthrie's preaching:

He is a regular O'Connell in the pulpit - cringing to the people, and telling them that they were able to judge, for it was the people with whom Christ was popular, and the elders and higher classes who persecuted. I wonder who it was that crucified Him! ...This is a lesson to all parties: a perfect agitator and an excellent specimen of how the pulpit is made use of to quicken the worst species of pride in the Scotch mob. No wonder they are so turbulent and sanguinary when excited - they are utterly democratic in religion.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³. A comparison may be made with George Walker's series *Costume of Yorkshire* (1814), which is a distanced and critical study of working-class life. This is analysed in Roger Young, 'George Walker's *Costume of Yorkshire* (1814)', *Art History*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1996): pp. 393-417.

¹⁰⁴. Thomas Guthrie, *Speaking to the Heart or Sermons for the People*, London 1862, p. 145.

¹⁰⁵. 19 February 1843, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake*, ed. Charles Eastlake Smith, London 1895, pp. 53-4. In her review of the calotypes, she added an acid footnote, which must have caused Hill to blench, referring to 'the fat martyrs of the Free Kirk.' Elizabeth Rigby, review of books on modern German painting, *Quarterly Review*, vol. 78 (March 1846): p. 338.

Words like ‘democracy’ and ‘enthusiasm’ had for many people a sinister relation to mob rule and, in the context of the social and economic distress in the 1840s, the idea of revolution was near and troubling. Britain might well have been swept by the European political revolutions of 1848. D. O. Hill took a more generous and optimistic view of his world.

Chapter two

Personal and Professional Ambition

Predestination and phrenology

D. O. Hill belonged to a society, which emphasised the personal responsibility of the individual and regarded both hard work and struggle as a necessary background to success. Samuel Smiles's publications in the *Self-Help* series, regarded nowadays as characteristic of Victorian values, emanated from such work as Hugh Miller's *My Schools and Schoolmasters* and included the lives of others of Hill and Adamson's subjects, Robert and William Chambers and James Nasmyth.¹ All are built on the assumption that formal education was only partly of benefit to a future career. Smiles, whilst declaring in his autobiography that, 'A good education is equivalent to a good fortune,' adds, 'I fear I was fonder of frolic than of learning' and concludes, 'On the whole, provided there was perseverance, those young men succeeded the best from whom little was expected.'²

The question of personal responsibility for success was complicated by the Presbyterian idea of predestination, which meant that worldly failure, as well as success, was part of God's intention.³ Like life itself, ambition was in God's hands and subject to the same condition of perilous and obscured hope. Hill expressed this after his niece, Patricia Orr, underwent an operation in 1853: 'let us hope she may be spared and that God has some good work for her to do which this dreadful shadow may point the way to.'⁴ (see Chapter five). It was an old problem, exemplified by the Book of Job, but nonetheless a difficult one.

The supposed science of phrenology, which had a particular stronghold in Edinburgh from the 1820s, partly aimed to simplify or alleviate the stress of religious predestination by proposing that inherent capabilities could be judged by an

¹. Samuel Smiles (1812-1904) was born in Haddington and trained in medicine at Edinburgh University at the same time as Dr John Brown. He first expressed the idea of 'Self-Help' in a lecture in 1845. See Adrian Jarvis, *Samuel Smiles and the Construction of Victorian Values*, Stroud 1997.

². Ibid., pp. 2-3.

³. The moral and rational difficulties raised by the proposal of predestination and the idea of God's elect were presented in a nightmare fiction by James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, (1824). Hill illustrated a shortened version of this in the selected *Tales and Sketches of the Ettrick Shepherd*, in 1838.

⁴. Hill to Paton, 15 March 1853, NLS Acc 11315.

examination of the surface structure of the head (see also Chapter six).⁵ The leading phrenologist, George Combe (1788-1858), explained his enthusiasm for the subject as a revolt from the arid formalities of his Calvinist upbringing:

There was neither within nor around me any atmosphere of consistency, goodness, and truth; but a constant conflict of emotions and ideas one with the other; *and the world was a chaos.*⁶

In the words of another phrenologist:

The world will give it [phrenology] a long trial, were it only that it deals with the substances of character, and seems to create a solid play-ground, away from the abstractions of the old metaphysics. Colour and life, substance and form, are dear to mankind, as homes against the wind of cold speculation. We cannot give them up for patches of sky a thousand miles from earth, or for anything, in short, but still more substantial houses.⁷

In an age when self-determination was beset with new fears and problems, from the erratic nature of industrial progress to an unstable population, such certainty was particularly attractive. For young men wanting to know what trade to adopt, for masters wanting confidence in new servants, for people looking for marriage or business partners, phrenology purported to give practical answers. George Combe made phrenology both popular and subsequently respectable by attaching it to a moral and educational system. His book, *The Constitution of Man*, published in 1828, sold 17,000 copies in one year, and became fourth of the best-selling books of its time.⁸

The impact of phrenologists' opinions on the Scottish art world may be judged by two instances. In 1826, John James Audubon, then a relatively obscure naturalist, came to Edinburgh, where he made the agreement to publish his great work on birds with the engraver, William Home Lizars. It seems plausible that Lizars, who was a phrenologist and introduced Audubon into phrenological circles, was confident of this major undertaking because of the shape of Audubon's head. Phrenological analysis of Audubon's skull on this occasion confirmed him as a painter and 'compositor,' and earned him a place next to Titian and Rubens as a colourist. George Combe himself

⁵. See Charles Colbert, *A Measure of Perfection. Phrenology and the Fine Arts in America*, Chapel Hill and London 1997 and Roger Cooter, *The cultural meaning of popular science. Phrenology and the organization of consent in nineteenth-century Britain*, Cambridge 1984

⁶. Quoted in Cooter (as in n. 5), p. 106.

⁷. Dr Wilkinson, quoted in D. G. Goyder, *The Autobiography of a Phrenologist*, London 1857, p. 183.

⁸. Cooter (as in n. 5), pp. 140-2.

begged to be allowed the privilege of casting Audubon's head, because it 'exhibited and verified' the truth of phrenology. Audubon was, therefore, launched in an international arena, with his success announced as a painter in advance and that success confirmed as a phrenological truth.⁹ The circularity of this argument should not obscure the immense value of the confidence induced by such extravagant opinions. The artist and his partner and, indeed, all convinced phrenologists now had an investment of belief in Audubon's success.¹⁰

Part of the virtuous intention behind phrenology was educational – to match the young to appropriate careers. The Swedenborgian minister and phrenologist, D. G. Goyder, was filled with enthusiasm for the fourteen-year old Joseph Noël Paton:

Of the different heads brought under my notice I do not remember one more strikingly characteristic and harmonious with phrenology ... His head was very large, measuring at that early period upwards of 23 inches in circumference, and every part was fully and freely developed. The organs of Constructiveness, Form, Size, Coloring, Ideality, Imitation, Wit, and Language, were very large indeed ... I recommended the father of this youth to allow him to cultivate the arts, affirming that I was yet young enough to see him at the head of his profession as an artist.¹¹

Regardless of the actual influence of Goyder's words on Paton's career, such a positive opinion can only have been cheering and added to Paton's youthful confidence. It would also have been attractive to his close friend, D. O. Hill. But the same respect for phrenology could be undermining. Hill's career, as an artist, was settled and begun before phrenology became respectable. What if his head was the wrong shape for the Fine Arts?

In a series of letters on phrenology and art in the 1840s, George Combe wrote:

There are numerous instances in which the individual has possessed the temperament of genius, and even a combination of cerebral organs adapted to art, but in which the size of the organs has been so deficient, that it was not adequate to give vigour and impressiveness. Such artists are haunted by a demon of genius: their fine and active temperaments give them some inspirations; they appreciate art, and are able to a certain extent, to body forth, in their own minds, original conceptions of beautiful figures and groups; but

⁹. Colbert (as in n. 5), pp. 52-5.

¹⁰. Alexander Hill was involved as a publisher of Audubon's *Birds of America*, see advertisement in D. O. Hill, *Views of the Opening of the Glasgow and Garnkirk Railway...* Edinburgh 1832.

¹¹. Goyder (as in n. 7), pp. 293-4. Paton's memoir, written some 40 years later, credits his father rather than Goyder, see M. H. Noël-Paton and J. P. Campbell, *Noël Paton 1821-1901*, Edinburgh 1990, p. 8.

owing to the smallness of their brains, there is a feebleness in the execution which mars their best efforts.¹²

There is an uncomfortable echo here in the anxieties of Hill's friends and particularly in John Brown's criticism of his painting, written in 1846:

There is sometimes a provoking carelessness, and even feebleness in execution, and harshness of contrast. These show that his power of performance, - of sustained effort, - is not equal, or at least not by his will made equal to his conceptions.¹³

Brown's intention, to persuade Hill to work harder on his landscape painting, involved a doubt of his capacity. Whether or no Hill believed in phrenology, a nervous suspicion that his brain was wrongly developed might well have been as discouraging as the opinion of Paton's head was encouraging.

Ambition and Fine Art

The high ambition of an artist's work was seen, by observers, as necessarily surrounded by the failure of those lacking in talent and drive. Bathos was omnipresent in the art world of the time; the grander the project, the more foolish the intensity may be made to look. Hill's offer to help the history painter, David Scott (1806-49) when he was on his deathbed, to dispose of his unsold heroic picture of *Vasco da Gama passing the Cape of Good Hope*, was an attempt to alleviate his distress. But Hill may also have been attempting to lessen the tragic irony, inherent in the theoretical necessity of failure.¹⁴

Benjamin Robert Haydon's suicide in despair in 1846 is a desperate case of the stress between ambition, talent and success.¹⁵ It was presented in the *Sun* newspaper as an appalling example of official meanness in the face of 'the anguish of destitute genius' which led to 'starvation, and the lunacy, and the sudden and sometimes violent deaths, which impart such a melancholy but significant gloom to the

¹². George Combe, *Phrenology Applied to Painting and Sculpture* (first published in the *Phrenological Journal* in 1844), London and Edinburgh 1855, pp. 46-7 and 88.

¹³. John Brown, review of the RSA exhibition, *The Witness* (22 April 1846).

¹⁴. The painting was 18 feet long and difficult to understand. See Mungo Campbell, *David Scott 1806-49*, Edinburgh 1990, p. 14 and plate 9. Hill's letters are published in full in William Bell Scott, *Memoir of David Scott, R.S.A.*, Edinburgh 1850, pp. 334-7.

¹⁵. See *Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter, from his Autobiography and Journals*, ed. Tom Taylor, London 1853 and Eric George, *The Life and Death of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter, 1786-1846*, Oxford 1967.

memorials of some of the most gifted beings in the land.¹⁶ Hill, like many others, must have been strongly affected. Haydon had written to him in April, admiring the calotypes and adding: 'I never paint now without one of your heads on my easel.'¹⁷ He shot himself in front of the easel and there is a macabre possibility that his life blood blotted out a calotype.

The ambitions of genius in art were tempting and could be fatal. There was even an appropriate literary model of such failure in Walter Scott's satire on the idea of the native genius, Dick Tinto. In a letter to Paton, describing John Ruskin's Edinburgh lecture in 1853, Hill wrote:

There was great amusement occasioned by a magnified drawing of one of the sixty four Lions of the Royal Institution - as contrasted with - a drawing by Millais of a Tiger from the Life - Dick Tinto's Horse standing a-la Tripod on its hind Legs & Tail, I doubt not produced exactly such emotions in the minds of the Guests of the Wallace Head of Ganderclough.¹⁸

This refers to the first chapter of Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*, in which Tinto introduced the tragic plot of the story. Hill is referring to Tinto's painting for the Wallace Head Inn, which compensated drinkers for the poor quality of the beer: 'one glance at his sign was sure to put them in a good humour.'¹⁹ Tinto emulated the natural art of David Wilkie, 'amid hunger and toil.' He pursued his career in Edinburgh and London, where he was briefly patronised, but died bankrupt and in poverty, earning the brisk epitaph:

So ended Dick Tinto! a lamentable proof of the great truth, that in the fine arts mediocrity is not permitted, and that he who cannot ascend to the very top of the ladder, will do well not to put his foot upon it at all.²⁰

Tinto's talents and labours were inadequate. His ruin was completed by the caprice of patrons, who briefly supported him as a fashionable novelty. The idea has its precedent in the eighteenth-century sentimental proposal – specifically related to poetry – that genius springs from nature and that irresponsible patronage might spoil the man of genius, introducing him to the corruption of sophisticated society. Ill-

¹⁶. Quoted at length in *The Fife Herald* (2 July 1846).

¹⁷. Haydon to Hill, 13 April 1846, NLS Acc 11782.

¹⁸. Hill to Paton, 5 November 1853, NLS Acc 11315.

¹⁹. Walter Scott, *The Bride of Lammermoor. Waverley Novels*, vol. 13, Edinburgh and London 1831, p. 263.

²⁰. *Ibid.*, p. 270.

considered patronage might not merely encourage the ineffectual but offer the accomplished artist too rapid and easy an advance. This anxiety is expressed in Henry Mackenzie's praise of Robert Burns in *The Lounger* in December 1786. He introduced him to public attention, after a nervous paragraph:

We have had repeated instances of painters and of poets, who have been drawn from obscure situations, and held forth to public notice and applause by the extravagant encomiums of their introductors, yet in a short time have sunk again to their former obscurity.²¹

James Nasmyth, a successful engineer and *laissez-faire* industrialist, wrote to Hill, in 1835, expressing doubt about the unnatural encouragement offered by academies of art:

there is such a native elasticity in true genius that it will by its own efforts leap over the stumbling blocks and by making nature and not art its model for the most part. I do think we should then have more real originality - in as much as none but the true genius could fight his way through. for I am a bit of a tory in these as well as some other matters. which makes me think that every facility should not be given for young men joining the profession as it is one in which the supply has so fearfull a tendency to exceed the demand and these academys do tend I think to cultivate potatoes under hot beds.²²

This idea, of the importance of stumbling blocks, was common, and connects with Smiles's remark, quoted above, that the young succeeded best from whom little was expected. James Skene, himself an amateur painter and patron, wrote the article on the history of painting for David Brewster's *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*. Skene devoted a large section of this to a moral lecture on the founding of the Scottish Academy, which implies the need not just for difficulty but for suffering in the pursuit of art:

It is not an unusual error in institutions of this description, to defeat their purpose by overshooting the mark, and endeavouring to do too much, - to present the means of encouragement uninvited, and to urge its acceptance, before the privation it is meant to supply is keenly felt, and a consciousness of its value awakened in the minds of those for whose behoof it is intended.²³

²¹. Quoted by Carol McGuirk, *Robert Burns and the Sentimental Era*, Phantassie 1997, p.66, who describes the anxiety that Robert Burns might be spoiled in just such a way and the close watch kept on him in Edinburgh in 1786, in pp. 70-83.

²². Nasmyth to Hill, 5 August 1835, ROE. Nasmyth was being disingenuous. His career as a remarkably successful engineer was based on his parents' own knowledge and wide circle and their even more remarkable readiness to allow their teenage son to turn his bedroom grate into a foundry.

²³. James Skene, 'Painting,' *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, ed. David Brewster, Edinburgh 1823.

Hugh Miller wrote an account of his friend, William Ross, who wished to become a painter, which lays out the problem of the natural ideal based on individual struggle:

His boyhood had been that of the poet: he had loved to indulge his day-dreams in the solitude of a deep wood beside his grandmother's cottage; and he had learnt to write verses and draw landscapes in a rural locality where no one had ever written verses or drawn landscapes before. And finally, as, in the North of Scotland, in those primitive times, the nearest approach to an artist was a house-painter, William was despatched to Cromarty, when he had grown tall enough for the work, to cultivate his natural taste for the fine arts, in papering rooms and lobbies, and in painting railings and wheel-barrows. There are, I believe, a few instances on record of house-painters rising to be artists ... but the fact that the cases are not more numerous serves, I fear, to show how much oftener a turn for drawing is a merely imitative, than an original, self-derived faculty.²⁴

Miller's direction in this passage is unexpected. He starts with the idea of the young poet in natural solitude, follows with a sardonic account of his apprenticeship and concludes that Ross lacked the 'original faculty'; for him, as for Nasmyth, originality and genius will fight their way through. This uncompromising and even unkind idea was justified by Predestination and Nature in combination: God and Jean Jacques Rousseau, with George Combe in attendance. Miller's fatalism was presumably a part of a search for the explanation of his friend's failure and early death, but he expressed a similar view of poetry. He opposed Thomas Gray's idea of the 'mute inglorious Milton' who died, like William Ross, without encouragement or education. He wrote:

The versifiers, placed in obscure and humble circumstances, who for a time complain of neglected merit and untoward fate, and then give up verse-making in despair, are always men who, with all their querulousness, have at least one cause of complaint more than they ever seem to be aware of, - a cause of complaint against the nature that failed to impart to them "the divine vision and faculty."²⁵

Education and unity – the alleviation of individual responsibility

Hugh Miller was resigned to his friend's failure as natural. For a modern audience, untrammelled by assumptions of predestination and divine purpose, it is arguable that William Ross's talent may have been wasted by a lack of professional encouragement

²⁴. Hugh Miller, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, Edinburgh 1879, p. 168.

²⁵. Hugh Miller, 'Periodicalism,' *Leading Articles on Various Subjects*, ed. the Rev. John Davidson, Edinburgh 1870, pp. 206-7.

and education. But Miller had only a partial interest in formal education. The title of his autobiographical work, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, was sardonic; he presents himself as largely self-educated and much of that education as coming direct from nature.

Hill would have sympathised with a more generous view. He himself was well served educationally. His school was Perth Academy, where an impressive curriculum appears in an advertisement for 1818 - subjects included mathematics, physics, (incorporating engineering and optics), chemistry 'with its application to Arts & Manufactures,' geography, logic, modern languages, writing, drawing and both portrait and landscape painting.²⁶ The rector of this school, Adam Anderson (c. 1780-1846), was a most remarkable man. He is described in Kenneth Cameron's biography:

From a firm belief in Christianity's capacity in the moral sphere, and in the complementary role of science in the material, to transform the quality of life, the theme of reconciliation runs through his diverse activities. He attempted to bridge gulfs between religion and science, amateurism and professionalism, and not least the conflicting aspirations of different groups in society ... Fused with a love of humanity in general, and an intense civic pride in his adopted town in particular, this released a veritable stream of creativity.²⁷

Adamson's approach to his pupils was kind, in an age when aggression was common, and his range of mind and interests was phenomenal. The influence on Hill's character is undoubted and the impact of Anderson's engineering and scientific enthusiasms, as well as his respect for education, may be traced in Hill's career as a landscape painter (see Chapter seven). It is, moreover, a straightforward comment on the virtues of education that three of the contemporary Scottish painters, Hill, Thomas Duncan and John McLaren Barclay, came from this same school.²⁸

In pursuit of further education, Hill joined the Trustees Academy in Edinburgh around 1818, where he was taught by the landscape painter, Andrew Wilson. He was advised by William Allan in the 1820s. The impressive collection of classical casts and the teaching of drawing and anatomy at the School were all a great advantage (see Chapter six, for the limitations of this study). Hill also became a teacher. He first appears in the Edinburgh street directories for 1826-7 as a landscape painter and

²⁶. Advertisement in *Morison's Perth and Perthshire Directory Register for 1811*, quoted in Edward Smart, *History of Perth Academy*, Perth 1932, pp. 100-1.

²⁷. Kenneth J. Cameron, *The Schoolmaster Engineer*, Dundee 1988.

²⁸. They were taught by David Junor, who was apparently a naïve painter but presumably a good

teacher of drawing, and one of the calotypes, of Hill sketching with the Misses Morris, suggests that he maintained this role.²⁹ In 1832, he proposed to establish a drawing academy for figure and landscape with ‘a class particularly adapted for the boys of the High School.’ This emerges in a letter of support, written by William Allan, in which he adds:

It gives me great satisfaction in being able to give a Testimony not only of your abilities, but of the power you possess in creating that degree of emulation in the minds of your pupils, which cannot fail to ensure every success.³⁰

Hill was fortunate to be a member of the close circle around the landscape painter, Alexander Nasmyth, whose household acted as a sociable centre for discussion of broad areas of interest. This offered an unstructured and unofficial forum for advanced education, which the Edinburgh painters seem to have maintained. Moreover, Hill’s association with the Nasmyth family would have encouraged the interest in an interchange between art and technology. Alexander Nasmyth was a ready inventor, devising ingenious methods to enable people to run down hill at speed or improving lawnmowers. His son James Nasmyth, who was Hill’s close friend, was an engineer, not a painter, but he could model and draw and made a number of etchings. James Nasmyth was also an enthusiast for photography. He apparently acquired a photograph by the Parisian instrument maker, Gustave Froment (1814-65), as early as 1835, and he was friendly with the land agent, George Smith Cundell (1798-1882) and his brothers, who were significant figures in early photography.³¹ James Nasmyth, therefore, may have been Hill’s first conduit to the art.

It would appear that the artists and their friends discussed their work with each other and offered practical assistance. Hill was given much advice by his friends,

teacher.

²⁹. Illustrated in Sara Stevenson, *David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson. A Catalogue of their Calotypes in the Collection of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery*. Edinburgh 1981, p. 168, Group 203.

³⁰. Allan to Hill, 14 September 1832, RSA.

³¹. Examples of Alexander Nasmyth’s drawings are in an album of his work in the NGS. The first is illustrated in John Ward and Sara Stevenson, *Printed Light. The Scientific Art of William Henry Fox Talbot and David Octavius Hill with Robert Adamson*. Edinburgh, 1986 p. 45. The Froment photograph is in a collection assembled by James Nasmyth, NLS Ms 3241 fo. 214, discussed in Larry J. Schaaf, ‘The First Photograph James Nasmyth Ever Saw,’ *Scottish Photography Bulletin*, no. 2 (1990): pp. 15-22. See also, George Smith Cundell, ‘On the practice of the Calotype Process of Photography,’ *London, Edinburgh and Dublin Philosophical Magazine and Journal of Science*,

presumably mostly verbally but sometimes in their letters. As an example, the advocate and poet, Sheriff Henry Glassford Bell (1803-74), wrote to him:

O! man! paint your lights & shadows in large masses - use less green & yellow & more black & red, & then you may defy the foul fiend, who always is Yours very truly.³²

The artists' anxiety for excellence involved an unselfish concern that art should succeed generally rather than just individually. Hill's tribute to Allan, written in 1849, is of this order, combining a note on his enthusiasm as Master of the Trustees Academy with a comment on his 'genial, hospitable and liberal private character.'³³ Thomas Dibdin was impressed by the artists he met when entertained by Hill in 1836:

The fact is ... there exists at Edinburgh a warm and generous feeling about the FINE ARTS. There is a sort of heart's worship in the cause; and, I will honestly add, a very general disposition among artists to render ample justice to the merits of each other.³⁴

It is unquestionably significant that the generosity Dibdin admired was found in Hill's enlivening company.

Scotland seems to have taken an energetic role in the publication of art criticism in the 1840s and 50s, with the idea of educating the artist as well as the audience. Dr John Brown partly justified taking up employment as art critic for *The Witness* in 1846 in Hill's interest: 'I was anxious to do it very much on account of David Hill. I want to tell the truth about him to himself and the public.'³⁵ Later, Hill urged Paton to exhibit in Edinburgh as well as London in 1855, on the grounds that:

Our press here too would do you more justice than your great Picture can receive from any Metropolitan Journal called upon to discuss the whole of the Royal Academy Exhibition - and little as the Metropolitan Press would confess to being moved by the provincial it is not the less certain that an Edinburgh reputation has not unfrequently preceded at least if not led to one that was world wide.³⁶

3rd series, vol. 24 (1844): pp. 160 and 321-332.

³². Bell to Hill, 14 August 1836, ECL YTR 140.

³³. Anon (D. O. Hill), 'Sir William Allan,' *The Art Journal*, vol. 11 (1849): pp. 108-9.

³⁴. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *A Bibliographical Tour in the North Counties of England and Scotland*, vol. II, London 1838, p. 590.

³⁵. Brown to John Taylor Brown, 10 March 1846, *Letters of Dr John Brown*, ed. his son and D.W. Forrest, London 1907, p. 64.

³⁶. Hill to Paton, 15 January 1855, NLS Acc 11315.

This opinion is confirmed by a letter from J. E. Millais in 1852, when his picture, *Marianne*, was in the Royal Scottish Academy: ‘I am continually receiving Scotch papers with frightfully long criticisms, a vast quantity of praise and, of course, advice.’³⁷ This critical enthusiasm helps to explain John Ruskin’s remark in 1853:

I have many friends and admirers in Edinburgh, and am in some respects far better understood there than in London. The Edinburgh artists - Harvey, D. O. Hill, Noel Paton, etc., are all eager to meet me, while the London ones are all too happy to get out of my way, and the only letter you have yet got, showing true appreciation of my book, except George Richmond’s, is from the Edinburgh Dr. Brown.³⁸

It is presumably not a coincidence that John Ruskin, the most influential critic of the time, was born of Scottish parents and imbued with a deep religious training, which emphasised the need for moral criticism throughout life.³⁹ When he met Hill in 1853 he noted that Hill was, ‘a landscape painter, amiable and unobtrusive; must be attended to.’⁴⁰ Hill wrote to him in 1867, hoping that he would write a criticism, presumably of his Disruption Picture, but received the melancholy reply:

I have kept your kind letter by me very sorrowfully it is one of the painfulest results of the state of health I am in at present that I must seem so unkind to my friends —but I have been obliged – by sweeping and irrefrageable rule – to give up all critical work. It is very laborious to me, & very killing and I believe utterly useless. Popular will must direct art at present – no single voice can be heard in the hubbub. But if it could – I have no voice to raise – I never look at any pictures now.⁴¹

The Academy and the rejection of official patronage

James Skene and James Nasmyth were thoroughly dubious of academies. Thomas Carlyle was, characteristically, most damning, and made a direct analogy with industrial manufacture: ‘Philosophy, Science, Art, Literature, all depend on machinery ... In defect of Raphaels, and Angelos, and Mozarts, we have Royal Academies of

³⁷. Quoted in John Guille Millais, *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais*, London 1899, p. 161.

³⁸. John Ruskin to his parents, 19 August 1853, quoted in Introduction, *Lectures on Architecture and Painting, Etc., The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, vol. 12, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, London 1903, p. xxvii.

³⁹. For a discussion of the Ruskin family’s religion see Tim Hilton, *John Ruskin. The early years 1819-1859*, New Haven and London 1985.

⁴⁰. Quoted in *The Letters of John Ruskin 1827-1869, The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, ed. Cook and Wedderburn, London 1909, p. 177. Presumably ‘unobtrusive’ has the complimentary meaning of someone who does not push himself forward.

⁴¹. Ruskin to Hill, 29 May 1867, NLS Acc 11782.

Painting, Sculpture, Music.⁴² Lord Cockburn was more sympathetic. He was involved as a mediator in the early stages of the Scottish Academy and wrote of its history:

There is an advanced state of art at which probably all artificial associations of artists are useless, if not hurtful. But in an infant stage, during which the public taste requires to be excited and educated, and artists need importance and protection by formal brotherhood, such unions are nearly indispensable.⁴³

Hill was not one of the first to form the Scottish Academy but belonged to a larger group who joined later. According to George Harvey, Hill was responsible for the break-up of the meeting in 1829, in which this second group, chaired by William Allan, was supposed to debate the forming of a separate institution. Allan opened the meeting to discussion:

After a short pause, Mr J. F. Williams rose and addressed the chair in his rather stagey style. "Mr Chairman," said he, "in the nature of things there is in society a tendency to progress and where there is progress there must be extension; extension and progress go therefore hand in hand," - and a little more to the same purpose, when a loud peal of merriment broke forth from the meeting, and Mr Williams sat down, adding, "Well, the stuff is there, but you may put it in another form and words." When the mirth had subsided, the secretary asked what he was to minute, on which Mr D. O. Hill, quoting Dogberry, replied, "To be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune, but to write and read comes by nature." [ref. Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*] At this there was another shout of laughter, when the chairman becoming angry began to scold Mr Hill; and as it was evident from the uproar that nothing further in the shape of business would be done, they separated - and so ended the only meeting of the twenty-four.⁴⁴

The passage underlines the attractive inexperience of all twenty-four men in the management of committees. In that year, they joined the Academy.⁴⁵

In 1830, William Nicholson resigned from the unpaid post of Secretary of the Academy. Hill accepted the appointment, after Nicholson had made it clear that his own work for the Academy 'was attended with a very serious sacrifice on my part;

⁴². 'Signs of the Times,' quoted in Paul Barlow, 'Fear and loathing of the academic, or just what is it that makes the avant-garde so different, so appealing?' *Art and the Academy in the nineteenth century*, Manchester 2000, pp. 1-32.

⁴³. Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of his Time*, Edinburgh 1856, pp. 463-4.

⁴⁴. George Harvey, *Notes of the Early History of the Royal Scottish Academy*, Edinburgh 1873, p. 19, footnote. Harvey was a very serious man and, I suspect, continued to think of Hill as a possibly frivolous juvenile throughout his career. He tells this story 44 years after the event.

⁴⁵. For the history of the Academy, see also Esmé Gordon, *The Royal Scottish Academy of Painting Sculpture and Architecture 1826-1976*, Edinburgh 1976.

and I may mention, in confidence, that I cannot estimate my loss at less than £200 a year.⁴⁶ Hill, therefore, consciously accepted a loss in income, which delayed his marriage, and a professional responsibility, which was at odds with his personal ambition. In George Harvey's words, Hill:

commenced his long period of service to the Academy, so fruitful in much that conduced to its stability and wellbeing. Of an impulsive and enthusiastic nature, and at this period but imperfectly acquainted with business, he occasionally required the qualifying regulation of cooler and more practical heads; nevertheless, whatever he did in capacity of Secretary was always done with a singleness of purpose in the direction of what appeared to him the best interests of the Academy.⁴⁷

It is worth noting Harvey's opinion that Hill was not a natural administrator. The heroism involved in tying himself to such work against his natural, ebullient and possibly inefficient character deserves tribute. When he first undertook the Secretaryship, he worked for five years unsalaried and was never paid enough to relieve his financial anxiety. He worked for nearly forty years for the Academy and, in the words of his obituary: 'His zeal amounted to enthusiasm for the cause of the Academy and of Scottish art, and was never wanting.'⁴⁸

As the Secretary, Hill was one of the principal actors in freeing the Academy from the amateur toils of the Board of Trustees for Manufactures in Scotland (established by Act of Parliament in 1727) and the associated Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts (founded in 1819). This long and ill-tempered fight is difficult to reduce to its history.⁴⁹ Essentially the painters had set up the Academy and withdrawn from their associate membership of the Institution because, as interested artists, they were not allowed a voice in its actions. The membership of the Board and the Institution overlapped and was composed of noblemen and men of wealth, patrons rather than artists. Despite the Royal Charter, which the Academy secured in 1838, the funding for the arts provided by Government grant remained in the hands of the Board and Institution.⁵⁰

⁴⁶. Quoted in Harvey (as in n. 44), pp. 68-9.

⁴⁷. Harvey (as in n. 44), pp. 69-70.

⁴⁸. Anon, 'Death of Mr D. O. Hill,' *Edinburgh Evening Courant* (18 May 1870).

⁴⁹. The Academy's position is presented in detail by Anon (Alexander Monro), *Scottish Art and National Encouragement*, Edinburgh 1846.

⁵⁰. Both the London Royal Academy and the Hibernian Academy were directly funded by the Government.

In the first instance, the Institution had been set up to stage exhibitions, both of historic and modern art. The Board and the Royal Institution built the handsome classical building at the foot of the Mound in Princes Street partly to provide a grand exhibition venue. The Academy took over the staging of exhibitions, in rooms in Waterloo Place, until 1835, when their lease came up for renewal. At this point, Hill, David Scott and Thomas Duncan had a meeting with the Institution in which it was agreed that the Academy should rent the exhibition rooms in the Royal Institution for three months of the year.⁵¹

This relationship lasted until 1844, when the essential flaws within it cracked open. After the opening of the Academy exhibition in that year, Hill received a letter from the Secretary to the Board of Trustees, Sir Thomas Dick Lauder (1774-1848). The letter, which rashly confused a private grievance with a public concern, complained that the Academy had re-hung a painting by Lauder's son in a poor position in the exhibition. In the course of this surprisingly long letter, Lauder, who began by regretting that he was communicating through Hill because he had, 'experienced so many instances of your polite attention,' effectively invited him to dissociate himself from the actions of the Academy. The character of the letter may be summed up in one of Lauder's comprehensive sentences:

It is evident that no public confidence can be placed in future in a Council which can allow, not only the judgement of its Hanging Committee, but its own determinations corroborative thereof, and these so long confirmed, to be swayed and overturned by every unworthy intrigue that may be originated by selfish individuals in the body which it ought to govern.⁵²

The fight that ensued had the distressing character of a domestic dispute - these were all men who knew each other well, occupying the same building and all, theoretically, occupied in the same public work. The arguments involved long debates on such thoroughly trivial questions, as whether Lauder needed to walk through the exhibition rooms before they were open to the public (thus giving himself the opportunity to examine the hang of the exhibition before it was completed), in order to check on the

⁵¹. The agreement also included allowing the Academy access to the library and cast collection and offered space for the Academy's projected plans for a Life Academy, a School of Paintings and lectures. This offer was not put into practice. See Monro (as in n. 49), Appendix, pp. 32-3.

⁵². Letter published in *ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

safety of the boiler. Most of the correspondence was printed by the Academy, and the fight was conducted in public.

The conflict had flared naturally as a result of the practical circumstances of the situation. The building was overcrowded. It contained the Fishery Board, a school for the drawing of patterns, the Trustees Academy, the Royal Society of Arts, the Society of Antiquaries, the Board's and the Academy's collection of paintings and casts and an art library. The theory by which the artists had been prevented from having responsibility had been abrogated by practical action - they had taken it. The situation had worked for ten years because it was not analysed. Thomas Dick Lauder's letter of complaint, voicing, as a supposedly disinterested patron, precisely the unfortunate arguments about the jealousy of artists in relation to his own son, effectively drew attention to this impossible situation.

The lengthy correspondence resulted in the Board refusing the Academy the exhibition space. The Academy made the whole dispute public, required an official accounting from the Board and Institution and asked for independent funding. The Treasury, Parliament, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, the press all became involved. The fight occupied more than a decade, and the extraordinary stress and indignation it generated can be heard in Hill's letters. It was he who acted as the official focus of the complaints, from Lord Meadowbank and James Skene amongst others, constantly responsible for 'another shell which we are just in the act of throwing into the citadel of the Royal Institution.'⁵³ Nasmyth's doubtful attitude towards academies was shattered by this dispute and he responded to one of Hill's letters:

the attack they made on the Scottish Academy is outrageous and insolent beyond all sufferance and I only hope it will put the finishing toutch [sic] to a final and most complete emancipation of Scottish art and artists from the driveling but abortive attempts to degrade the artists of Scotland to be the creeping things that they would apparently wish to see them become. Patrons of the Fine arts. Meadowbank and Skeens their very names stink i' th' nostril of every thing that is small and spirit cramping.⁵⁴

At the end of the day, the results were a substantial measure of independence for the Academy and the establishing of a separate building to house the Academy and its

⁵³. Hill to Roberts, 8 January 1846, NLS microfilm 381.

⁵⁴. Nasmyth to Hill, 28 April 1845, ROE.

schools with the new National Gallery of Scotland. It was a compromise position, which Hill notes in 1855:

Now that we are committed we must try it loyally & sincerely & heartily. We go to it with the debt of many thousands on our shoulders - the Board look to us for the art knowledge necessary for conducting their schools & exhibitions - they have a noble gallery of antiques which may be ours in effect - and in short with frank & manly sincerity our position the Government being along with us may be made better than we ourselves could have made it. There are many considerations to make us rest more than satisfied with our new position. These I doubt not would have occurred to your mind - they frequently did to mine - even when I was striving to convince others & myself that nothing could do for us but sole possession. If we had got it I think one of my first acts would have been resignation of office - for woe betide the [fearless?] secretary who had three Exhibitions a year instead of one to attend to.⁵⁵

Hill along with George Harvey was then appointed one of the members of the Board of Trustees, finally placing artists alongside the ‘disinterested’ patrons.

Independence of patronage and the Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts

The success of the Academy involved a union of people and ideas: educating and interesting the public and the artist, consciously widening the audience, consciously challenging the Scottish painters. This, in itself, is a clue to the way Hill thought and worked. His enthusiasm was not narrowly directed but expressed broad ambition. The strange situation the Academy flourished in until 1844 may well have been made possible by this attitude of mind, in which ambition was approached through the opening influence of generosity.

It was obvious that fine art was encouraged almost entirely by the wealthy. Despite the elevated theory that a small class of educated, discriminating men would encourage and monitor the productions of art, it was obvious that patronage could lack stability, generosity and even sense. Hill’s own experience with Mr Hunt of Pittencrieff, whose senile forgetfulness caused him to reject the painting he had ordered (see Chapter one), underlined the problem that the artist was not commonly arguing from a position of strength. Hugh Miller expressed a sense of the danger of dependence, inherent in such a close and potentially demeaning relationship: ‘no man

⁵⁵. Hill to Paton 22 January 1855, NLS Acc 11315.

is, or no man ought to think himself, above the high dignity of being independent ... Some of the greatest wrecks we have seen in life have been those of waiters on patronage.⁵⁶ Cockburn, after reading Allan Cunningham's *Life of David Wilkie* in 1843, commented:

His life does not impress me with a favourable idea of the position even of a successful artist in this country. In Wilkie's case, it produced little money and constant anxiety about patronage.⁵⁷

In the new cycles of economic depression, the most impressive artists might fail. David Roberts's friend, the Glasgow merchant John G. Kinnear, himself affected by the slump in 1848, wrote slyly but accurately to him:

I suppose the times will affect your sect also - a falling off in the demand for works of Art - Exhibitions glutted - Landscape looking down - great fall in the Historical line - Eh?⁵⁸

In that year, George Harvey wrote in despair, 'It is now three years since I sold a picture of any kind and seven since I sold one in Edinburgh.'⁵⁹ This explains the enthusiasm with which the exhibition receipts were counted, which may be seen in Hill's letters to Roberts:

The Exhibition continues to draw hugely - that is even more so than any previous one. and the Treasurer gets more particular and generally confidential in announcing the sum total.⁶⁰

It also justifies Hill's pride in the financial position of the Academy and of the painters, which he summed up as his achievement, when he retired in 1869:

I entered upon the duties when our income from visitors was 5 or 600£ a year - now they are £3000 from that source. Our sales were contemptible - now for the last three years they average more than £6000. And this great result has in a great measure flowed from beginnings by myself, which have stirred up the artistic [or 'intense'] love of art of England and its colonies - so that a few years ago - the income of the associations founded on ours - which was my devising - was 60,000£ a year in Great Britain. Then the activity it has made with private purchasers is amazing - But this is perhaps nothing to the implanting of notions of art throughout the whole empire - and to a great extent the love of nature [?] which it has opened up. I have also the satisfaction of having introduced the evening Exhibitions which show their success by

⁵⁶. Hugh Miller, 'An Unspoken Speech' (as in n. 25), p. 277.

⁵⁷. *Circuit Journeys by the late Lord Cockburn*, Edinburgh 1888, p.19.

⁵⁸. Kinnear to Roberts, 22 January 1848, NLS Acc 7723.

⁵⁹. Harvey to Roberts, 19 May 1848, NLS Acc 7723.

⁶⁰. Hill to Roberts, 25 February 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

producing some £500 or 600 a year to our funds at smaller prices of admission.⁶¹

This was not simply Hill's view. From the mid 1830s, the Academy had achieved a situation, in which:

All expenses connected with the general management, also what was expended in the purchase of works of art for the National Gallery, the Library, and the support of its schools, were defrayed solely from the proceeds of the annual Exhibitions, the income from which continued to show a steady increase, the result of the Academy's efforts to make these annual displays increasingly attractive to the public, not only from the contributions of the members, but by acquiring for the time the loan of works distinguished for their merit and value.⁶²

This success partly derived from the Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland, the first of the Art Unions, of which Hill was the originator or one of the originators, with Henry Glassford Bell and John Steell.⁶³ This was set up in 1834 to enlarge the narrow and uncertain base of private patronage. Hill was prompted into action by the drop in sales in the Academy's exhibitions from nearly £500 in 1831 to £338 in 1833.⁶⁴ The Association was a kind of lottery in which, for a pound a year, each of the subscribers received a print and the opportunity to win oil paintings at the Academy's exhibitions. In 1840, the Association collected £6,396; in 1842, £6,590.

This is noted in *The New Statistical Account of Scotland* in 1845, which comments:

Those who recollect the time, when instead of £6,000 being collected in one year for the encouragement of the fine arts, there were not £1,000 distributed among our native artists in six years, will best appreciate the importance of the change which has taken place.⁶⁵

Despite the manifest advantages of this lottery, it attracted moral opposition. Disconcertingly, one of the fiercest opponents of the idea was Hill's friend, John Brown. In his review of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* he added a passage irrelevant to

⁶¹. Hill to John and Jane Macdonald, 29 December 1869, NLS Acc 11782.

⁶². Harvey (as in n. 44), p. 86.

⁶³. The name of the Association is in itself evidence of the Academy's conscious encroachment on the responsibilities of the Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts. For a critical account of the political and social background to the setting up of the Academy and the Association, see Duncan Forbes, 'Private advantage and public feeling: the struggle for academic legitimacy in Edinburgh in the 1820s,' *Art and the Academy in the Nineteenth Century*, Manchester 2000, pp. 86-101. See also, Anthony J. Hamber, 'A Higher Branch of the Art.' *Photographing the Fine Arts in England 1839-1880*, Amsterdam 1996.

⁶⁴. Gordon (as in n. 45), p. 58.

⁶⁵. *The New Statistical Account for Scotland*, Edinburgh and London 1845, vol. 1, p. 706.

the text of his argument, contrasting the public benefit of Robert Cadell's illustrated edition of Scott with the harm generated by the art unions:

The heavy and certain evils to the public as well as to art, which all such unnatural and self-sufficient associations must, in our opinion, produce ... by tending to make void the natural law of reward and production – depreciating what is truly valuable, and encumbering it by their help, and as a natural consequence of their encouragement, producing and over-rating and over-rewarding an inferior – often false – art, which would other wise have either not existed, or been left to be dealt with according to its desert.⁶⁶

Hill's expressed enthusiasm for *Modern Painters* (which will be discussed in the context of his landscape painting in Chapter seven) may have prompted and informed Brown's review, in which Brown took the opportunity to analyse one of Hill's landscapes in Ruskin's terms. This passage may therefore have been aimed directly at Hill, who was one of the artists involved in Cadell's publication, as well as being one of the instigators of the unions.

Exhibition and example - the education of the artists and their public

From the evidence of Hill's letters, we can see his energy in setting up the annual exhibitions, bringing in challenging and important pictures from outside Scotland to help raise standards and widen the horizon of the artists and their audience. This was undertaken at a period when most important paintings were privately owned and only to be seen as a personal favour. Hill's pursuit of paintings from private collections may be seen particularly in the letters to David Roberts. In 1845, paintings by Clarkson Stanfield, Turner and Roberts himself were among those lent and Hill responded:

Many many thanks to you for your great exertions - I trust they will lead to the growth of a cosmopolitan spirit in regard to Art as well as the increase of a National emulation in the race of genius.⁶⁷

Hill's major gift of calotypes to the Academy followed gifts to the London Academy and to the Hibernian Academy. It was designed to give the painters access to the significant aesthetic contribution of photography. His proposal to form a photographic department in the library was approved in the Annual Report:

⁶⁶. John Brown, review of *Modern Painters*, *The North British Review*, vol. 6 (1847): pp. 412-3.

⁶⁷. Hill to Roberts, 3 February 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

a nucleus has already been formed by his presentation of 500 of the best specimens executed by him and the late Mr. Adamson. He stated that there were many other Calotypists, both professional and amateur, who would be found equally ready to contribute the best of their works, were they assured that they would be considered fitting additions to a National Art Library, and would be valued and preserved accordingly.⁶⁸

Much of this activity was designed for the benefit of the painters, but Hill was also concerned with the education of the public at large. From the late 1840s, he was involved in soliciting and acquiring paintings for the proposed National Gallery of Scotland. He was also concerned that it should encourage and generate new art and he urged Joseph Noël Paton's designs for sculpture for the building on the committee of the Academy and the architect. His correspondence with Paton on the subject is lengthy and impassioned:

I have high hopes that a public subscription will do them all. I think our President will come down handsomely. I shall with pleasure give my first year of my advanced salary - the advance is £25 - the great matter is to delight people with the designs and that speedily ... I promise you I shall not easily be beaten off the execution of them all. If a personal solicitation & representation will raise the needful. So never say die.⁶⁹

The Gallery opened in 1858 in the handsome new building designed by William Henry Playfair, on the Mound behind the Royal Institution – without Paton's sculpture. However, Hill's enthusiasm had continued to overflow in ideas of this kind. In 1854, he proposed a national collection of art at Holyrood:

It might be made one of the most delightful & extraordinary collections in the world - the History Poetry Romance - superstitions sylvan sports & Landscapes of Scotland and by Scottish artists - and all this in Holyrood - depend upon it there is life in it.⁷⁰

His interest in spreading the base of art education emerges in the free and cheap evening openings he organised. The intention was laid out in the leaflet printed, in 1846, to re-publish John Brown's critical piece on *Distrainting for Rent* for the benefit of the visitors, which is signed by Hill as Secretary. It was designed to promote an understanding and love of art among the people:

⁶⁸. From the evidence of the following year's report, the Library did build up this photographic collection, but little of it now remains. Hill and Adamson's photographs were sold in 1975.

⁶⁹. Hill to Paton, 15 February 1853, NLS Acc 11315.

⁷⁰. Hill to Paton, 7 February 1854, NLS Acc 11315.

It is not more to the honour and fame of Scotland, that she produced a Burns from the bosom of the people, than that they - the masses - know intimately, understand thoroughly, and feel and love intensely, the writings of their own poet. We would also have them know, feel, and love in equal degree, the immortal works of one who may be truly said to be *their own Painter* ... In order to assist in the study of this and other works, those of our readers who might be liable to fall into the mistake that pictures are meant to gratify the eye without interesting the mind or the affections, we extract from a contemporary ... a lengthened essay on the work above alluded to, as we think we recognize in it a style of criticism of the highest class, likely when read, to exercise a most wholesome and genial influence on the Art, and the feeling for Art throughout Scotland.⁷¹

Hill obviously had executive control of the catalogues, as in so much that applied to the exhibitions. He shared an interest with other painters, like Turner, in supplying his own paintings with texts, which were printed in the Academy catalogues. He was acting as a modern museum curator would, offering the help of words, especially to important and difficult paintings. His admiration for Ruskin's writing on Turner turns to this point:

When reading his glowing pages I was so fascinated by the truth and beauty of his remarks, that I more than once thought of communicating to the Author my entire sympathy and admiration of his labours ... it might serve the cause of the criticism if public attention were called to it while Turners Picture was with us.⁷²

In previous decades, the political attack on the Royal Institution was partly based on the complaint that its exclusive evening opening of exhibitions deprived the generality of art education.⁷³ His moral and educational agenda had, therefore, a political impulse behind it. Having seen the idea of cheap evening openings work well in Edinburgh, Hill urged the idea on David Roberts for the London Academy. It is a good example of Hill's pursuit of excellence through technology that he recommends the Royal Academy to find or make its own supply of gas for the purpose:

I suppose the daylight would bother you too much for night & not enough for day, but I presume you could by blinds easily make artificial night. I am told your London gas is not of the purest - but if you found it worth your while you would find ways & means to come by a supply of a purer sort - many private

⁷¹. Anonymous pamphlet for the Academy visitors, republishing Dr John Brown's review of the Academy exhibition for *The Witness* (1846).

⁷². Hill to Roberts, 20 February 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

⁷³. See Forbes (as in n. 63).

gentlemen in Scotland have their country houses supplied with beautiful gas - made at their own place by their Gardener or other domestic.⁷⁴

Education was understood to be the key to moral and social advance, but its potentially rarefied character, establishing rank and élitism, and the fear of cultural, as well as financial competition, still beset less generous minds. Hill believed in present education, as an offering, not a problematic reward.

The multiple image

It was important to Hill and his colleagues that the Academy should provide an example of excellence in all fields to encourage and educate the Scottish painters and their public. For many artists the understanding of both historical and modern painting was a particular difficulty and dependent on reproductions. The desire to acquire equivalents or copies appears in several instances in Hill's correspondence in the 1850s:

Mr J. F. Lewis [John Frederick Lewis] the painter of "The Hhareem" ... was reported to have made drawings from Massaccio & Ghirlandajo & on my writing to him ... he mentioned incidentally that he had about sixty drawings in water colours from the great Spanish Italian Flemish & other masters some of them very elaborate others slighter. This led to a desire of possessing these. Lewis is a cracksman in his way ... Lewis writes me that his drawings are 62 - and pricing them moderately such as he thinks they would sell at Christie & Mansons they come to about £540 or thereabouts - but he seems a man of generous spirit and says if the Academy wish them he would part with them at some loss.⁷⁵

If your Lordship [Lord Rutherford] in passing by 33 Abercromby Place, has time to go upstairs - you will see in the Academys reading Room ... two goodly results of my visit to England - namely Etty's own copy of the Titian Venus in the Tribune at Florence - and a copy by another hand of Titian's "Ariadne in Naxos." The Academy consider them very valuable acquisitions.⁷⁶

⁷⁴. Hill to Roberts, 8 January 1851, NLS Acc 7723. Hill's interest in gas lighting may have been stimulated by Adam Anderson, who designed the Perth gas works. 'He invented a method for purifying the gas, equally ingenious and simple. Its brilliancy is yet unrivalled.' *The New Statistical Account of Scotland: Perth*, vol. 10, Edinburgh and London 1845, p. 86. See Cameron (as in n. 23).

⁷⁵. Hill to Paton, 15 February 1853, NLS Acc 11315.

⁷⁶. Hill to Rutherford, 16 November 1853, NLS Ms 9717 fo. 149.

We have bought 200 casts in imitation Ivory - from Medieval Ivory Carvings extending over seven centuries - and I believe giving a capital view at a glance of the sculpture of those ages. They are early casts & sharp.⁷⁷

This urge for understanding through a comparable, equivalent work explains Ruskin's enthusiastic letter to Hill in 1853, responding to the Academy's initiative in proposing to send accomplished students abroad to copy pictures of significance. He wrote:

nothing could possibly be better calculated to promote the rapid advancement of the schools of art in this country ... Art has been entirely debased all over Europe by the habit of copying great works in the modes supposed most likely to render them attractive, when engraved, to the public eye: a system which has necessarily destroyed the veracity of the copyist, as well as the sincerity of admiration for the true virtues of great works of art. To teach the student to copy at once faithfully & spiritedly; and to put the public in possession of the series of copies so obtained, will be the easiest & the most effective means of reviving the perception of the nation both to the powers of its own artists, & to those of the dead.⁷⁸

Reproduction, making art public within people's private lives, was of immense importance to Hill, and the idea was a continual thread in his career. His first public artwork employed the new art of lithography, when at the age of eighteen, he produced his *Sketches of Scenery in Perthshire Drawn from Nature and on Stone*.⁷⁹ Hill was connected with the boom in the publishing trade, in the production of illustrated books, newly-enabled by the use of the hard steel plate for engraving. Hill's drawings for Robert Cadell's edition of the Waverley novels in 1831-2 meant that he worked closely with sophisticated engravers – some of them the same men who worked with Turner.⁸⁰ In 1837 to 1838, he was the principal illustrator of the *Tales and Sketches and Poetical Works* of James Hogg. His major literary publication was the series of engravings from 66 landscapes painted as *The Land of Burns*, which he

⁷⁷. Hill to Paton, 2 January 1855, NLS Acc 11315.

⁷⁸. Ruskin to Hill, 12 December 1853, NLS Acc 11608.

⁷⁹. This was first published by his father, Thomas Hill in George Street, Perth, and sold through William Blackwood in Edinburgh and Rodwell and Martin and R. Ackermann in London at six and seven shillings. The SNPC has two copies with Thomas Hill's label, one contains 17 prints, the other 28. 15 prints were advertised for sale again in 1832 in his *Views of the Opening of the Glasgow and Garnkirk Railway*, along with *Five Views on the Clyde*, published by Alexander Hill. Hill apparently maintained a lithographic printing press and used it for general communication. The letters he sent to the Free Church ministers inviting them to sit for calotype studies for the painting are lithographic prints with the individual names and dates filled in by hand. He employed it also for printing party invitations.

⁸⁰. 'His [i. e. Hill's] engravers were as skilful as those who worked for Turner, being in some cases the

embarked on in 1834, the same year Cadell published Turner's landscape illustrations for Scott's *Poetical Works*. *The Land of Burns*, published by John Blackie in 1840, was ambitious. An article on Hill in *The Art Journal*, in 1850, says: 'This beautiful book originated entirely with himself, and was one of the most spirited and expensive speculations in Art-Literature which had been attempted by a Scottish publisher.'⁸¹

Hill's continuing pride in it is seen in the early 1850s, when he wrote to Paton:

I am working away washing & putting new faces on the Land of Burns pictures - all of them. The week I was in Glasgow I did this to 7 or 8 of them, so as to prove to their proprietors that I could improve them beyond their conception of what was meant by putting them in order - but that if I did it at all I must do it thoroughly, and there was a work of time & labour - with a little brains to make them work sweetly They were so satisfied with the experiment, that they have made it worth my while to do the whole set well - & I am well pleased that these members of a somewhat ragged regiment - will now take the field with their pockets full of pollashes [?] - I trust to fill the world with new admiration. But seriously I am very well pleased to have this opportunity of blowing the noses of these bubbly boys - of putting clean shirts on them, and of otherwise giving them the necessary brushing up to enable them to pass in society - and as Ailie Dinmont [ref. Walter Scott, *Guy Mannering*] said of her bairns to behave themselves distinctly.⁸²

The following year, he exhibited the pictures as a group in his brother's gallery in Edinburgh.⁸³ He wrote, in reference to the Academy's exhibition catalogue, of an unfulfilled intention to advertise, with two pages:

for my Burns Gallery & my Calotypes - with the opinions of artists thereon, it would be well for me that the first should not be a gone coon - and that the latter should a little more be made a dropping green [might be 'goose' or 'dripping goose,' perhaps a variant on 'dripping roast'].⁸⁴

According to Hill's obituary, he had proposed to set up a special gallery for the pictures:

'very same men,' P. G. Hamerton, *The Life of J. M. W. Turner*, London 1879, p. 229.

⁸¹. Anon (probably S. C. Hall), biographical note on Hill, *The Art Journal*, New series, vol. 2 (1850): p. 309.

⁸². Hill to Paton, 10 April 1851, NLS Acc 11315.

⁸³. 'The Burns Gallery. The Exhibition of the Original Oil Pictures (upwards of Sixty in number) of the Beautiful and Romantic Scenery of The Land of Burns Painted by D. O. Hill R. S. A. Now open in Alex. Hill's Galleries, 67 Prince's Street, will close on Saturday. Admission sixpence.' Advertisement in *The Scotsman* (25 February 1852).

⁸⁴. Hill to Paton, 17 February 1852, NLS Acc 11315.

on the banks of Doon, but for want of funds the proposal fell through, and one half of the series has since been destroyed by fire, the remainder being dispersed by public auction in Edinburgh.⁸⁵

The surviving paintings for the *Land of Burns* are all in oil. By 1842, it was clear to Hill that the terms for book illustration were not always adequate for the effort concerned in making drawings. He wrote two consecutive letters to Thomas Constable about illustrations for an account of Queen Victoria's visit to Scotland, between which his concern about this problem is clarified:

As to the price of these drawings for the steel plates, I would propose 12 Guineas each for the landscape ones - and perhaps more for the Dunkeld reception should it prove ultra elaborate which indeed it must be - say 20 Gs if the drawing turns out good and very elaborate - if but medium as to quality and labour say 16 Gs. As to the woodcuts I am more in the dark about them. Mr Duncan tells me he charges Mr Caddell from 5 Gs the very small to 15 Gs the large he had done for Old Mortality of the Abbotsford edition ... If you think this is a fair standard to go by I will do the best I can with the subjects proposed.

I will endeavour to get the drawing for Cousins ready by the time you mention but hardly think it possible. These drawings take me a much longer period than matters of greater apparent importance.

In looking forward to what I must do this month I find it will be absolutely impossible for me to undertake the woodcuts - that is with the expectation of doing them in a way satisfactory to myself & otherwise I will not.⁸⁶

By this time, Hill was probably more interested in his brother, Alexander's, promulgation of fine art prints, both because they were bigger and would make more impact, and because they would represent a better proportion of effort to financial result:

Mr Hill, who was all his life of a speculative turn, and was animated at the same time by a warm desire for the improvement of the public taste, took an active share in various enterprises connected with the diffusion of artistic productions. It is understood to have been through his influence that his brother, the late Alexander Hill, was induced to enter upon the print publishing business, through which so many fine and costly engravings have been placed at the disposal of the public.⁸⁷

⁸⁵. Anon, 'Death of Mr D. O. Hill,' *Scotsman* (17 May 1870).

⁸⁶. Hill to Constable, 25 November and 31 December 1842, NLS Ms 3109 fo.154 and 163.

⁸⁷. Anon (as in n. 85).

Alexander Hill ran a gallery in Princes Street for the exhibition of paintings, the sale and loan of prints and watercolours, and artists' supplies. He was the official print publisher to the Academy and bequeathed proofs of his engravings to the Academy on his death.⁸⁸ Thomas Dibdin recounted a visit to his premises, in 1836, when he saw the evidence of Hill's 'first decided success':⁸⁹

You look before you, and a white pennant streams down, as from the top mast of a first rate [ship], upon which are inscribed the names of the subscribers to the plate of Sir David Wilkie's "preaching of John Knox." The publisher rubs his hands in a sort of modified ecstacy. "A thousand pounds, Sir, are upon yon scroll." - "With all my heart, good Mr Hill, and may it be doubled before the day of publication. How did you manage to raise such an army of subscribers?" - "Wrote to every Scotch peer and to every Scotch gentleman in the Kingdom; and behold the fruits."⁹⁰

It was principally through his brother that Hill published the large-scale engravings, which include the *Views of the Glasgow and Garnkirk Railway* in 1832, the posthumous portrait of the Rev. Thomas Chalmers and his grandson, *Edinburgh from the Castle and Windsor Castle*.

Hugh Miller's introductory article on the calotype offers evidence that Hill was thinking of photography as a substitute for drawing in book illustration:

For a large class of works the labours of the artist bid fair to be restricted to the composition of *tableaux vivants*, which it will be the part of the photographer to fix, and then transfer to the engraver ... Compared with the mediocre prints of nine-tenths of the illustrated works now issuing from the press, these productions serve admirably to show how immense the distance between nature and her less skilful imitators. There is a truth, breadth, and power about them which we find in only the highest, and not often even in these.⁹¹

The calotypes which illustrate Walter Scott were presumably intended as an experiment in photographic publication, although this was not announced. The seriousness of the intention may be seen in the fact that for the group of *The Monks of Kennaquhair*, one of the models, the painter, William Leighton Leitch, has shaved his head (Fig. 24). The calotype partnership apparently took on a new impetus in 1844,

⁸⁸. Royal Scottish Academy Report, Edinburgh 1866, p. 16. For his career, see Anon, 'The Late Mr Alexander Hill,' *The Edinburgh Evening Courant* (18 June 1866).

⁸⁹. Ibid., 'The Late Mr Alexander Hill.'

⁹⁰. Thomas Frognall Dibdin, *A Bibliographical Tour in the North Counties of England and Scotland* vol. II, London 1838, p. 590.

⁹¹. Hugh Miller, 'The Calotype,' *The Witness* (12 July 1843).

when Hill joined Adamson in Rock House and they advertised six volumes in preparation. None of those advertised was issued, though they did publish *A Series of Calotype Views in St Andrews* in 1846.⁹² In the end, their principal publication proved to be the set of a hundred calotypes, which were intended to be marketed through the printsellers, Colnaghi, in London in a splendid volume priced at £40 to £50. Whilst a number of these albums were constructed, there is no evidence that any of them were sold, and Hill eventually gave them away as handsome gifts, to Elizabeth Rigby's husband Sir Charles Eastlake among others.

There are indications in the calotype work that Hill was already considering substituting photographs for engravings in art reproduction (see also Chapter nine). Here the concern would be for the potential accuracy of such copies – a direct, or at least closer transcription than the translations of many engravers. Ruskin's original enthusiasm for photography stemmed from this idea:

It is such a happy thing to be able to depend on *everything* – to be sure not only that the painter is perfectly honest, but that he can't make a mistake.⁹³

There are copies of several engravings and paintings amongst the calotypes, including the work of Henry Raeburn, William Allan and William Etty. Hill later urged the need for expert photographic reproduction on Thomas Annan, probably directing his career substantially into this field, so that Annan: 'was never so happy as when endeavouring to faithfully translate some masterpiece into monochrome through the medium of his camera.'⁹⁴ One of Annan's most important commissions came from Hill.⁹⁵ While Hill's first advertisements for the Disruption Picture in 1843, offered subscribers an engraving of the painting, in the 1860s he turned to photography. Annan held the patent rights for Joseph Swan's 'permanent' carbon process. Hill persuaded him to purchase 'a large Photographic Camera of the latest and most perfect construction'⁹⁶ from Dallmeyer, and to print photographs in three sizes – the largest, half the size of

⁹². See Graham Smith, ' "Calotype Views of St Andrews" by David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson,' *History of Photography*, vol. 7, no. 3 (1983): pp. 207-36.

⁹³. Quoted in Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France*, London 1976, p. 104. Haskell outlines the search for experience of paintings and the need for accurate reproductions of art at this time.

⁹⁴. Thomas Annan obituary, *The British Journal of Photography*, vol. 34 (1887): p. 803. For a discussion of photographic art reproduction, see Hamber (as in n. 63).

⁹⁵. Discussed in Sara Stevenson, *Thomas Annan 1829-1887*, Edinburgh 1990, pp. 6-7.

⁹⁶. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 7.

the painting and put together from three negatives. It was not his intention just to produce one grand picture, which might disappear into a private collection, but to publish it in an enduring edition of thousands.

Hill's maintained enthusiasm for reproduction was expressed in one of his last letters, where he spoke with great satisfaction of ordering a multiple edition of Amelia Paton's marble bust of him:

The day before your welcome package arrived - we had just issued orders to Leopoldo Aeroghi [?] - our honest & admirable & handsome [illegible] maker - to get a few copies of Mrs Hill's Bust of myself ready - with which we intend to try the temper of our friends by asking their acceptance of a copy - as New Years gifts.⁹⁷

Hill's interest in reproducing sculpture had also emerged during the calotype partnership, with an overtly religious intention. There are two negatives of groups of Indian figures, which also appear in one of Hill's drawings of Rock House in the 1850s.⁹⁸ These were presumably sent home by missionaries to raise funds and support for their work, and Hill may have meant to produce prints to aid the work.

The obvious financial advantage of producing more than one copy of an artwork was balanced by the more important argument behind publication. The educational advance, offered in literature through book publication, could be extended to aesthetic education: 'implanting notions of art throughout the whole empire' and this was a significant purpose also of the Art Unions.

Personal ambition - *The Signing of the Deed of Demission*

It is clear from the foregoing that Hill's ambitions as an individual were strongly affected and often re-directed by his concern for broader ambitions in the arts. He had, however, the responsibility for his own individual creativity and, although interrupted, he continued to follow the dictates of high ambition and struggle expected in the concept of genius. His most laborious work was *The Signing of the Deed of Demission*, his great Disruption Picture (Fig. 25), which may usefully be analysed here for its conscious complication and its arguable failure.

⁹⁷. Hill to John and Jane Macdonald, 29 December 1869, NLS Acc 11782.

⁹⁸. This is one of a group of drawings known from glass negative copies in the GUL.

In May 1843, Hill, filled with enthusiasm for the new Free Church, was sketching the scene and had begun to paint individual ministers. Sir David Brewster carried him off to the studio on Calton Hill and introduced him to Robert Adamson (see Chapter eight). After a few weeks of experiment, Hill was seduced by photography into a position where his control ultimately became improbable; involving the enlarging of the picture to include nearly everyone directly concerned, whether they were there on the day or not, and quite a few interested outsiders. Three years later, Hill was still advertising in *The Witness* for further sitters. The newspaper explained that Hill had originally planned to take three years in the painting but would now take longer:

a circumstance which the doubling of the scale of the picture, and the insertion of twice or three times the number of portraits more than were at first contemplated, are sufficient to apologise for.⁹⁹

By using photography, he had presented himself with two critical problems. The first was technical - how to translate the calotype portraits into paint.¹⁰⁰ This was unexpectedly difficult. The calotype was a reduction. Unlike a drawn sketch, it could not be wholly controlled to give the painter the information he needed. It involved an arbitrary chemical reaction, thoroughly satisfactory in its own terms but not necessarily useful as information. After the first weeks of experiment in 1843, Hill compounded the problem. He began to take individual calotype portraits rather than working sketches (Fig. 26), which were offered as an independent series in an exhibition of the studies for the painting, shown at Alexander Hill's galleries in July.¹⁰¹ From this time, the backgrounds and composition of the calotypes were formally considered and the supports were concealed (Fig. 27). Thereafter, the self-contained beauty of the calotypes obstructed the ambition of the painting. They had a satisfactory completeness, which meant that the painting was partly reduced to the subordinate role of copying that excellence. As late as August 1860, Hill was still talking of working hard on the painting:

I have brought out my big figure Picture here [Grange House, south of Edinburgh], desiring to dedicate the summer in pushing it on towards

⁹⁹. *The Witness* (28 May 1846).

¹⁰⁰. I have discussed this problem at greater length in 'David Octavius Hill and the Use of Photography as an Aid to Painting,' *History of Photography*, vol. 15 (1991): pp. 47-59.

¹⁰¹. Advertisement in *The Witness* (10 July 1843).

completion rather than in sketching. There is a great deal of gin-horse work to be gone through before the end is in sight.¹⁰²

In the event, the picture was not completed until 1866, twenty-three years after the Disruption. It took so long, because Hill had taken over 400 photographs and committed himself to an inherently democratic idea, with every individual recognisable. In effect, he had through his own excitement and enthusiasm made it nearly impossible to complete the picture. Earlier British examples of paintings with large numbers of recognisable portraits, such as George Hayter's *Reform Bill* and Benjamin Robert Haydon's *Anti-Slavery Convention*, were not helpful as models; they have the same appearance of photomontage as the Disruption Picture. A favourable review of Hill's painting in 1866, makes that point:

Most attempts at giving pictorial interest and expression, life and power, to a vast conglomeration of portraits of men, engaged as spectators ... in some notable piece of business, are generally - we except Wilkie's "Queen Victoria's First Council," and Phillip's "Marriage of the Prince of Wales" - dead failures, bordering oftentimes on the idiotic.¹⁰³

The early sketches had a coherence, which might have led to a better picture and one easier to achieve (Fig. 28). Hill admired Paul Delaroche's grand painting the *Hémicycle des Beaux Arts*, when it was on exhibition in his brother's gallery in 1853: 'It is really a beautiful thing ... I wish I had seen the original ten years ago - my Free Kirk picture would in that case long ago been done.'¹⁰⁴ Delaroche's painting was based on Raphael's *School of Athens* and is huge, designed to curve half-way round the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, but it is a comparatively sparse composition of around 70 figures.¹⁰⁵ The simple implication of Hill's remark is that he had realised that his project had got out of hand; he could see the advantage of a less crowded composition, perhaps both a smaller and a symbolic group.

Hill's general despondency in the 1850s (partly brought on by ill-health), was obviously loaded by his sense of failure at not completing the task. It was a phenomenal aesthetic challenge. Duncan Macmillan compares the picture to Jacques-

¹⁰². Hill to Roberts, 13 August 1860, NLS Ms 14836 fo. 165.

¹⁰³. Review of the painting, presumed to be by John Brown, *The Scotsman* (24 May 1866).

¹⁰⁴. Hill to Paton, 25 November 1853, NLS Acc 11315. This was presumably a reduced version of the picture.

¹⁰⁵. The impact of Delaroche's painting on British art is discussed by Haskell (as in n. 93), pp. 9-11. See also Stephen Bann, *Paul Delaroche: history painted*, London 1997.

Louis David's *The Oath of the Tennis Court* of 1789, 'another moment of democratic crisis. Both painters had to try to accommodate a very large number of portraits and give them all roughly equal status. David's painting was never finished.'¹⁰⁶ By the time Hill's picture was complete, the public excitement had died down and he was addressing a new generation, which had no direct knowledge of the warmth and passion behind the Disruption.¹⁰⁷

It may be presumed that Hill's friends offered him an immense amount of advice on the progress of the painting and some expressed doubt, even in the early stages. Charles Heath Wilson (1809-82), Director of the Schools of Art at Somerset House, wrote to him in 1845:

your large picture made a great impression on me, I thought you a little crazy when I heard of it, but you have proved what heart of sentiment can do, you think that it is a great event which you are commemorating, you enter with fervour into the feelings of the men you paint, you admire them (I dont) if you succeed as you have begun the production of that picture will be an event & a very remarkable one in the history of Scottish arts, a remarkable phase in the history of the artist mind. I often think about it & hope earnestly that you may succeed. Forgive my frankness & eschew plastering *alla scozese*.¹⁰⁸

The response to the finished picture was generally not good. The painter, Sam Bough, 'compared the grouping of the numerous heads to "Potatoes all in a row,"' and satirized the various weak points of the picture in a very comical manner.¹⁰⁹ The Editor of the *Art Journal*, Samuel Carter Hall, saw it as 'the weary Disruptive Portraiture, which must have lain like an incubus on his genius.'¹¹⁰

We feel the failure of the painting, partly because the photographs are so much better. Our view of it suffers from the historical intervention of the composite group photograph, with its inescapable aura of scissors and paste or of modern digital manipulation. For photographic historians, it is the impulse behind the partnership and little more than a foil for the photographs. Heinrich Schwartz referred to it

¹⁰⁶. Duncan Macmillan, *Scottish Art 1460-1990*, Edinburgh 1990, p. 194.

¹⁰⁷. In 1857, the editor of Hugh Miller's articles, published as *The Cruise of the Betsey*, which were first written in the 1840s for *The Witness*, 'expunged some passages' of 'much bitter feeling ... between the Free and Established Churches of Scotland ... The sword is in the scabbard: let it rest!' W. S. Symonds, Preface, Hugh Miller, *The Cruise of the Betsey*, Edinburgh 1857.

¹⁰⁸. Wilson to Hill, April 1845, RSA.

¹⁰⁹. Sidney Gilpin, *Sam Bough, R.S.A., Some account of his life and works*, London 1905, p. 124. Bough had a lengthy quarrel with the Academy and was an aggressive opponent both of Hill and Noël Paton.

disparagingly: ‘he squandered his marvellous and inspired portrait photographs on a frigid setting and a huge and clumsy background.’¹¹¹ Helmut Gernsheim said of it: ‘we can only consider it as a misspent labour of love, for the subject was clearly beyond Hill’s capability - if not beyond the capacity of most artists.’¹¹² More recently, Colin Ford has written: ‘the inescapable fact is that the Disruption painting … is a monumental flop.’¹¹³

It was not, for many of Hill’s peers, a great painting; it is not a great painting for us. But it would be fair to examine the picture, not so much for its success as for its intention, as a radical experiment and a most impressive ambition. In its directly personal or democratic character, the painting offered a series of histories. Hill set up a kind of democracy of perspective, by moving the dominant, charismatic figure of Thomas Chalmers to an elevated position at the back. He is a small figure in the flat plane of the painting; we can understand his dominance from the height of his position and by the shaft of sunlight shining down on him, which picks him out among the crowd. It nevertheless requires historical understanding to see him fully as the leader of the Disruption. He is offered as a focus rather than a figurehead; the other figures in the painting have equivalent status. The heroism of each one within the picture could be told, detailed, as the face was, in its contribution to the greater whole. It was designed as an educational work, on a par with Delaroche’s *Hémicycle*; although Hill did not have Delaroche’s certainty of the painting’s location, it was equally designed as a didactic and elevating picture, a model for posterity.¹¹⁴ It offered not just the communal heroism, but helped to explain the Church’s drive and success in the hands of determined individuals and groups. This is partly brought out by Hill’s prospectus for the picture, which takes the narrative line, but the individual

¹¹⁰. Samuel Carter Hall, review of the RSAexhibition, *The Art Journal*, vol. 13 (1868): p. 65.

¹¹¹. Heinrich Schwartz, *David Octavius Hill, Master of Photography*, trans. Helene E. Fraenkel, London 1932, p. 25.

¹¹². Helmut Gernsheim, ‘The David Octavius Hill Memorial Lecture,’ *Creative Camera* (September 1971): p. 301.

¹¹³. Colin Ford and Roy Strong, *An Early Victorian Album. The photographic masterpieces (1843-1847) of David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson*, New York, 1976, p. 43.

¹¹⁴. The *Hémicycle* was designed for the amphitheatre, which was used for the *École*’s prize-giving ceremony, and ‘a pleasant scene of instruction could take place … when one more expert connoisseur might take the opportunity of instructing his young companions.’ See Bann (as in n. 105), p. 208.

members of its audience could develop the theme from their own local and personal knowledge.¹¹⁵ It is a demonstration of Presbyterian principle and morality.

George Harvey said of the finished picture:

I consider it a noble work, and can conceive no more precious bequest to future generations of the Free Church by the present than such a record of the men - painted at the time - who so valiantly fought the battle of its independence. The painting, moreover, is unique of its kind: I know of nothing like it existing; and strongly feel that but for Mr Hill's enthusiasm, it could never have been produced, requiring, as it did, such an amount of heroic self-denial and continuous labour of a kind which few could give, and which no one unacquainted with the production of figure-pictures of a much more subordinate character could possibly imagine.¹¹⁶

Harvey's response makes the point that the painting itself involved a comparable heroic effort, which was justified by the importance of the subject. The calotype practice was motivated by the painting, and we owe the unchallenged success of individual portraits to the same driving idea. They are not separate; they are not squandered or misspent. They are a successful realisation of a religious, historical and democratic idea, which the painting itself did not wholly achieve (this idea is developed in Chapter four).

'Till the world brings out its history'

I must tell you that the meeting of the Academy on the 25th November, in approving of my salary being paid for life - passed two pages of resolutions of great interest and value to me & to my relations. I will at another time send you a copy of them, and an account of the queer way in which I was deprived of thus being presented in the Report. Douglas is a new secretary [?] therefore I do not blame him but strange to say our President has manifested a strange [strong?] and seemingly jealous dislike to [illegible] being said of me - so the paragraph at the end instead of being in the words of the Report, which it would have been had I been writing it [illegible] - is reduced to a simple pecuniary affair. I understand that the members instead of ['resenting' or 'rewriting'] this in a minute [?] - consider the Institution itself would suffer - and so we must bide our time till the world brings [it?] out its history.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵. Anon (presumed to be D. O. Hill), *The Disruption of the Church of Scotland: An Historical Picture... Painted by D. O. Hill*, R. S. A., Edinburgh 1866.

¹¹⁶. Quoted by John Brown, 'The Disruption - The Signing of the Deed of Demission. A Picture by D. O. Hill,' *The Scotsman* (24 May 1846).

¹¹⁷. Hill to John and Jane Macdonald, 29 December 1869, NLS Acc 11782.

Hill left the Academy in ill health in 1869, and the above is part of a letter expressing some sadness about the ungenerous treatment of his pension. Its illegibility is a part of that expression. Hill was disappointed that the work he had done had not been formally recognised.¹¹⁸

In the Christian ethic Hill followed and admired, personal responsibility for advancement was balanced by the contrary idea of sacrifice; this, rather than obvious, individual success, may have proved to be God's intention. In the words of his obituary:

Mr Hill fought the battles of the Academy with a singleness of purpose and a devotion of time and talent which in effect impaired his efforts towards attaining the first-rate place in art otherwise in reach of his fertile and felicitous genius.¹¹⁹

The text on Hill's gravestone, which may have been written by Amelia Paton, reads: 'He was a man of upright, noble and unselfish character, who sacrificed much to the advancement of the fine arts of his country.'¹²⁰ The idea of sacrifice runs consciously through Hill's career. He chose the moment of sacrifice, the minister signing away his right to the richest living in Scotland, as the central focus of his Disruption Painting. George Harvey talked of the painting as an act of sacrifice in itself. More importantly, in adopting a responsibility for the community of art and devoting himself to its broad advancement, he lost the individual, or selfish concentration that might have made him a celebrated painter.

¹¹⁸. George Harvey's reaction, as President, may connect with the Academy's poor treatment of Thomas Hamilton, whose work was not recognised by a pension in 1850.

¹¹⁹. Anon (as in n. 48).

¹²⁰. He is buried in the Dean Cemetery, with a bronze cast of Amelia Paton's bust on the gravestone.

Chapter three

Writing fact and living fiction

The latent spirits

In discussing the period from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth, Lord Cockburn's *Memorials of his Time* presents a view (coloured by his Whig outlook) of Scottish society and culture effectively fossilised by Tory dominance and fuelled by the fear of the French Revolution:

Jacobinism was a term denoting everything alarming and hateful, and every political objector was a Jacobin. No innovation, whether political or speculative, consequently no political or economical reformer, and no religious dissenter, from the Irish Papist to our own native Protestant Seceder, could escape from this fatal word ... the suppression of independent talent or ambition was the tendency of the times.¹

Cockburn's account of the following years then offers an astonishing range of change: political, social, clerical, literary, legal and artistic. Amongst the most impressive of these changes was the great literary revolution begun by Archibald Constable, the publisher of the *Edinburgh Review* and the works of Walter Scott, who:

rushed out and took possession of the open field, as if he had been aware from the first of the existence of the latent spirits, which a skilful conjurer might call from the depths of the population to the service of literature. Abandoning the old timid and grudging system, he stood out as the general patron and payer of all promising publications, and confounded not merely his rivals in trade, but his very authors, by his unheard-of prices ... [which] drew authors from dens where they would otherwise have starved, and made Edinburgh a literary mart, famous with strangers, and the pride of its own citizens.²

The literary emphasis of the portraits in the calotypes is based on this cultural revolution - the sudden, wide spread of independent and combative literature and criticism, in books, journals, newspapers and encyclopaedias. It became increasingly possible to acquire an informal education in the form of biographies, scientific explanation or literary criticism, which were entertaining and pleasurable. The massive increase in output and consumption had, moreover, a marked effect on the authorship and character of the writing. Many more writers were published and the manner of writing became biased towards the personal and physically or emotionally descriptive:

¹. Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of his Time*, Edinburgh 1856, pp. 82 and 167.

². Ibid., pp. 168-9.

looking less to a classical or philosophical model and more to one that was widely intelligible.

The factual ground and the painter's eye

The writers and public speakers Hill particularly admired had the ability to make what they were saying visible in the mind's eye. Notable examples amongst the popular writers were Walter Scott and Hugh Miller. The advocate and editor, Francis Jeffrey identified the pictorial character of Scott's writing, when reviewing Scott's book-length poem, *The Lady of the Lake* in 1810:

He sees everything with a painter's eye. Whatever he represents has a character of individuality and is drawn with an accuracy and minuteness of discrimination, which we are not accustomed to expect from verbal description ... The rocks, the ravines, and the torrents, which he exhibits, are not the imperfect sketches of a hurried traveller, but the finished studies of a resident artist, deliberately drawn from different points of view.³

A recent critic has emphasised the character of this vision, as an aesthetic based on reality, and the equivalent of landscape painting rather than topography (see also Chapter seven):

Whatever fictional gloss may be applied, when he is writing of Scotland, and especially of his own Border region, Scott is recording not inventing; his vision grows out of an objective world, a place of time and the senses. Before Scott ... landscape rarely appeared as an organic element in prose.⁴

Hugh Miller's writing was praised in the same manner by Thomas Carlyle, in 1852: 'You have, as you undertook to do, painted many things to us; scenes of life, scenes of Nature, which rarely come upon the canvas; and I will add, such Draughtsmen too are extremely uncommon in that and other walks of painting.'⁵ The following is part of a passage, written by Miller, set deep in the Doocot Cave on the Cromarty Firth:

We strike a light. The roof and sides are crusted with white stalactites, that depend from the one like icicles from the eaves of a roof in a severe frost, and stand out from the other in pure, semi-transparent ridges, that resemble the folds of a piece of white drapery dropped from the roof; while the floor below has its rough pavement of stalagmite, that stands up, wherever the drops descend, in rounded prominences, like the bases of columns. Here, however, is a puzzle to

³. Quoted in James Holloway and Lindsay Errington, *The Discovery of Scotland*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh 1978, p. 109.

⁴. James Reed, *Sir Walter Scott: Landscape and Locality*, London 1980, p. 6.

⁵. In relation to *My Schools and Schoolmasters*. Thomas Carlyle, quoted in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Sidney Lee, vol. 37, London 1894, p. 409.

exercise our ingenuity. Some of the minuter stalactites of the roof, after descending perpendicularly, or at least nearly so, for a few inches, turn up again and form a hook, to which one may suspend one's watch by the ring; while there are others that form a loop, attached to the roof at both ends. Pray, how could the descending drop have returned upwards to form the hook, or what attractive power could have drawn the two drops together, to compose the elliptical curve of the loop? The problem is not quite a simple one. It is sufficiently hard at least, as it has to deal with only half-ounces of rock, to inculcate caution on the theorists who profess to deal with whole continents of similar material.

Let us examine somewhat narrowly. Dark as the recess is, and though vegetation fails fully fifty feet nearer the entrance than where we now stand, the place is not without its inhabitants. We see among the dewy damps of the roof the glistening threads of some minute spider, stretching in lines or descending in loops. And just look here. Along this loop there runs a single drop. Observe how it descends, with but a slight inclination, for about two inches or so, and then turns round for about three quarters of an inch more; observe further, that along this other loop there trickle two drops, one on each side; that, as a consequence of the balance which they form the one against the other, their descent has a much greater sweep; and that, uniting in the centre, they fall together. We have found the solution of our riddle, and received one proof more of the superiority of the simple art of seeing over the ingenious art of theorizing.⁶

This is quoted at length to emphasise its loving and seductive detail. Miller has brought us in to this grand setting, carrying the flaring torch; he then offers a small problem, which is solved by visual observation. It is a precise piece of prose, which is hung engagingly round the idea of a pocket watch on a spider's thread. While it is manifestly not scientific in any rigorous sense, it would be a mistake to think of Miller simply as a populist, despite the immense popularity of his work; he was more certainly an educationalist, opening people's minds to the visible world.

Scott had examined the detail of nature with equal concentration. He was observed with amazement 'noting down even the peculiar little wild flowers and herbs':

[I] could not help saying, that as he was not to be upon oath in his work, daisies, violets, and primroses would be as poetical as any of the humble plants he was examining ... he replied that in nature herself no two scenes were exactly alike, and that whoever copied truly what was before his eyes, would possess the same variety in his descriptions, and exhibit apparently an imagination as boundless as the range of nature in the scenes he recorded.⁷

Miller was treating fact in a broad, poetic manner, bringing fiction into his province. Walter Scott, by contrast, looked at surrounding reality with respect and brought *that* into the province of fiction. The distinction between the two approaches became most

⁶. Quoted in George Rosie, *Hugh Miller, Outrage and Order*, Edinburgh 1981, pp. 224-5.

⁷. J. B. S. Morritt, quoted by J. G. Lockhart, *The Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, London 1893, p. 226.

interestingly blurred. Scott, like Miller, had an eccentric education. It had been divided because of ill health in his youth, between a direct experience of nature and the vernacular tradition, learnt from the company of country people, and formal university education. This meant that while his thinking was tempered by irony and classical learning, he was readier to accept the value of pragmatic experience or real life.⁸ He stood out against the concepts of the uniformity of human society generally accepted in the Enlightenment. His view of people was rather inclined to the teaching of Edinburgh University's Professor of Universal History, Alexander Fraser Tytler, who commented:

It seems to be the passion of the philosophers of the present to reduce everything to general principles ... The man who proceeding upon this principle that human nature in similar situations is always the same, would, from a partial point of view of a single nation or race of men think himself qualified to lay down the laws of the species may perhaps have the ability to make a fine hypothesis or a utopian system, but it would be his daily mortification to find it contradicted by the facts.⁹

Scott and Miller both approached truth through reality and the examination of present nature: in a half ounce of rock and a small flower. Their underlying motives were distinct but the effect was similar – they were both fascinated by their findings. Scott employed the idea of assembling unimportant fragments to generate an imaginative world. Hugh Miller's aim was largely moral and consciously depended on humility. Casting the eyes down, away from the fearful sublime to a local comprehension, had the attractions of familiarity. It offered an understanding of facts within reach of the hand and comprehensible though a knowledge of their context. Through the creative use of such familiar or rediscoverable facts, writers as diverse as Scott and Miller transferred a sense of direct experience to their readers and merged the pleasures of fact and fiction.

'dissolving views' and the use of analogy

The particular Scottish affection for fact surfaced in the collected information of the *Statistical Accounts*, published in 1792.¹⁰ The accounts were put together by the clergy and were as much idiosyncratic as systematic. They unexpectedly opened up creative

⁸. Discussed by Marinell Ash, *The Strange Death of Scottish History*, Edinburgh 1980.

⁹. Quoted in ibid., pp. 23-4.

¹⁰. *The Statistical Account of Scotland. Drawn up from the communications of the Ministers of the different Parishes by Sir John Sinclair*, Edinburgh 1792. This kind of broad collection of information was not undertaken in England.

possibilities. This is directly seen in the novel, *Annals of the Parish* by John Galt (1779-1839), who was both a novelist and a statistician. Galt was particularly skillful in the use of small facts - details of furniture, dress or garden plants – which proved to be a natural way, both of generating historical realism and of satirising his characters. The taste for such literalness was the cause of a sardonic comment from a friend of David Roberts in 1844:

It has been often said that we are not an Artistic people, and I fear it is not altogether untrue - Not because Genius cannot ripen in the Northern climates, as the Abbate Winckelman asserts, but because our minds are so occupied with "great facts," and little facts, that we have no capacity for the Ideal.¹¹

Hill had no taste for raw fact but for the way it could be, selectively, used. He disliked the 'livid' accuracy of the daguerreotype and its indiscriminate focus (see Chapter nine). Such a dislike can be related to the way authors imitating Scott sought the same effect by inserting facts in cold slabs. It is interesting in this context that Thomas Cleghorn's review of Charles Dickens's work in *The North British Review* in 1845, attacks him in terms of the daguerreotype:

Ludicrous minuteness in the trivial descriptive details induces us to compare Mr. Dickens' style of delineation to a photographic landscape. There everything within the field of view is copied with unfailing but mechanical fidelity.¹²

One of the notable characteristics of the writing and preaching that Hill knew lies in the use of natural analogy. After hearing Thomas Guthrie preach in London in 1856, Henry Reeve said:

Guthrie's faith seems to be a lurid Calvinism, refined by that poetic fervour and love of nature which is so intense among the Scotch ... Guthrie's preaching was a finished performance - tones, gesture, diction highly spirited and sometimes highly effective - but I could hardly trace an idea. He passed from one topic to another, as if he were exhibiting dissolving views of the perdition of man.¹³

Dissolving views were devised in the early part of the century, before the invention of photography. Essentially they were images superimposed from two or more magic lanterns, to demonstrate changing effects and scenes - one picture could melt into

¹¹. J. G. Kinnear to Roberts, 3 July 1844, NLS microfilm 381.

¹². Quoted by Mark Haworth-Booth, *The Golden Age of British Photography*, exhibition catalogue, Victoria and Albert Museum, London 1984, p. 19. Cleghorn married Lord Cockburn's daughter in 1847/8.

¹³. Quoted in John Knox Laughton, *Memoirs of the Life of Henry Reeve*, London 1898, pp. 357. This opinion would not have surprised Guthrie. His biography quotes 'an old woman' as saying, 'Eh, Mr Guthrie, if it hadn't been for the grace of God, ye would have made a grand play-actor.' C. J. Guthrie, *Thomas Guthrie, Preacher and Philanthropist*, Edinburgh 1899, p. 15.

another as the lighted wicks were turned up and down. In the 1840s, the Polytechnic Institution in London had a particularly impressive version of this using mammoth painted slides. As a public entertainment, it was popular for forty years.¹⁴

Guthrie's friends were conscious that his habit of analogy needed defence:

His mind moved not in the logical, but the analogical plane, and swept forward, not in the rigid iron line of the railway excavation, but with the curves of a river that follows the solicitation of the ground. And so, too, his sermons were constructed. They had not exhaustive divisions enclosing subjects, as hedges do fields, but outlines, such as clouds have, that grow up by electricity and air; or such as the breadths of fern, and heather, and woodland had on the hill-side opposite his door, where colour melted into colour, with here a tall crag pointing sky-ward, and there an indignant torrent leaping headlong to come glittering out again among flowers and sunshine. Some tell us that analogy is a dangerous guide, and that metaphors prove nothing; but where they rest on the unity between God's world and man's nature they are arguments as well as illustrations.¹⁵

The curiosity of this lies in the newly factual interest which underlay it. It is a historical way of thinking, based on the seeing of parallels and of relating things through types: the three-part view of the cultured world in which the New Testament had its natural precursors in the Old Testament and the classical age, or the association of animal, vegetable and mineral forms through their surface resemblance, which dates back to Aristotle. Much of our knowledge of the world is based on the recognition of resemblance - the understanding that similar things and situations are likely to present us with similar problems and benefits. This was not, in an eighteenth-century sense, rational – it rejects sophisticated education - but it did relate to common sense as well as faith.

Analogy was carried into the area of mystery by the Christian assumption that God had built the metaphorical message into nature. Because man was God's central creation, nature would be filled with moral intimation. Thomas Guthrie related this idea of offering mystery through simplicity to the biblical parables:

With this end I used the simplest, plainest terms ... I turned to the gospels, and found that He who knew what was in a man, what could best illuminate a

¹⁴. David Robinson, 'Introduction: Shows and Slides,' *Magic Images. The Art of Hand-painted and Photographic Lantern Slides*, London 1990, p. 7. A performance of dissolving views, managed by Mr Blanchard from the Royal Polytechnic Institution, with 'an efficient number of Performers, both Vocal and Instrumental, to assist with their combined efforts in rendering the illusion of each picture effective and complete,' was held at the Calton Convening Rooms in Edinburgh, from 9 October 1843, advertisement in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 7 October 1843.

¹⁵. Dr John Ker, quoted in *Autobiography of Thomas Guthrie, D. D. and Memoir by his sons, David K. Guthrie and Charles J. Guthrie*, London 1875, vol. 2, p. 359.

subject, win the attention, and move the heart, used parables or illustrations, stories, comparisons, drawn from the scenes of nature and familiar life, to a large extent in His teaching; in regard to which a woman - type of the masses - said, "The parts of the Bible I like best are the *likes*."¹⁶

Guthrie's preaching was admired in 1846:

As to his preaching, it lives on his Bible, but leans in explication in a great measure, on first principles alone, and these in accordance with a pretty severe system of Calvinistic theology ... What to him, beyond the aid of commentary, are all the labours of philosophy, or advancements in moral science? Man is just man, as he was, is and shall continue - a sinner - with a complexity of disease modified by circumstance and time, but still only curative by one medicative process; and why then waste his time on a pharmacopoeia? ... he derives a wonderful power from the use of analogy ... brought fresh from the streets in the everyday publicities of life ... He deems the affections more assailable for good than the judgment, and we think him right ... It is like a beautiful experiment in chemistry.¹⁷

Guthrie was, like Hill, a man who felt the need to know other people. In common with Miller and with Thomas Chalmers in his parish experiment, Guthrie side-stepped the theory and applied himself to the practical solutions of social and religious difficulty - within the terms of the people he was concerned to save. He also appreciated the beauty of nature and thought of his preaching as consciously visual. He went so far as to advise one artist:

on whose easel lay an unfinished historical picture. He suggested some change, and ventured somewhat freely to criticize some object or attitude on the canvas, when the artist, with just a little warmth, interposed - "Dr Guthrie, remember you are a preacher and not a painter." "Beg your pardon, my good friend - I am a painter; only I paint in words, while you use brush and colours."¹⁸

Guthrie has here taken the classical idea, that the two arts of writing and painting are so closely interlinked that they involve the same underlying vocabulary, and applied it to the Romantic study of nature as the source of inspiration for poet, preacher and painter.¹⁹ Hill's admiration for him was expressed in the gift of a painting in 1847.

Guthrie responded appreciatively:

I came last night to find my drawing room adorned by your kindness, talent & taste - It is an exquisite Picture - a Masterpiece - I pity the Poet who has to

¹⁶. Ibid., pp. 160-1.

¹⁷. 'M. H.' 'Rough Pulpit Sketches by a Wayfarer, No.VIII Thomas Guthrie,' *The Fife Herald* (17 September 1846).

¹⁸. Guthrie (as in n. 15), vol. 2, p. 189.

¹⁹. Discussed in Rensselaer W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting*, New York 1967.

follow the Painter - If this world with its [illegible] Palaces is so beautiful what must Heaven be. May we inherit a house "Eternal in the heavens"²⁰

Guthrie retreated to the Highlands for respite from the terrible work in Edinburgh's city slums, when he fell ill in 1849. He wrote from Lochlee, comparing the countryside with Edinburgh's Canongate:

if I could make a satisfactory picture I would hang these two scenes up side by side before the world. Such a contrast! God made the one, man and Satan the other. I can roam here by loch and streamlet, with my eyes now up on the blue heavens, now on the majestic hoary crags, now on the calm blue waters, now on the leaping, rejoicing falls and see neither sight nor hear sound of sin, - of the groans wherewith the whole creation groaneth. If Jesus Christ did not say - pointing to yon outer world where the battle is a-fighting - 'Arise, let us go hence;' if duty to Him and our fellow-men did not come in and say with Martha to her sister, 'the Master is come and calleth for thee,' I would be content to spend the remainder of my days in this sweet quiet solitude.²¹

It is particularly appropriate that George Harvey, who used the analogical idea to paint scenes of Scottish religious significance which would offer a parallel to the Bible, painted a picture of Guthrie preaching on the shores of the Loch and a sketch of him fishing on Lochlee (Fig. 29).²² The latter is a picture of his pleasure in the outdoor world and in nature; it also offers an unstrained parallel with the Lake of Galilee. 'This loch,' Guthrie wrote in a letter, 'like the Lake of Galilee and all such mountain-girdled waters, rises on a sudden like a hot angry man.'²³ By natural comparison he could be seen as an apostle, an evangelist, 'a fisher of men.' This meant that, by picturing the reality, the painters and, by inheritance, the photographic partnership were able to offer an analogical reading.

'Like men acting a part ...'

Fact and life had flowed into fiction; the expressiveness and visual excitements of fiction had flowed into fact. The fiction itself influenced the life of the people pictured in the calotypes. Henry Reeve wrote of Guthrie's sermons, as:

Noctes Ambrosianae in the pulpit; there is the exuberance of [Professor John] Wilson over a punchbowl, and sometimes the pathos of the Shepherd [James Hogg]. The Scotch have almost repudiated the theatre, but they are more

²⁰. Guthrie to Hill, 1 December 1847, whereabouts of ms unknown, from a glass negative in GUL

²¹. Guthrie (as in n. 15), p. 339.

²². In the collection of the SNPG.

²³. Guthrie (as in n. 15), p. 436.

theatrical than the English. Jeffrey, Cockburn, and Rutherford [all three men were judges] always talked and behaved like men acting a part.²⁴

Cockburn, himself, confirmed this idea of the theatricality of the Scottish courts in an account of a civil court in Liverpool, where he found the proceedings remarkable for quiet and brevity: 'I heard no voice strained and did not see a drop of sweat at the Bar in these eight days. Our high-pressure Dean [John Hope] screams and gesticulates and perspires more in any forenoon than the whole Bar of England in a reign.'²⁵

This suggests that Edinburgh was literally self-conscious. Whether in continuing, regenerating or even fabricating a simple-hearted heroic tradition, they were keeping a Romantic emotionalism alive. The unlikely appointment of John Wilson (1785-1854), whose morality might be described as emotionally variable, to the Edinburgh Chair of Moral Philosophy is striking evidence of this idea.²⁶ The milder example of Hill's sociability may have been consciously based on an older tradition, perhaps from his own family and certainly from a knowledge of the Nasmyth household, of modest but pleasurable hospitality - '[Sheriff] Logan & spouse eats Oysters and Tripe with Mrs Watson and I tomorrow.'²⁷ The admiration of 'ancient' character underlies one of the period's more eccentric fictions - the impersonations by Clementina Stirling Graham (1782-1877), who would turn up disguised in the houses of her friends and act perverse old parties like the litigious Lady of Pitlyall. She, amongst other implausibilities, had inherited a flea from the very person of the Young Pretender:

I have a flech that loupit aff him upon my aunty, the Lady Brax, when she was helping him on wi' his short gown; my aunty rowed it up in a sheet of white paper, and she keepit it in the tea canister, and she ca'd it aye the King's Flech, and the Laird, honest man, when he wanted a cup of gude tea, sought aye a cup of *Prince's mixture* ... It is now set on the pivot of my watch, and a' the warks gae round the *flech* in place of turning on a diamond.²⁸

²⁴. Reeve (as in n. 13).

²⁵. Quoted in *Some Letters of Lord Cockburn with pages omitted from the Memorials of His Time*, ed. Harry A. Cockburn, Edinburgh 1932, p. 109. Thomas Chalmers identified the danger of this theatricality, that 'as much delight may emanate from the pulpit on an arrested audience beneath it, as ever emanated from the boards of a theatre; and with as total disjunction of mind too in the one case as in the other from the essence or the habit of religion,' in his discourse 'Sympathy felt for man in distant places of Creation,' quoted in Mrs Oliphant, *Thomas Chalmers*, London 1905, p. 91.

²⁶. See, for example, his treatment of Wordsworth, discussed by Elsie Swann, *Christopher North*, Edinburgh and London 1934, pp. 122-5.

²⁷. Hill to Paton, 6 January 1852, NLS Acc 11315.

²⁸. Quoted by Dr John Brown, 'Mystifications,' *Horae Subsecivae*, London 1908, p. 134. Hill, who knew and photographed her in middle age, referred to her as 'a dear little woman.' Hill to Paton, 23 January 1854, NLS Acc 11315.

People like Lord Jeffrey, who was kept from his own dinner party by her, were fascinated by the apparent reality; her success rested on the fact that they wanted to believe her. The particular admiration for old ladies of character, which Hill clearly shared, is a recurrent theme in the writing of the time - expressed by Walter Scott, most notably, but also by Lord Cockburn:

There was a singular race of excellent Scotch old ladies. They were a delightful set; strong headed, warm hearted and high spirited; the fire of their tempers not always latent; merry even in solitude; very resolute; indifferent about the modes and habits of the modern world; and adhering to their own ways, so as to stand out, like primitive rocks, above ordinary society. Their prominent qualities of sense, humour, affection, and spirit, were embodied in curious outsides; for they all dressed, and spoke, and did, exactly as they chose; their language, like their habits, entirely Scotch, but without any other vulgarity, than what perfect naturalness is sometimes taken for.²⁹

The autobiographies and biographies I quote in this thesis, written by people Hill knew and admired, are entertaining to read. They are written in a manner of heightened enthusiasm. This was a true reflection of the subject, related to the writer and the expectations of the time. Dr John Brown, who wrote a number of biographical essays, including the one telling the story of Clementina Stirling Graham's performances, was an especially receptive man. His friend, the Professor of Classics John Stuart Blackie (1809-95), said of him censoriously:

In point of emotional character he was the most womanly man that I ever met with. His judgment was often at fault when his affections were engaged, and I do not think I ever heard him say "No" with decision during the whole time of my long intercourse with him.³⁰

Brown himself was aware that his own kindness was perhaps a critical failing:

You are quite right about my tendency to excess in praise. This arises from two causes: 1st, from my constitutional vice (for it amounts to one) of wishing *to please* at all hazards: this is one of my greatest weaknesses. 2nd, From a real exaggerative tendency, arising from my passionate nature; this really interferes very much with my trustworthiness as a critic.³¹

This, a self-conscious sensitivity, should not be taken too straightforwardly. Brown knew that his encouraging criticism was to a degree optimistic, but it is part of the purpose of criticism to influence the future. Moreover, such a recognition should only

²⁹. Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of his Time*, Edinburgh 1856, pp. 57-8.

³⁰. John Stuart Blackie, *Notes of a Life*, ed. A. Stodart Walker, Edinburgh 1910, p. 109.

undermine our sense of his veracity if we have no doubts of the truth of other less self-critical authors and know their purpose. What is interesting in this potential confusion is that Brown and his friends were well aware of the doubt. They acknowledged authorship rather than claiming objectivity. It is a similar warmth or passion that Hill was seeking in his portraiture: closeness rather than perspective or a false appearance of judgement. We meet his sitters on friendly terms.

Hill himself did not think of human virtues as absolute or flawless. In amongst the crowd of little figures in his elaborate drawing of Robert Burns's dream at Lincluden Abbey is a fairy in a kilt attacking a pen-wielding toad (Fig. 30), which:

personates one of those critics or biographers, whose blackened pages, throwing their shadows before, sometimes while the poet lived, clouded his serenity. In the present instance, a friendly fairy shields him from the venom of the reptile, and annoys it in turn by the application of a sprig of Scotch thistle; the moral of which is, that the countrymen of the bard will not permit even his frailties to be further drawn from their dread abode without administering the merited castigation.³²

Such a view of character is not Hill's idea alone but is common to much of his circle. The reason we are so clear of his faults or failings lies in the habit the writers of the time had of dealing with these together with the virtues of their friends - whether this was moral criticism or a expression of character, the two are presented side by side. One surprising example is the biography of Sir David Brewster written by his daughter, who was at times consciously disrespectful. She wrote: 'That would be an unsuccessful picture which was all light and no shadow ... that would be a poor biography which told only the better part and threw a veil over the rest.'³³

'and be another...'

Hill would appear to have shared the ability of the great literary figures he admired, not simply to understand but to be, sympathetically, someone else. In John Brown's words:

Though little known as a delineator of human character, he has many of the mental qualities proper to this department: he can throw himself out of himself, and be another; he has humour, which implies, we have always thought, not merely character in its owner, but a power of seeing into the character of others;

³¹. Brown to John Taylor Brown, 10 February 1846, quoted in ibid. pp. 62 -63.

³². Hill to Wilson, published in D. O. Hill, *The Land of Burns, A Series of Landscapes and Portraits, illustrative of the Life and Writings of the Scottish Poet*, vol. 1, text by Robert Chambers and John Wilson, Glasgow, Edinburgh and London 1840, p. 105.

³³. Mrs Gordon, *The Home Life of Sir David Brewster*, Edinburgh 1869, p. 289.

and he has that thorough human-heartedness and love of his kind, that makes him lay out his affections on them wherever he sees them.³⁴

This ability involves an understanding of how life looks from inside someone else's head. Such empathy, which sees virtues and faults with an eye of generosity, is one of the most sophisticated, albeit often confusing, human traits.

In the early nineteenth century, the idea of occupying another personality may come from the convention of writing anonymously, particularly for journals like *Blackwood's Magazine* and *The Edinburgh Review*. This proved useful to women authors, who were taken more seriously if they were anonymous or pseudonymously male; Elizabeth Rigby, for example, wrote anonymously for the *North British Review* and implied in her text that she was a man. This anonymity, which Scott himself played with as 'The Great Unknown,' enabled not just protected critical writing, but writing in other *personae*. It had a positive creative purpose. Scott wrote of this, when his anonymity was broken:

As it is the privilege of a masque or incognito to speak in a feigned voice and assumed character, the author attempted, when in disguise, some liberties of the same sort ... the present acknowledgment must serve as an apology for a species of 'hoity toity, whisky frisky' pertness of manner, which in his avowed character, the author should have considered as a departure from the rules of civility and good taste.³⁵

The assumption of another's name, most evident in the form of parody, extended the idea further. Hill's taste for this is shown in a letter of encouragement to Paton, where he rewrites one of the parodies of James and Horace Smith:

"Joseph Muggins stir your stumps
Why are you in such doleful dumps
A dancer & afraid o pumps
What are they fear'd on, eh! ad raten
Here's the last sketch of J. N. Paton."³⁶

³⁴. John Brown, review of the RSA exhibition, *The Witness* (22 April 1846).

³⁵. Quoted in Fiona Robertson, *Legitimate Histories: Scott, Gothic and the Authorities of Fiction*, Oxford 1994, p. 126. This work has a useful chapter on 'Fictions of Authenticity,' pp. 117-60 and includes reference to Sarah Green's *Scotch Novel Reading; or, Modern Quackery: A Novel Really Founded on Facts* (London 1824), which offers the engaging possibility that such anonymity is a Scottish commercial plot to monopolise the novel-writing market.

³⁶. Hill to Paton, 6 January 1852, NLS Acc 11315, based on James and Horace Smith, 'A Tale of Drury Lane. The Burning,' *Rejected Addresses*

'You, Clutterbuck, come, stir your stumps,
Why are you in such doleful dumps?
A fireman and afraid of bumps! -
What are they feared on? fools! 'od rot em!'
Were the last words of Higginbottom.

The Smiths's *Rejected Addresses* were written on the occasion of a prize offered for a speech for the opening night of the Drury Lane theatre, rebuilt after a fire. It became a popular and critical success

The Smiths's *Rejected Addresses* was one of the first significant works of the kind.³⁷ The proposals of character and parody, when regarded as an alternative to caricature and satire, offered the nineteenth century a kinder and closer view of their subjects. The wider education of the time, based on the publishing revolution which made their assumed authors so familiar, meant that the earlier, more aggressive theatricality of approach became subtler and could offer both humour and understanding of the subject. In Dwight Macdonald's terms parody is 'an intuitive kind of literary criticism, shorthand for what "serious" critics must write out at length. It is Method acting, since a successful parodist must live himself, imaginatively, into his parodee ... Most parodies are written out of admiration rather than contempt.'³⁸ The parody accepted the idea of individuality and was a humorous celebration of 'marked and peculiar style,' adding to the pleasure and public currency of the original. The anonymous writing had, moreover, the interesting consequence that parody would not necessarily be distinguished from true authority.

The most extraordinary literary example of this confusion of personality known to Hill was the *Noctes Ambrosianae*, largely written by John Wilson for *Blackwood's Magazine* between 1822 and 1835. This series was presented as conversations between real people, lightly disguised under pseudonyms: John Wilson was 'Christopher North,' James Hogg was 'The Shepherd,' Thomas De Quincy was 'The Opium Eater,' and so forth. It was an extended bravura performance of multiple personality - poetic, ribald and critical - which Wilson maintained for thirteen years, until James Hogg's death.³⁹ Professor Ferrier, who edited the *Noctes* for republication, made the astonishing claim:

The Ettrick Shepherd of the Noctes Ambrosianane is one of the finest and most finished creations which dramatic genius ever called into existence ... In wisdom the Shepherd equals the Socrates of Plato; in humour he surpasses the Falstaff of Shakespeare. Clear and prompt, he might have stood up against Dr Johnston in close and peremptory argument; fertile and copious, he might have rivalled Burke in amplitude of declamation; while his opulent imagination and powers of comical description invest all that he utters either with a picturesque vividness,

and Francis Jeffrey devoted 18 pages of *The Edinburgh Review* to admiration of the work. See Dwight Macdonald, *Parodies. An Anthology from Chaucer to Beerbohm - and After*, London 1964, preface, p. 15.

³⁷. There are earlier examples, but this work was followed by the broad nineteenth-century movement of pleasure in the parody.

³⁸. Macdonald (as in n. 36), pp. 13-14.

³⁹. The idea was further complicated by a portrait of the naïve art collector and Secretary of the Dilettanti Club, James Bridges, who was painted as James Hogg by John Watson Gordon in 1818. In a private collection.

or a graphic quaintness peculiarly his own ... He is intensely individual and also essentially national. Hence he is real - hence he is universal.⁴⁰

In writing as 'Christopher North,' Wilson presented himself as fictional. Thomas Duncan painted a small full-length portrait of him, known as *Christopher in His Sporting Jacket* after one of Wilson's essays (Fig. 31), in which Wilson is portrayed in a physical, outdoor pose, hair windswept and shirt open, holding a gun.⁴¹ He was a large man, proud of his strength, who combined his writing with a love of the outdoor life. The kind of invention involved here is basically truthful. So it is curious that the painting was later attacked for sexual ambiguity. It was said, in 1879:

except in Edinburgh, where Professor Wilson could be, do, or say anything, the idea was little cherished. The man and the picture are out of keeping. At the desk or in the field he was masculine beyond his fellows, but here, dressed in character, he becomes trifling and effeminated. The head is veritably that of Professor Wilson, while the accessories are more fitted for T. P. Cooke.⁴²

Cooke was an actor, and it is hard to see what is meant here by 'the accessories.' Presumably the critic was not happy with a picture that offered duality.

The balanced historical opposition of the public and the private man, the serious and the relaxed, the mental and the physical, seems to have still been a common idea in Edinburgh in Hill's time. Lord Cockburn, in inviting a friend out to the country wrote of himself:

His Majesty's Solicitor General is a decorous person – arranged in solemn black – with a demure visage – an official ear – and evasive voice – suspicious palate – ascetic blood – and flinty heart. There is a fellow very like him, who traverses the Pentlands in a dirty grey jacket, white hat, with a long pole. That's not the Sol. Gen. That's Cocky – a frivolous dog.⁴³

The reaction to the portrait of Wilson is similar to that roused by David Wilkie's picture of Scott's family as a country farmer and his household (see Chapter four) and recently by the calotypes of Hugh Miller (see Introduction). It seems likely that the response in all three cases stems from the cultural dislocation of pictures transplanted from their time or place. The critics' anxiety is focussed on their own ideas of dignity, the

⁴⁰. Professor Ferrier, Preface, *Noctes Ambrosianae, The Works of Professor John Wilson*, Edinburgh and London 1855, vol. 1, pp. xvii -xviii. The same view was expressed by J. G. Lockhart in a letter of 1834: 'In Wilson's hands the Shepherd will always be delightful; but of the fellow himself I can scarcely express my contemptuous pity,' quoted in *James Hogg. Memoir of the Author's Life*, ed. Douglas S. Mack, Edinburgh and London 1972, p. xv.

⁴¹. In the collection of the SNPG. It was painted in 1844, for the publisher, Blackwood.

⁴². Peter H. Drummond, *Perthshire in Bygone Days*, London 1879, p. 130.

⁴³. Cockburn (as in n. 25), p. 33.

importance of appropriate dress and the display of worldly status, and probably implies a dislike of the exploration of duality in the character of the three men.⁴⁴ If this is indeed so, the adverse reaction to such Scottish pictures might provide us with an idea both of the nationality of such a concept or, perhaps more strictly, of the particular group which held such a view of nationality, and of a historical time within which it was acceptable. The concept may, at this point, have been distinctive in Scotland rather than in England and, in Scottish terms, unfashionable from about mid-century.

Thomas Carlyle was a leading voice in advancing the contrary idea of a monolithic, severe character for great men, which supplanted the variable idea:

man's spiritual nature, the vital Force which dwells in him, is essentially one and indivisible ... All that a man does is physiognomical of him. You may see how a man would fight by the way in which he sings.⁴⁵

Carlyle constantly repeats, in his lectures on the heroes, that their roots in a savage or rugged nature, their sincerity, even their silence and lack of action, were part of that admirable wholeness, which he extended beyond his historical knowledge. If they seemed imperfect or variable, their unseen, unacted spiritual or internal nature balanced them into the monolithic heroism. They stand in a context of unreality, isolated, not as other men. He wrote, for example, of Robert Burns against a background of: 'the withered unbelieving, secondhand Eighteenth Century... a Hero starting up, among the artificial pasteboard figures and productions, in the guise of a Robert Burns.'⁴⁶

The fact in fantasy

Hill may have enjoyed fancy dress occasions - like the curious fore-runners of the work of Gilbert and Sullivan that he helped his friend, the Editor of the *Glasgow Herald*, George Outram (1805-56), to compose and perform - partly because they allowed him to try being someone else. He referred to one of these performances, which was a satirical musical on an attempt of the clergy to raise their stipends:

I heard last week the whole of the Plea for Augmentation - it is almost a tragic performance and at the same time irresistibly comic. The greed, sensuality and worldiness of the clerical Elegant [?], is almost too dreadful to laugh at were it

⁴⁴. Victorian anxiety about theatricality, as opposed to sincerity, is discussed in Nina Auerbach, *Private Theatricals: The Lives of the Victorians*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1990.

⁴⁵. Thomas Carlyle, 'The hero as Poet [Shakespeare],' *On Heroes and Hero-Worship, The Works of Thomas Carlyle. Centenary Edition*, vol. 5, London 1897, p. 106.

⁴⁶. Ibid., 'The Hero as Man of Letters,' p. 188.

not for the ludicrous way in which the legal phraseology of the tiend court is interwoven with the ministers appeal.⁴⁷

This occasion was ribald and satirical but there was an additional seriousness behind the idea of such role-playing.

This is exemplified by the immense solemnity of the Eglinton Tournament.⁴⁸ This re-creation of a mediaeval tournament was staged in August 1839 in the wettest valley in Scotland and was, unsurprisingly, rained off. A reduced version of its original plan took place a few days later and the 'knights' performed respectably - it was not the complete fiasco experienced in earlier attempts to rekindle chivalry, in that the knights were capably athletic: they succeeded in hitting each other with the lances. The seriousness of the planning may be seen in the extraordinary cost of the exercise - the making and adapting of armour and historic costume, the enormous silver trophy and the splendid series of engravings detailing the action and events in highly imaginative precision. One hundred thousand people are estimated to have been in the audience. D. O. Hill was one of the artists present on the occasion and one of the fancy dress calotypes may well be a reminiscence of the event, since it was inscribed at a later date as 'D. O. Hill in Tournament Dress' (Fig. 32). This shows him as a minstrel playing the lute, an appropriate role, given his affection for singing and inventing song (see Chapter four).

Amongst Hill's friends, an affection for the Middle Ages can be seen in letters from James Nasmyth and the miniature painter, Kenneth MacLeay (1802-78), who is also seen in mediaeval dress in the calotypes. In 1835, Nasmyth wrote to Hill:

I trust we shall i'the end save a few "pieces of eight" and at a fitting season take my departure to some high and lonely tower where to converse on a dais of old, with one D.O. of happy memory. when to keep out the winter and colde weather I shall have a mug of nut Brown Ale and a crabb laid i'the fire (a sea cole one as old song hath it) Ah these be the daies to look forward to, then shall we imagine the sound of pipe and tabour in the hall, while we sit and gossip olde daies. while said crab bobs against nose in gossips bowl.⁴⁹

⁴⁷. Hill to Paton, 10 April 1851, NLS Acc 11315. *The Process of Augmentation* is published in *Lyrics Legal and Miscellaneous by the late George Outram*, ed. and intro. J. H. Stoddart, Edinburgh and London 1888, pp. 77-92.

⁴⁸. See Ian Anstruther, *The Knight and the Umbrella*, London 1963, Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot. Chivalry and the English Gentleman*, New Haven and London 1981, and Sara Stevenson and Helen Bennett, *Van Dyck in Check Trousers*, exhibition catalogue, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh 1978.

⁴⁹. Nasmyth to Hill, 5 August 1835, ROE. This surprisingly elderly passage was written when Nasmyth was 27.

Hill's antiquarian taste is seen in the calotypes where his fifteenth-century helmet is placed beside the harpist, Patrick Byrne (Fig. 33), and Jimmy Miller, *The Young Savage*. This helmet is a South German sallet for the tournament and an important piece.⁵⁰ He also possessed and calotyped 'an ancient oak door' carved with the figure of a man fighting a lion, which he showed to the Society of Antiquaries in 1848, and was himself one of the group who revived the moribund Society at the time.⁵¹

The Eglinton Tournament was a response to the economy of Queen Victoria's coronation - judged to be a sad contrast to the thrilling, if expensive, chivalry of George IV's. Behind the wistful affection for the decorative idea of the Middle Ages, lay a reasonable concern for generous morality, lost in the Industrial Revolution and the faltering principles of Free Trade. Thomas Chalmers, for example, recommended a hierarchical system of class, on the grounds that:

There is a soul in chivalry, which though nursed in the bosom of affluence, does not cloister there, but passes abroad from mind to mind, and lights up a certain glow of inspiration throughout the mass of the community ... where there are nobles, the common people are not so ignoble.⁵²

The unexpected impact of the Tournament may be judged by a letter written by Hugh Miller in the 1840s, which reads:

Could you lend me a glance of your volume on the Eglinton Tournament? Lord Glenlyon who acted so conspicuous and gallant a part then has been dealing by the Church with a degree of meanness and rancour not yet reached by any of the other aristocracy. It would be perhaps well to give him a gentle cutting up, and begin by a detail of his past [?] exploits. The knightly and brave should be generous and merciful.⁵³

The belief that someone enacting a role might be regarded as someone who had acquired its virtue or true character is a significant part of the interest in fancy dress and

⁵⁰. It passed from Hill to W. B. Johnstone and then to Noël Paton and is now in the Royal Museum of Scotland, NMS. A. 1902.429. See A. V. B. Norman, *Arms and Armour in the Royal Scottish Museum*, Edinburgh 1972, pp. 14-15 and fig. 11.

⁵¹. Hill showed 'A collection of calotype views of Scottish topographical antiquities and portraits, chiefly of individuals eminent as authors or artists' to the first of the Society's evening 'conversazioni' in February and showed them the door in April. Minute Book of the Society of Antiquaries, no. 5, p. 205. He later gave the Society an album of the calotypes, which is now housed in the NMS. See Marinell Ash, 'A fine, genial, hearty band': David Laing, Daniel Wilson and Scottish Archaeology,' *The Scottish Antiquarian Tradition*, ed. A. S. Bell, Oxford 1968, p. 105

⁵². Thomas Chalmers, *On political economy in connection with the moral state and moral progress of society* (1832), quoted by Donald C. Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest: Social Criticism in the Scottish Church 1830-1945*, New York 1987, p. 57.

⁵³. Miller to John Johnstone, ms attached to a copy of the large Hill and Adamson calotype of Miller, SNPC, PGPR169-42. Lord Glenlyon's contribution seems to have been largely the spending of a vast sum of money on costumes for himself and his following, see Ian Anstruther (as in n. 48), p.

amateur theatrical performance. It is a serious and optimistic idea, that the successful expression of emotion or virtue should be based on true experience. John Wilson expressed this, in reference to the actor, T. P. Cooke, who is mentioned in the criticism of Wilson's portrait. Wilson wrote, as 'Christopher North,' an admiring account of Cooke's performance as a sailor in *The Pilot*, which concluded that, 'all his experience of sea-life, and all his genius, would have been in vain, had he not possessed within his own heart the virtues of the British tar. That gives a truth, a glow of colouring to his picture of Long Tom.'⁵⁴ The idea had been transferred to painting through the Renaissance classical tradition that held 'the painter himself, like Horace's tragic actor, if he is to move the beholder of his picture must first feel these emotions himself. Si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi, is Horace's famous maxim.'⁵⁵

Lord Cockburn and *The Antiquary*

The prominent writer, in questions of the importance of personality, in ideas of variability and even in the concept of acceptable fallibility of character, was Walter Scott. Moreover, in his words, Scott invited the painters, obliquely and overtly, to consider passages for illustration. He emphasised and directed their role by imagining scenes in their terms and offering them subjects to paint. The effect of this was as disconcertingly widespread as the popularity of his work. Scott inspired painters worldwide and offered the prospect of a great, new range of familiar stories and scenes for interpretation. In a calotype session at Lord Cockburn's home, Bonaly Tower, Hill and Adamson took photographs illustrating Scott's *The Antiquary* (Fig. 34). The particular text comes from the account of the meeting between the characters, Edie Ochiltree and Miss Wardour:

Edie Ochiltree, old man and beggar as he was, had apparently some internal consciousness of the favourable impressions connected with his tall form, commanding features, and long white beard and hair ... At present, as he lay half-reclined, with his wrinkled yet ruddy cheek, and keen grey eye, turned up towards the sky, his staff and bag laid beside him, and a cast of homely wisdom and sarcastic irony in the expression of his countenance, while he gazed for a moment around the courtyard, and then resumed his former look upward, he might have been taken by an artist as the model of an old philosopher of the Cynic school ... The young lady, as she presented her tall and elegant figure at the open window, but divided from the courtyard by a grating, with which, according to

210.

⁵⁴. Wilson (as in n. 40), vol. 2, pp.37-8.

⁵⁵. Lee (as in n. 19), p. 24.

the fashion of ancient times, the lower windows of the castle were secured, gave an interest of a different kind, and might be supposed, by a romantic imagination, an imprisoned damsel communicating a tale of her durance to a palmer, in order that he might call upon the gallantry of every knight whom he should meet in his wanderings, to rescue her from oppressive thraldom.⁵⁶

The photographs employed Cockburn's daughter and the sculptor, John Henning, as the Antiquary's daughter and the licensed beggar or 'gaberlunzie.' Henning was usefully picturesque in appearance but was also similar to Ochiltree in cast of mind - a self-educated man with his own high-flown and confusing philosophy. Cockburn himself was an enthusiastic antiquary and built himself a fictionally historic building to live in - a self-determining hermit crab, re-presenting himself in Scott's terms.⁵⁷ His daughter was unmarried and possibly being courted at the time of the pictures, like Miss Wardour.⁵⁸ All three fitted convincingly into the imaginative invention of the fictional characters. It seems probable that Hill, with his knowledge of Scott, started, not with the idea of illustrating *The Antiquary*, but the other way about - recognising in the people a resemblance to the fiction. Such fancy photographs have an innately real character, which stays comfortably within a concern for the truthfulness of photography. There is another echo of significance here, which may have prompted the idea. An undated letter from Cockburn to Hill says:

I shall be very glad to see Mr Adamson & the Apparatus on Thursday ... Be so good as to step down from Pie Mont & put a note into the post office, as soon after receiving this as you can, saying whether you be all acquainted with Mr Ballantyne – the Gaberlunzie. If he be not a stranger to the party, I should like to have him out here.⁵⁹

James Ballantine, who wrote *The Gaberlunzie's Wallet*, was one of the group calotyped on this occasion. His book was an extension of Scott's idea, in which the wandering beggar moved about the landscape to different houses, where stories were told, poems recited and songs sung.

⁵⁶. Walter Scott, *The Antiquary. Waverley Novels*, vol. 5, Edinburgh and London, 1831, p. 166. Scott is himself making a reference here to the figure of Raphael's *Diogenes*.

⁵⁷. Bonaly Tower was a Scottish tower house designed for Lord Cockburn by William Playfair in 1836. Cockburn bought the land in 1811 and had first considered a neo-Tudor design by William Burn. See John Gifford, Colin McWilliam and David Walker, *Edinburgh (The Buildings of Scotland)*, Harmondsworth 1984, p. 518.

⁵⁸. Thomas Cleghorn proposed to her in 1848, but he was known to Cockburn and presumably his daughter well beforehand. Cockburn's letter of advice to his daughter on this occasion is published in Cockburn (as in n. 25), pp. 62-3. Hill sent her an album of photographs as a wedding gift in 1849.

⁵⁹. Cockburn to Hill, NLS Acc 10400.

Within this one photographic session, there is a remarkable nest of associations. Scott himself is involved. He was an antiquary and there is an element of self-satire in the portrait of *The Antiquary*. In building Abbotsford, Scott launched the baronial enthusiasm in Scottish architecture which overtook Cockburn.⁶⁰ Moreover, Scott's story presents a narrative before and after the passage quoted, giving it dramatic life - the contemporary audience looking at the picture would know that the beggar had saved the lives of the antiquary and his daughter during a dramatic storm the night before, and that she was about to offer him a substantial reward, which he would reject. The text offered a further layer of implication in the romance of a resemblance to earlier figures. The photographs would have thereby adopted an apt typological character, with three layers: the present actuality, the factually based fiction of the recent past and the Romantic distant past.

Hill had a long-standing professional and affectionate relationship with Lord Cockburn, especially in the Academy's affairs. It may be expressed by Cockburn's letter to him, in 1847, thanking him for a set of calotypes:

But are you not too munificent? - when I look on that splendid "Land of Burns," which adorns my shelves - & recollect sundry precious prints - & read your present intimation of still further generosity - I am abashed by the contrast of the little I have given with the greatness of what I have received.

However, the true value of the donations, in my sight, consists in the kindness that sends them, & in the reciprocity of this feeling, I am conscious that I am not unworthy of your favour - for I have a very strong & sincere esteem for you - extending far beyond the artistic matters with which so much of our intercourse has been connected ...

Weather & Adamsons health have been adverse to the completion of the Bonaly Book, but Hope, which fortunately for mortals never dies - hints about 1848 ... I don't believe that either Eastlakes or Stanfields appreciation of the coming volumes is a whit too high. My chief interest in it is, my Interest in the artist.⁶¹

The Bonaly Book was part of the entertainment offered by Cockburn at one of his country picnics. A letter from Hill to Cockburn's daughter, as Mrs Cleghorn, sending her an album, refers to it as, 'containing a few memorials of a very pleasant day at Bonaly ... [which] I intended to have sent to you on your marriage day - with an expression of my devout wishes for your happiness. I waited however to get impressions of the calotypes my London friend made at Bonaly last autumn - but I waited too long

⁶⁰. See Stephen Bann, 'The historical composition of place: Byron and Scott,' *The clothing of Clio*, Cambridge and elsewhere 1984, pp. 93-111.

⁶¹. Cockburn to Hill, 28 October 1847, NLS Acc 11782.

and the volume could not be got ready for the day.⁶² In these various ways, the Bonaly photographs have an extended and fascinating range of reference and memory. They contained the personal and public, the literary and actual. They are an expression of Hill's circle and knowledge – his admiration for Scott and Cockburn. It is not a coincidence that the account of Hill given by James Nasmyth comes at the end of his account of a Bonaly picnic in 1853: 'he was a delightful companion and a staunch friend, and his death made a sad blank in the artistic society of Edinburgh.'⁶³

⁶². Hill to Mrs Cleghorn, 12 May 1849, present whereabouts unknown. The 'London friend' has not been identified.

⁶³. *James Nasmyth, Engineer. An Autobiography*, London 1891, p. 336.

Chapter four

Nationality and the vernacular

Hugh Cheape has drawn attention to the similar dependence on and interest in literature, which is discussed in Chapter three, as an essential consideration in the study of Scottish nationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He writes that the question of the authentic history of the Jacobite movement is dominated by the ‘neglect of Scottish history in formal teaching and [the] consequence of Scots understanding their history through literature.’¹ This understanding was, again, substantially the responsibility of Walter Scott, defined by Marinell Ash:

The Romantic revolution in historical writing was born of Walter Scott and Scotland. The man and the place combined a blend of past and present, uncertainties and assumptions, physical realities and philosophical ideals which met the growing yearning of Europeans and Americans to receive (in the words of Heinrich Heine) ‘history from the hand of the poet not from the hand of the historian … dissolved back into the original poetry whence [it] came.’ Scott’s historical legacy was both personally unique and yet representative of the experience of his country, compounded as it was of the tensions and contradictions of a traditional Scotland merging into a changing British nation, part of a great world empire.²

One of the striking cultural phenomena of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Scotland was the development of the Highland idea into a leading national theme. The 1715 and 1745 rebellions in Scotland, in favour of the Stuart dynasty, were in the nature of civil wars. The line of division, Jacobite against Hanoverian, was far from clear-cut either in geographic or family terms; clans who supported the Stuarts in 1715, stood back in 1745.³ The war left a sense of divided loyalty and lost nationhood, harking back to the Union of 1707. Within a generation of the ‘45, a Romantic idea of the Highlands was advanced which helped to give a new coherence to the broader Scottish idea. In 1761, James Macpherson published his ‘translation’ of the Ossianic epic, which promoted the Highlanders as a grand primitive society, and offered an opposition, not so much between Highland and

¹. Hugh Cheape, ‘The Culture and Material Culture of Jacobitism,’ *Jacobitism and the '45*, London 1995, pp. 32-48.

². Marinell Ash, *The Strange Death of Scottish History*, Edinburgh 1980, p. 13.

³. See, for example, Frank McLynn, *The Jacobites*, London, Boston and Melbourne 1985.

Lowland or Highland and English as between the past and the present.⁴ According to Leah Leneman:

The strong belief in primitivism - the idea that earlier societies possessed virtues which more 'civilised' societies had lost - which was such a keynote of Enlightenment thinking, made the honourable and chivalrous characters presented by Macpherson very credible.⁵

She then quotes the writer, Anne Grant of Laggan (1755-1838), on the virtues of the primitivist ideal:

The importance and necessity, in a country thus enervated by luxury, thus lost in frivolous pursuits and vain speculations, to cherish in whatsoever remote obscurity they exist, a hardy manly Race, inured to suffering, fearless of Danger, and careless of Poverty, to invigorate Society by their spirit, to defend it by their courage, and to adorn it with those virtues that bloom in the shade, but are ready to wither away in the sunshine of prosperity.⁶

The defeat of the Jacobite cause withdrew the threat of violence and made it sentimentally attractive. After the death of Prince Charles Edward, his brother, Cardinal Henry Benedict, made the Hanoverian line his heirs. Walter Scott's first novel, *Waverley*, was designed to consider the contradictions of the Jacobite/Hanoverian conflicts in 1715 and 1745 from a human rather than political viewpoint.⁷ Scott was, from childhood inclination, a Jacobite - he knew men who had fought in the war and some of his relatives had been executed by the Duke of Cumberland - but his adult judgment 'inclined for the public weal to the present succession.'⁸ The idea of the Jacobites, which he proposed in the book, was attractive for its heroism, but he balanced the narrative by introducing the human factor. *Waverley* was an Englishman, caught up in the Highland fighting, who could see his old commander and fellow soldiers on the English side as equally heroic. When George IV visited Scotland in 1822, Walter Scott filled Edinburgh with a Highland

⁴. For the context and impact of Ossian, see William Ferguson, *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: An Historic Quest*, Edinburgh 1998, pp. 227-49.

⁵. Leah Leneman, *Perspectives in Scottish Social History*, Aberdeen 1988, p. 112

⁶. Quoted in *ibid.*, loc. cit.

⁷. Discussed, for example, by Robert C. Gordon, *Under Which King? A Study of the Scottish Waverley Novels*, Edinburgh and London 1969.

⁸. *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott (1811-1814)*, ed. H. J. C. Grierson, London 1932-7, p. 302.

host and saw the King wearing the Highland dress, which had been proscribed by royal decree after the battle of Culloden in 1746.⁹

Hill believed that opposing forces could be united in sympathy for heroism. This is expressed in his support for Joseph Noël Paton's grand plan for a national memorial in Princes Street, which disconcertingly featured a plaque of William Wallace's trial in London, related to the mocking of Christ. Hill defended the memorial with great passion against the doubt of David Roberts (resident in London):

England then as now recognized in Wallace a noble martyr for Liberty, done to death by a powerful and sagacious but unscrupulous and tyrannical Norman King. Englishmen should and do revere the memory of Wallace ... I believe they will aid the monument, if this aid is wanted. And as to Bruce - the opinion of the late Dr Arnold of Rugby is one that Englishmen will listen to, and he has said that "Englishmen should keep the anniversary of Bannockburn as the day which conferred on England her right arm." Consider the sort of Union we would have had, had Scotland been a downtrodden & conquered people: - contrast such a Union with that whose blessings we now enjoy.¹⁰

Hill and Roberts were at odds here, but Hill's enthusiasm was deeply rooted in a concept of union based on heroic sympathy.¹¹ Hill's idea of nationality is culturally respectful or assimilated. He had no difficulty associating Burns and Shakespeare, as he did in to the *Fishermen and Women* series.¹² The great advantage offered by the influence of the Scottish Enlightenment, but more emphatically by the wider, literary influence of James Macpherson, Robert Burns and Walter Scott, was precisely that Scottish nationalism could be approached from a position of strength. Isolation was not necessary to generate distinction; such distinction had flowered within the Union. Hugh Miller wrote of Scott's influence in the balance of the Union, at the inauguration of the Scott Monument in 1844:

He has interested Europe in the national character and in some corresponding degree in the national welfare; and this of itself is a very important matter indeed ... the European celebrity of the fictions of Sir Walter must have had the inevitable effect of raising the character of his country – its character as a country of men of large growth, morally and intellectually.¹³

⁹. See Gerald Finley, *Turner and George IV in Edinburgh*, London and Edinburgh 1981.

¹⁰. Hill to Roberts, July 1859, NLS Acc 7723.

¹¹. Paton's prospectus for the sculpture is discussed as evidence of unionist nationalism by R. J. Morris, 'Victorian values in Scotland and England,' *Victorian Values*, ed. T. C. Smout, Oxford 1992, pp. 38-41.

¹². See Sara Stevenson, *Hill and Adamson's 'Fishermen and Women of the Firth of Forth'*, Edinburgh 1992.

¹³. Miller defined nationalism, 'in its human and more charitable form,' as necessary to the love of

'Highland Character and Costume'

One of the six albums of photographs Hill and Adamson announced in 1844 was *Highland Character and Costume*. This was presumably meant to include the Highland ministers and Hugh Miller, who came from Cromarty, north of the Highland line. The volume would certainly have contained the piper, John Ban Mackenzie, the miniature painter, Kenneth MacLeay, the celebrated deerstalker, Finlay and the Sobieski Stuart brothers. Hill probably also intended to include the large calotype of Alexander Campbell of Monzie, who was described with such enthusiasm by John Stuart Blackie that he sounds fictional:

He received me with great frankness of old Highland hospitality, gave me a splendid dinner of venison-tripe and full-bosomed grouse, with a magnum of most excellent claret, capped with a tumbler of brandy-and-water ... we had all sorts of laughing and talking and explosive outbursts. He took me through all his various and strange museums, introduced me to his magnificent deerhounds, and mingled deer-stalking and good fellowship with pious scraps of Gospel and Revival hymns in a manner quite original and refreshing ... he is full of natural vigour and nobleness, but like a wild horse has never been accustomed to the rein, and is not quite understood by the quiet jogging people of whom the respectability of this world is mainly made up. He and I got on like gunpowder, and came down the glen in the dark, singing song for song.¹⁴

Charles Edward Stuart (1799-1880) was calotyped in full Highland dress, in a suitably melancholic pose, lying on a rocky ledge (Fig. 35). He and his brother, John, lived as a Romantic fiction, claiming to be the legitimate heirs of the Stuart line. They told their own story in print in 1847 as a mysterious tale of the Stuart Princess, Clementina Sobieska, conceiving in secret. The boy, who became their father, was then smuggled away, unacknowledged. They established themselves on an island in the middle of the River Beauly.¹⁵ In 1848, they published a verse account of their life

humanity and the preservation of liberty, and 'cosmopolitanism' simply as indifference. Hugh Miller, 'The Scott Monument,' *Leading Articles on Various Subjects*, ed. Rev. John Davidson, Edinburgh 1870, pp.115-6.

¹⁴. *The Letters of John Stuart Blackie to his Wife*, ed. Archibald Stodart Walker, Edinburgh 1909, p. 169. This is strongly contrasted with John Brown's disapproval, 'This is the great slaughter, the St Bartholomew of Grouse. Campbell of Monzie, that Freekirkman and purist, has wagered that he slays 230 brace this day, besides wounding and sending miserably into Eternity 3 times as many.' 12 August 1846, *Letters of Dr John Brown*, ed. by his son and D. W. Forrest, London 1909, p. 66.

¹⁵. A painting of the two brothers standing in their neo-gothic interior, decorated with targes, swords, coats of arms and stags' antlers, is illustrated in Christian Hesketh, *Tartans*, London 1961, p. 96.

on the banks of the Findhorn river, as *Lays of the Deer Forest*. A sympathiser described their life:

Here the two brothers entirely realised the old border ideas of gallant young huntsmen, - superb figures, attired in the ancient dress of the century, and full of chivalric feeling, - who, giving up the common pursuits of the world, spent most of their days in following the deer through the pathless wild.¹⁶

To the colder eye of Elizabeth Rigby, they were immediately transparent. She met one of them in 1843 and remarked:

the man was dressed in all the extravagance of which the Highland costume is capable - every kind of tag and rag, false orders, and tinsel ornaments which could be heaped on an ill-made clumsy person; the whole surmounted by a face very like the portraits of Charles II, but nothing like the descriptions of the Pretender.¹⁷

Their work was published in the 1840s; firstly, the *Vestiarum Scoticum*, which purported to be an ancient manuscript, in 1842, then *The Costume of the Clans*, in 1845.¹⁸ The calotype of Charles Edward Stuart was exhibited in the Academy in early 1844. I would take it that Hill was prepared to accept the brothers as genuine. The obvious invention in their work fitted so pleasingly into the taste for a Highland Romance of life that people wished it to be true, although the sustained examination of their printed arguments made that truth more doubtful. It is not impossible that the publication of *The Costume of the Clans* was prompted by Hill and Adamson's own proposal. The calotype volume would have been one of a number of such grand publications, which included R. R. McLan's *The Clans of the Scottish Highlands*, issued in parts from 1843 and Kenneth MacLeay's *Highlanders of Scotland*, published in 1868 at the instigation of Queen Victoria.¹⁹ MacLeay himself, who appears in the calotypes in Highland dress, was proud of his own Jacobite ancestry and claimed descent from Robert I. MacLeay and his wife, who were known to Hill as

¹⁶. George Stronach, Introduction, John Sobieski Stolberg Stuart and Charles Edward Stuart, *The Costume of the Clans*, Edinburgh 1892.

¹⁷. *Journals and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake*, ed. Charles Eastlake Smith, London 1895, p. 55.

¹⁸. Scott had expressed scepticism about the *Vestiarum*, when they first produced the document: 'I have understood that the Messrs. Hay Allan are young men of talent, great accomplishments, and an exaggerating imagination, which possibly deceives even themselves.' Letter to Thomas Dick Lauder, 5 June 1829, *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott 1828-31*, vol. 11, ed. H. J. C. Grierson, London 1936, p. 201.

¹⁹. Noël Paton recommended MacLeay as a miniaturist to Queen Victoria, as a 'Highlander of Highlanders.' See Helen Smailes, *Kenneth MacLeay 1802-1878*, Edinburgh 1992, p. 14.

‘the King and Queen,’ responded to an Academy invitation in 1847, in appropriately regal and mediaeval style:

Be it known unto our trusty & well beloved Cousin & Secretary of the Mount that it is her Majesty Queen Louisa’s intention along with ourself this night to Grace your Banquet & that in time to remark upon the pane of our Juvenile Subjects.²⁰

The Disruption Picture and nationalism

The Highland idea was, with the aid of James Macpherson and Walter Scott, built in to the cultural understanding of Hill and his contemporaries. It was promoted pictorially by the grand Highland portraits of Henry Raeburn. It gave warmth and strength to the figures Hill admired: the Gordon Highlanders, heroes of the Napoleonic Wars (Fig. 36) and, more extraordinarily, the Free Churchmen.

In the foreground of the Disruption Picture, the composition is anchored by the only two wholly unobstructed figures: Hugh Miller and Sergeant Mackenzie of the 42nd Highlanders, ‘Pipe-major of the regiment at Waterloo, where he behaved with great gallantry,’ who acted as ‘one of the Officers of the Assembly.’²¹ He is wearing Highland dress and is sitting, leaning forward in an attitude of attentive contemplation; there is no military stiffness in his attitude (Fig. 25).

The pose is reminiscent of the figure of the native American in Benjamin West’s *The Death of General Wolfe*.²² The painting was immensely popular; West painted at least five replicas and the engraving by William Woollett was ‘one of the most commercially successful prints ever published.’²³ It was much debated in its time for breaking the convention of showing heroes in classical dress, in favour of contemporary uniforms, giving the picture that core sense of specific time and respect for nationality, which is critical also to the Disruption Picture. John Galt later quoted West’s justification:

The same truth which guides the pen of the historian should govern the pencil of the artist. I consider myself as undertaking to tell this great event to the eye

²⁰. MacLeay to Hill, 2 February 1847, RSA.

²¹. Anon (presumed to be D. O. Hill), *The Disruption of the Church of Scotland: An Historical Picture ... painted by D. O. Hill*, Edinburgh 1866, p. 16.

²². Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West*, New Haven and London 1986, pp. 55-68.

²³. Ibid., p. 213.

of the world; but if instead of the facts of the transaction I represent classical fictions, how shall I be understood by posterity?²⁴

West's painting may not have been factual in a literal sense. The American is unnamed and was presumably meant as a representative national and historical figure, posed as the melancholic observer. Sergeant Mackenzie, who was an identified individual, serves a similar purpose in the Disruption Picture, locating the event in its national context and offering the respect of a military warrior to fighters in another arena.

This comparison may be underscored by a group of photographs Hill and Adamson took in 1845. In August of that year, Hill and Adamson were able to take one of the earliest photographs of an American chieftain.²⁵ Their subject was the Rev. Peter Jones or Khakewaquinaby (Fig. 37), an Ojibeway from North West Canada, the son of a Welsh methodist and an Ojibeway woman.²⁶ Jones was touring Britain to raise money for schools to promote Western civilisation and Christianity among his people. He preached in the churches of the Rev. Thomas Guthrie and Rev. Dr Robert Smith Candlish (1807-73) in Edinburgh, and addressed a public meeting.

Jones was not, in some eyes, a sufficiently Romantic figure. John Stuart Blackie's response to him is in striking contrast to his lyrical description of Campbell of Monzie: 'He is a tall, dark-haired, dark-eyed, rather poor looking fellow, but with a big bulging mouth.'²⁷ Very probably, both for Guthrie and Hill, he was a model of assimilation. Hill, it should be emphasised in this context, did not look for beautiful models to symbolise his ideal but looked to the admirable reality.

Peter Jones appears in two groups of photographs, one in tribal dress and the other in Western clothes. The calotypes thus show him in two roles: the historic and American figure standing, wearing the war bonnet and holding an axe, and sitting on the ground, contemplative, with the pipe of peace; and the Western man of religion with the Holy Bible. The pictures offer the optimistic potential of assimilation - the

²⁴. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 56.

²⁵. In the 1840s, it was not necessary to visit North America to encounter native Americans. Catlin lectured in Edinburgh with 'Tableaux Vivants and Groupes on the North American Indians' in 1843, advertised in *The Witness* (21 April 1843), and a group of 14 from the Ioway tribe performed in Edinburgh's Music Hall, advertised in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* (27 January 1845).

²⁶. See Lilly Koltun, 'Regalia of Conversion,' *Studies in Photography*, 1999, pp. 9-11.

²⁷. Blackie (as in n. 14), p. 117.

proposal that the history and simpler virtues of the older culture may combine with the new.

Thomas Guthrie used the parallel of the native American to admire Hugh Miller's fighting spirit in 1843, making a comparison with the Highlander in Miller:

On the eve of what was to prove a desperate conflict, I have seen him in such a high and happy state of eagerness and excitement, that he seemed to me like some Indian *brave*, painted, plumed, leaping into the arena with a shout of defiance, flashing a tomahawk in his hand, and wearing at his girdle a very fringe of scalps, plucked from the heads of enemies that had fallen beneath his stroke.²⁸

The calotypes of Miller, like the calotypes of Jones, offered alternate readings, either as the Cromarty mason or as the man of letters (see Introduction). In the Disruption Picture, Hill painted him as the editor of the Free Church newspaper, *The Witness*, noting the proceedings (Fig. 25). The decision to use Hugh Miller as one of the key supporting figures of the painting was made after the photographs were taken and only the head is copied from a calotype. That this is Miller the intellectual is emphasised by the choice of calotype; of the two profiles, Hill used the one showing him with his hair combed back to show the height of the temple - the visible sign of intellect. Hill added the drape of the plaid, which Miller wore, as both a Highland and a historical reference. It echoes Hill's remark to Lady Ruthven, of a picture of Patrick Byrne (Fig. 33): 'The Harper, whose costume is made of a blanket and plaid shows how simply one might get up pictures of the old world.'²⁹

The composition of the painting changed radically within the twenty years Hill worked on it. I do not know when Hill placed Miller in this position but the idea was not a part of the original designs. It may be that the portrait and its prominence is also a personal tribute; given the friendship between Hill and Miller, there can be no doubt that he was deeply shaken by Miller's suicide in 1856.³⁰ The text for the painting says:

The plaied form ... employed in taking notes near the Clerks' table, is the editor of the *Witness* newspaper ... a name very dear to Scotland, and admired wherever the English language is read - whose figure does not bulk more prominently in the picture than did his remarkable writings in the controversy

²⁸. *Autobiography of Thomas Guthrie, D.D. and Memoir by his sons, Rev. David K. Guthrie and Charles J. Guthrie*, London 1875, vol. 2, p. 2.

²⁹. Hill to Ruthven, 1847, RSA.

³⁰. Miller shot himself when overwhelmed by the pain of a brain disease.

evolving the Disruption, of which it may be said emphatically he was one of the greatest leaders.³¹

The idea that this is a memorial tribute is supported by the fact that Hill's text refers to the portrait of Robert Adamson, which is placed much higher in the composition, immediately before this passage. On the ledge beside Miller lie copies of *The Witness*. On the ground, scattered at his feet are flowers, the natural tribute of affection to mortality.

The Disruption Picture was a nationalist painting in a broader sense. The founding of the Free Church was filled with extraordinary excitement, fuelled by principle and generosity. At the time, even observers who were not wholeheartedly behind the movement were deeply affected. It was a source of national excitement and pride. The occasion:

made Lord Jeffrey fervently exclaim, "I am proud of my countrymen!" and Lord Cockburn with like emotion enunciate, when, on the day following, the Painter communicated his intention to paint the event, "There has not been such a subject since the days of Knox - and not then!"³²

John Brown, while expressing a doubt of the principle behind the movement, still felt 'the wonderfulness, the solemnity, and in a certain just sense, the heroism of the time and act.'³³

The Disruption was neither narrow nor parochial and, indeed, it was a focus of international attention. Hugh Miller wrote of Hill's projected painting in June 1843:

His picture bids fair to possess an interest, not limited to one age or one country. One of the most pregnant events in modern history is the disruption of the Scottish Establishment; and it is an event for which Evangelism all over the world feels a deep concern. The Christian is the only true cosmopolite; his sympathies are co-extensive with the human family; and those feelings of love and admiration which a narrow patriotism confines within its limited ranges of hills, or its bounded lines of coast, he extends to wherever, for the sake of Christ, there are great dangers encountered or great sacrifices made.³⁴

This explains Hill's apparent optimism in promoting the finished picture:

³¹. *The Disruption* ... (as in n. 21), p. 16.

³². *The Disruption* ... (as in n. 21), p. 4.

³³. John Brown, 'The Disruption - The Signing of the Deed of Demission. A Picture by D. O. Hill,' *The Scotsman* (24 May 1846).

³⁴. Hugh Miller, 'The Two Prints,' *The Witness* (24 June 1843).

The Painter entertains the hope ... that the representation of an event so evidently designed to fill a large place in history, and to exert a far-reaching influence, will find ready admission into the houses and Art Collections of men of all denominations of religious opinions.³⁵

It was not an optimism founded on local enthusiasm alone. In 1862, Thomas Guthrie spoke of a discussion with the Chevalier Bunsen, expatiating with rapture on the Free Church and Scotland:

The idea that had seized his mind, and on which he dwelt so eloquently, was this - that God had, in His providence, raised us up in this country, and placed us in circumstances favourable for its solution, to try the problem, whether a Church, without aid or countenance from the State, could by the resources of its own members and nothing else, fulfil the two grand objects of every living being - sustain and extend itself.³⁶

The Act of Secession was based on the need to separate the political state from religious morality. In Christopher Harvie's words, Thomas Chalmers claimed for the Kirk, 'the status of a sovereign state,' independent of political government.³⁷ In 1917, Harold Laski's *Studies in the Problems of Sovereignty* talked of the Free Churchmen in these terms:

They were fighting a State which had taken over bodily the principles and ideals of the medieval theocracy. They urged the essential federalism of society, the impossibility of confining sovereignty to any one of its constituent parts.³⁸

Laski identified a surprising fact about the Disruption, viewed from the early twentieth-century perspective and in the context of political nationalism; that Scottish historians had not written an adequate history of 'the central event of nineteenth-century Scottish history'.³⁹ Ironically, the painted history of the event, offered so expansively by Hill, did not take on the authority of the missing writing. In the last twenty years, it has proved necessary and interesting to the Scottish historians to explain the importance of the Disruption:

³⁵. *The Disruption ...* (as in n. 21), p. 4.

³⁶. Guthrie (as in n. 28), p. 67.

³⁷. Christopher Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics*, London 1977, pp. 84-5.

³⁸. Quoted in *ibid*, p. 60.

³⁹. *Ibid.* p. 61.

It was an age of revolution in Scotland, more far-reaching in its impact than that surrounding the Union of 1707, and the Disruption crystallised and symbolised the transformations being unleashed on the nation.⁴⁰

The evangelical movement may indeed have been responsible for undermining or, more strictly, replacing the political radicalism of the Chartist movement in Scotland.⁴¹ It could be regarded as the equivalent of the political revolutions in the other countries of Europe, although the arguments of the Free Church leaders were firmly set in a non-revolutionary structure.⁴² They specifically upheld the current social stratification, regarding its failure as a breakdown, which could be restored by ameliorating the conditions and raising the moral status of the poor at the base of the pyramid. The principal aim was elevating the minds, or rather the souls, of the people, not their comparative circumstances.⁴³ The advantage of the Free Church idea, which helped to distinguish it from a state or political concern, was the concentration on the individual's responsibility, to think and act with direct moral consciousness. The picture was designed as a model of moral democracy.

Music and historic tradition

Beside Sergeant Mackenzie in the Disruption Picture is another thoughtful figure, Mr Hately, the precentor who led the singing during the Free Church sessions (Fig. 25). His presence was designed by Hill to:

remind the spectator of that opening song of praise, given forth by Dr Chalmers as the Church's first act of Devotion after the Disruption -
“O send Thy light forth and Thy truth” -
and joined in by the nearly four thousand voices with a joy and fervour of devotion seldom experienced; while the immense hall, till then but dimly seen from the dark and clouded nature of the day, was now filled with beaming light, from the bursting forth of the sun dispelling darkness, a change in the

⁴⁰. Stewart J. Brown and Michael Fry, *Scotland in the Age of the Disruption*, Edinburgh 1993, p. ix.

⁴¹. See Dr Elder's account of a meeting at Dumfries, when Guthrie circumvented a Chartist attempt to disrupt the proceedings, in *Autobiography of Thomas Guthrie* (as in n. 28), pp. 25-6.

⁴². It is doubtless a coincidence that Karl Marx wrote, 'religion is the opium of the people,' in 1843.

⁴³. This is antipathetic to twentieth century political and religious theories. See, for example, Donald C. Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest: social criticism in the Scottish church 1830-1945*, New York 1987. The 'passive obedience' to the worldly structure was justified by the biblical instruction, 'Render unto Caesar ...,' and was not seen as an obedience of the mind. A positive view of Thomas Chalmers's work is offered by Stewart J. Brown, 'Thomas Chalmers and the Communal Ideal,' *Victorian Values*, Oxford 1992, pp. 61-80.

face of the heavens in wonderful harmony with the words of the psalm and the feelings of the worshippers.⁴⁴

This was the emotional, mysterious focus of the day. When painting the picture and thinking of the event, Hill heard that hymn, and in the picture the sun streams in through a skylight to celebrate that moment. The song is there with the sunlight.

The prospectus ended with a discussion of ‘the objects of still life in the Picture,’ including the flowers, which:

were a feature in the first Assembly, being the everyday gifts of the ladies of the Church ... Scotch in their associations, they also mark the month of May, and call up many beautiful thoughts and sayings dear to the heart of Scotland, and applicable to the situation, from that of the greatest of her poets -
“The hyacinth’s for constancy, wi’ its unchanging blue”-
to that of HIM who spoke to the multitudes on the Mount, and now, here to the hundreds of homeless men who had that day given their all for Him ...
“Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that Solomon, in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”⁴⁵

The first quotation comes from Robert Burns’s love song, ‘The Posie.’⁴⁶ Hill is making a reference to the month of May, when the Disruption took place - the singer picks different flowers in succession and the refrain is: ‘And a’ to be a posie to my ain dear May.’ The justification for quoting the work of a reprobate in the context of a religious painting is Hill’s generous belief in analogy within the arts and within nature. For him, ‘The Posie’ could be an equivalent of ‘The Song of Solomon,’ a love song and, on another plane, a song offering a reflection of divine love. The celebration within the song of the beauty, simplicity and sweetness of a girl would not have struck Hill as incongruous as an expression of the crowd of Presbyterian ministers. It is certainly not a direct analogy but it is reflected in the impulse of the ladies in ‘their everyday gifts,’ to add physical beauty and sweetness to the moral beauty of the occasion.

Hill’s talent for singing helped to make him popular at social gatherings and he even figures in a song, written by George Outram, to celebrate a housewarming, in which the warmth of the house is measured against the general state of inebriation.

When Bell begins to falter in his boisterous career,

⁴⁴. *The Disruption* ... (as in n. 21), p. 16.

⁴⁵. *Ibid.*, p.17.

⁴⁶. ‘The Posie,’ *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. James Kinsley, Oxford 1968, vol. 2, pp. 638-9.

And Mackenzie's merry voice begins to sound a little queer,
And Hill's becoming tuneless - we may the question pit,
In whispers to each other - Is the house warm yet?⁴⁷

Hill joined Outram in Glasgow, in 1844, at a 'Scotch Denner':

a purely national meal, to which each guest was to come in the costume of some favourite Scottish worthy, and which was to be a gathering ironically renewing the once popular lamentations over the Union with England, as destructive of the independence and ancient position of Scotland. The "denner," to which only a small and select party was invited, each of whom appeared in a historical character and dress, came off on 22d July 1844, being the 138th anniversary of the Treaty of Union ... With the toasts, on the occasion of the "denner," were intermingled many of the Chairman's most delightful songs - some of them being composed for the occasion - together with other songs, hardly less delightful, by a favourite Scottish landscape-painter, now, alas! no more [i.e. Hill]; and with the irresistible stories of another Scottish artist [Daniel Macnee], who, happily, still survives to charm his countrymen alike with his word and colour painting.⁴⁸

This was a consciously historical occasion, a mock revolutionary gesture, with Scottish food of both the finest and the least pretentious kind and a menu written in verse quotations.⁴⁹ It is interesting that the two aspects of the vernacular tradition, original song and storytelling, were represented by two artists.

The connection between song and nationality was long-standing and was even used in the political context of the Union of 1707. Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, 'the archetypical Scottish patriot of modern history,' wrote at that time a dialogue on the regulation of governments for the common good, which contained the celebrated passage:

I knew a very wise man ... [who] believed if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation.⁵⁰

The concern for the decline of song as a critical part of Scotland's social culture was expressed by James Hogg in the early 1830s as part of a broad concern for farm

⁴⁷. 'Is the House Warm Yet?' set to the tune, 'When the house is rinnin' round about it's time enough to flit,' *Legal and Other Lyrics by the Late George Outram*, new ed., ed. J. H. Stoddart, Edinburgh and London 1888, pp. 156-8.

⁴⁸. Ibid., pp. 7 and 13-14.

⁴⁹. The food included a dish called 'crappit head,' described later as a variant on haggis, 'stuffed into the heads or skulls of large haddocks, and ... roasted in a Dutch-oven.' ibid., p. 24.

⁵⁰. Ferguson (as in n. 4) and Andrew Fletcher, 'An Account of A Conversation Concerning a Right Regulation of Governments for the common Good of Mankind,' quoted in Paul H. Scott, *Andrew Fletcher and the Treaty of Union*, Edinburgh 1992, p. 98.

workers, whose material conditions had improved but who were, in his opinion, less devout and less happy:

On looking back, the first great falling off is in Song ... the young men attended at the ewe-bucht or the cows milking, and listened and joined the girls in their melting lays ... I never heard any music that thrilled my heart half so much as when these nymphs joined their voices, all in one key, and sung a slow Scottish melody ... Where are those melting strains now? Gone and for ever!⁵¹

The publishing revolution had helped to spread new songs but also made available the collected editions of old ballads, gathered by poets like Allan Ramsay in his *Tea Table Miscellany* in 1724 or Walter Scott in his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* of 1802-3. The idea that the vernacular should be a spring of sophisticated creativity was well established; sophisticated writing *became* vernacular and authorship was often concealed to make a song historical.⁵² Jacobite songs were invented by such as Baroness Nairne, who also wrote 'Caller Herrin' - one of the fishwives' songs.⁵³

One of the reasons why the old songs had a considerable impact, both within Scottish culture and abroad, lay in the Scottish poets' continuing concern, not simply to collect what in some instances were fragments but to re-write and improve them. At the end of the eighteenth century, an English enthusiast for historic song, Joseph Ritson, identified as peculiarly Scottish and peculiarly irritating the habit of re-writing historical texts:

Why the Scotish [sic] literati should be more particularly addicted to literary imposition than those of any other country, might be a curious subject of investigation for their new Royal Society ... The history of Scotish poetry exhibits a series of fraud, forgery and imposture, practiced with impunity and success.⁵⁴

The Scots had established a thoroughly ambiguous but lively idea of re-writing which falls comfortably within established convention in the creative arts but is antipathetic

⁵¹. James Hogg 'On the changes in the habits, amusements and conditions of the Scottish peasantry,' reprinted in *A Shepherd's Delight. A James Hogg Anthology*, ed. Judy Steel, Edinburgh 1985, p. 41.

⁵². See Alexander Whitelaw, *The Book of Scottish Song*, Glasgow 1844, which has Hill's frontispiece illustration, 'The Bower of Bessy Bell and Mary Gray,' and T. F. Henderson, *Scots Vernacular Literature*, Edinburgh 1910.

⁵³. *Life and Songs of Baroness Nairne*, ed. Rev. Charles Rogers, Edinburgh 1896, pp.164-6.

⁵⁴. Joseph Ritson, in 1794, quoted in Carol McGuirk, *Robert Burns and the Sentimental Era*, Phantassie 1997, p. 125.

to antiquarianism. The problem, and the justification of Ritson's complaint, lay in the extraordinary Scottish tendency to deny authorship.

Robert Burns was the principal figure in this combination of historical discovery and invention.⁵⁵ He subsumed his own energies in the re-writing of old songs, both respecting and joining his work to the creativity of the ancient bards, who:

described the exploits of Heroes, the pangs of disappointment & the meltings of Love, with such fine strokes of Nature ... O ye illustrious names unknown! The last, the meanest ... one who though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes your path ... pays this sympathetic pang to your memory.⁵⁶

Burns's songs have a seductive force, appealing to the emotions through a combination of the sophisticated and the simple. He melded the old and the new, re-writing old songs and inventing new songs in a traditional manner. There is a remarkable range of emotional impact in his songs, not just from satire to sincerity, but from love to patriotism, from carousing to despair, from tragedy to tiresomeness, from the extraordinary to the ordinary. The range of emotional experience offered in singing such songs must have been not just uplifting and cathartic but part of the whole proposal of being another and exploring human nature.⁵⁷

As a singer and inventor of songs, Hill would have been well aware of the concentrated skill involved in writing and singing songs of such apparent simplicity. The act of singing is ephemeral and we cannot hear Hill's voice. For John Brown it was an equivalent or illumination of his painting and he wrote in his 1846 review:

His works always exhibit something of the highest beauty, - often a sort of tenderness as unexpected and as plaintive as the "owercome" of an old border ditty *sung by himself*.⁵⁸

Brown's comment suggests that Hill could cope with musical sophistication. It is reasonable to assume that he knew how a song was constructed and could achieve subtle effects.

From the outsiders' point of view, the Scots had a notable affection for music. The readiness of Scottish society to burst into song and dance was commented on by Benjamin Robert Haydon in the 1820s:

⁵⁵. Discussed in *ibid.*, pp. 103-148.

⁵⁶. Quoted in *ibid.* p. 119.

⁵⁷. This may be felt from Jean Redpath's singing of the songs in the settings designed to reassert the original music, by Serge Hovey, in *The Songs of Robert Burns*, vols 1-6, CDTRAX 114-6.

I never had a complete conception of Scotch hospitality till I dined at [Andrew] Geddes' with Sir H. Raeburn and [George] Thompson (who set Burns' songs to music), and a party of thirty at least.

Thompson sang some of the songs of Burns with great relish and taste, and at the chorus of one, to my utter astonishment, the whole company took hands, jumped up and danced to the tune all round till they came to their seats again, leaving me sitting in wonder.⁵⁹

Our earliest glimpse of Hill is provided by the miniature painter, Margaret Saunders, who arrived in Edinburgh around 1830, with a letter of introduction to Hill. She attended a dance at William Allan's house:

I was destined to make a scene that night, for when I was waltzing with D. O. Hill, I felt a little faint and said I would stop, he said O just one round more but at the end of the round I fell in a faint; and had to be carried or led into another room and laid on a bed, quite interesting.⁶⁰

Elizabeth Rigby described an Edinburgh dance in 1843, as a wild, national and historical impulse:

Nobody would believe in England what an immense expenditure of animal spirits goes on, on these occasions. Young men and children, old men and maidens, all jumping and whirling, and toiling alike. You can hardly believe your eyes till you see the oldest and gravest in the land cutting capers, snapping fingers, tossing their heads, twisting round, brandishing their arms, shaking their legs, clapping hands, whooping, yelling and screaming, till you expect them to sink down with sheer exhaustion, like the dervishes.⁶¹

The poet, Leigh Hunt, expressed a similar feeling about Scotland in the 1850s, in writing to John Hunter of Craigmor, who was a solicitor and official witness to the Free Church Deed of Demission:

It has always appeared to me, that Scotland, by some unaccountable freak of latitude, - or was it a consequence of an infusion of the blood of France? - was a more southern region than England. - I mean as to its songs and dances, and other evidences of animal spirits, not omitting certain escapades of the wise over their bottles, called High Jinks.⁶²

⁵⁸. John Brown, review of Hill's work in the RSA exhibition, *The Witness* (22 April 1846).

⁵⁹. *Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter, from his Autobiography and Journals*, ed. Tom Taylor, vol. 1, London 1853, p. 284.

⁶⁰. Undated manuscript memoir of Margaret Saunders of Dundee, miniature painter, in the collection of Dr Patrick Mullin, 1991.

⁶¹. Eastlake (as in n. 17), p. 56.

⁶². Leigh Hunt to John Hunter of Craigmor, undated 1850s, quoted in *Manuscripts: Letters: Documents: Portraits: Artefacts & Works of Art*, sale catalogue, Roy Davids Ltd, Great Haseley 1999, p. 69.

Such an enthusiasm for music and dance was not just a historical survival, it was consciously fostered and it offered relief from the constricting politeness of modern life.

The Antiquary, Newhaven and song

Sir Walter Scott's preface to *The Antiquary* says:

I have ... sought my principal personages in the class of society who are the last to feel the influence of that general polish which assimilates to each other the manners of different nations. Among the same class I have placed some of the scenes, in which I have endeavoured to illustrate the operation of the higher and more violent passions, both because the lower orders are less restrained by the habit of suppressing their feelings, and because I agree with my friend Wordsworth, that they seldom fail to express them in the strongest and most powerful language. This is, I think, peculiarly the case with the peasantry of my own country, - a class with whom I have long been familiar.⁶³

In 1817, David Wilkie made a little oil sketch of Scott and his family as a farmer and his household (Fig. 38). This obviously links with Scott's idea that the national character and culture of Scotland were preserved among the country people. Wilkie wrote to his sister, mentioning the painting, from Abbotsford in October 1817: 'the Misses Scott are dressed as country girls, with pails as if they had come from milking: Mr Scott as if telling a story.'⁶⁴ Hogg's connection of milking and national song, quoted above, relates to this painting, naturally adding the idea of song to the idea of story. It is certainly a mild - and a small picture - considered as a tribute to a great writer, but it is in Wilkie's vein as a *genre* painter. It ties Scott to his own nation and may also involve an element of wry humour, taking his anonymity at face value and presenting him and his family, not simply with a rustic bloom but with a manifest appearance of rustic innocence.⁶⁵

⁶³. Walter Scott, 'Advertisement,' *The Antiquary, Waverley Novels*, vol. 5, Edinburgh and London 1831, pp. i-ii.

⁶⁴. Wilkie to Miss Wilkie, 30 October 1817, quoted in Allan Cunningham, *The Life of Sir David Wilkie*, London 1843, vol. 1, p. 482.

⁶⁵. Scott was not yet publicly known to be the author of the novels. According to Lindsay Errington: 'Even Wilkie, his guest, did not know whether his host was writing *Rob Roy*, and if one regards the portrait as the light-hearted rendering of a traditional border poet ... inside the landscape of his own verses, it makes sense.' Lindsay Errington, *David Wilkie 1785-1841*, exhibition catalogue, National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh 1988, p. 10. However, by 1817, Scott's authorship was thinly disguised. Wilkie's surprise that Scott did not seem to be taking time to write *Rob Roy*, surely stems from a belief that he was the writer.

When Wilkie exhibited the painting at the Royal Academy in London, in 1818, it was attacked in the *Monthly Magazine* as ‘a most conceited design … a picture which creates pity for the painter and disgust at the objects, while it violates decency and good taste.’⁶⁶ Wilkie’s painting centres on Scott’s remarkable statement in *The Antiquary*. He looked for the passion and language of Scotland in the poorer classes of society. He could express history and nationality in the terms of a fishing village and this, clearly, relates to the moral and cultural importance of Hill and Adamson’s series *The Fishermen and Women of the Firth of Forth*. This publication was advertised with others, including *Highland Character and Costume*, in 1844. The two may well have been intended to represent the historic nation of Scotland: north and south, warlike and civil, clan and family and, perhaps, male and female, on the grounds that the fisherwomen ruled their society and that the historic, picturesque dress of the Highland clansman might be balanced by the equally picturesque dress of the Lowland fisherwoman.⁶⁷

While Walter Scott addressed the Highlands of Scotland in *Waverley*, *The Antiquary* was set in the Lowlands, in Fife. The book is narrated on two levels. Ostensibly it is a social comedy, centred on the antiquary’s gullibility and the courtship of his daughter. This part of the plot revolves around unlikelihood and melodrama. The pivot is the grand tragic setting of the storm and raging tide which threaten to trap the antiquary and Miss Wardour. They are safely rescued by the beggar and the young lover in the scene just previous to the one pictured in the Bonaly calotypes.

The apparent subplot concerns the people Scott refers to as his ‘principal personages.’ Despite the title of the book, the real plot centres on the village. Here, the pivotal action is the wholly undramatic disaster when the active young man of the Mucklebackit family dies in a swamped boat. It is the factual relation in the book. *The Antiquary*, evidently, was Hill’s cultural inspiration for *The Fishermen and Women of the Firth of Forth*. He was extending Scott’s idea that the fishermen and women, rather than the higher ranking or more educated members of society, represent the

⁶⁶. Quoted, as a malicious review, in William Whitley, *Art in England 1800-1820*, Cambridge 1928, p. 284.

⁶⁷. In a note to *The Antiquary* (as in n. 63), p. 68, Scott wrote: ‘In the fishing villages on the Friths of Forth and Tay, as well as elsewhere in Scotland, the government is gynecocracy.’

distinctive national history and culture and it is that vernacular culture which is celebrated. Hill emphasised the connection with Scott's poetry and naturalism in the calotype album he gave to James Wilson.⁶⁸ In this, two of the pictures of fishwives are supported by quotes from Maggie Mucklebackit. The calotype of James Linton and his boys is captioned 'Saunders Mucklebackit of Musselcraig,' offering the idea of the close affectionate and working relationship between father and son, which the father utters in his grief on Steenie's death. Two of the songs Hill quotes also appear in Scott's chapters on the fishing village. One is sung by the old woman of the Mucklebackit family, and Scott describes her as:

chanting forth an old ballad in a wild and doleful recitative.

"The herring loves the merry moonlight,
The mackerel loves the wind;
But the oyster loves the dredging sang
For it comes of the gentle kind."⁶⁹

Song was of particular importance in the cultural strength of Newhaven. The beauty of the fishwives' singing was often remarked on, and was celebrated in a lyrical passage by John Wilson, writing as 'The Ettrick Shepherd':

Saw ye them ever marchin hamewards at nicht, in a baun of some fifty or three-score, down Leith Walk, wi' the grand gas lamps illuminating their scaly creels, all shining like silver? And heard ye them ever singing their strange sea-sangs - first half-a-dizzen o' the bit young anes, wi' as saft vices and sweet as you could hear in St George's Kirk on Sabbath, half singin and half shoutin a leadin verse, and then a' the mithers and granmitherers, and ablins great granmitherers, some o' them wi' vices like verra men, gran tenors and awfu' basses, joining in the chorus, that gaed echoing roun' Arthur's Seat, and awa ower the tap o' the Martello Tower, out at sea ayont the end o' Leith Pier? Wad ye believe me, that the music micht be ca'd a hymn - at times sae wild and sae mournfu' - and then takin a sudden turn into a sort o' queer and outlandish glee? It gars me think o' the saut sea-faem - and white mew-wings wavering in the blast - and boaties dancin up and down the billow vales, wi' oar or sail, and waes me - waes me - o' the puir fishing smack, gaun down head foremost into the deep, and the sighin and the sabbin o' widows, and the wailin o' fatherless weans!⁷⁰

The importance of song and storytelling, related specifically to Newhaven, is further brought out in Charles Reade's novel, *Christie Johnstone*, first published in

⁶⁸. In the collection of the British Library.

⁶⁹. Scott (as in n. 63), p. 249.

⁷⁰. *Noctes Ambrosianae, The Works of Professor John Wilson*, Edinburgh and London 1855, vol. 1, p. 250.

1851.⁷¹ Reade may not have met Hill, but it seems reasonable from coincidences in the plot of the book that he at least knew the photographs and understood Hill's admiration of Newhaven.⁷² The argument of *Christie Johnstone* is two-fold. Reade referred to the book as opposing 'a cant that was flourishing like a peony, and a truth that was struggling for bare life, in the year of truth 1850.'⁷³ The cant in question was Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*: his belief that universal history was essentially the 'History of the Great Men ... creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain.'⁷⁴ Reade, like Hill, believed in common heroism and admired the lively culture of the village. The book's hero, an effete Viscount, has been sent up from England by his doctor to live among the fishermen and run their physical risks - in the course of this, his elegant idleness turns to intelligent judgement and he learns to favour their culture. One of the principal scenes in the book sets two picnics, side by side, on the island of Inchcolm. The aristocratic and wealthy party prove unable to entertain themselves. For the party of fishermen and wives, two hundred yards away, 'a merry dance, succeeding a merry song, had ended, and they were in the midst of an interesting story.'⁷⁵ The distance was that between a fatuous reliance of the over-civilised and moneyed on others' formal instruction and the active vernacular tradition. The heroine, Christie Johnstone, is both physically heroic and a creative storyteller and singer. She herself sums up this distance, inverting the common meaning of vulgarity:

Voolgar folk sit on a chair, ane twa, whiles three hours, eatin an' abune a' drinkin, as still as hoegs, or gruntin puir every day clashes, goessip, rubbich ... they canna gie ye a sang, they canna tell ye a story, they canna think ye a thought, to save their useless lives.⁷⁶

From Brown's account, Hill sang the old ballads. According to his obituary, he also wrote them: 'not unfrequently entertaining his companions with ballads of his

⁷¹. Charles Reade, *Christie Johnstone*, London, Paris and New York 1908.

⁷². For example, the calotypes include an unexplained group of English yachstmen and Newhaven fishermen; the book's dramatic climax involves the fishermen and Christie Johnstone with the yachstmen of the English Viscount. Reade kept a series of scrapbook incorporating pictures and press cuttings, which he used as inspiration for his novels and plays.

⁷³. Reade (as in n. 71), p. 330.

⁷⁴. Thomas Carlyle, 'The Hero as Divinity,' (1841), *Heroes and Hero-Worship. The Works of Thomas Carlyle, Centenary Edition*, vol. 5, London 1897, p. 1.

⁷⁵. Reade (as in n. 71), pp. 234 and 239.

⁷⁶. Ibid., p. 246.

own composition.⁷⁷ His relationship with the village of Newhaven may have involved a readiness to join in with the singing: a culturally critical or generative idea. He was, moreover, interested in the activity of the fishermen and women beyond the shores of the Forth. In the little caricature he drew in 1852, showing him torn in five different directions, one of the arms of the signpost says: 'To the Herring Fishing' (Fig. 12). In summer, the herring were caught off the north-east coast of Scotland and the fishermen and women travelled north to follow them.

In James Wilson's album, Hill subscribed the Newhaven group of the women carrying the washing, 'The Dredging Sang Newhaven,' and added the simply touching song from *The Antiquary*. The dredging song, sung impromptu by the fishermen, was described, prosaically, by Charles Reade:

Dredging is practically very stiff rowing for ten hours. I have heard the song and seen the work done to it; and incline to think it helps the oar, not only by keeping the time true, and the spirit alive, but also by its favourable action on the lungs ... The song, in itself, does not contain above seventy stock verses, but these perennial lines are a nucleus, round which the men improvise the topics of the day, giving, I know not for what reason, the preference to such as verge upon indelicacy.⁷⁸

A news report emphasised the combined pleasure of watching and listening to the fishermen:

On Friday ... a little after sunrise we counted fifty boats in the offing, all hands busy at the dredge, and making the water musical with the oyster song. Nothing can be finer than the movements of the tiny squadron.⁷⁹

Logically, Hill and Adamson could not calotype the oyster dredging, because the process was not sufficiently sensitive to catch movement. It is a measure of their sense of its importance as a picture that they staged the group with the boat on shore, with its sail pushed out by a pole stuck in the beach (Fig. 39).

Part of that importance lay in the song Hill heard. We know, moreover, from Hill's letters to Paton in the 1850s that he himself invented songs on topical issues. He wrote jocularly of himself, 'He was such a Poetical genius that frequently on beginning a note in plain prose - a spirit of song would burst upon his path.'⁸⁰ His letter then broke

⁷⁷ Anon, 'Death of Mr D. O. Hill,' *The Scotsman* (17 May 1870).

⁷⁸ Reade (as in n. 71), pp. 201-2.

⁷⁹ Quoted from *The Scotsman* in *The Fife Herald* (24 September 1846).

⁸⁰ Hill to Paton, 18 September 1854, NLS Acc 11315.

into impromptu verse, reporting on his failure to find Paton an Edinburgh studio and passing on an invitation from Lady Ruthven.

The analogy with the calotypes is unforced. Hill referred to them as ‘wood-notes wild.’⁸¹ Milton’s phrase, written in admiration of Shakespeare, was adopted by Burns as a motto and he also used it to describe his wife’s singing: ‘she has (Oh, the partial lover! you will cry) the finest “wood-note wild” I ever heard.’⁸² In the culturally sophisticated view of the balance and interchange between the vernacular and the polite, involving nature with artifice, simplicity with complication, history with the present, Hill found a model for the calotype itself. Its natural life and vigour escaped precise control and generously offered a variable beauty in return. Such a musical connection was also made by James Nasmyth in relation to the landscape calotypes and without the prompting of a title:

that Durham and York minster! Its sure they are noble very *pitch* forks of art
to set me a [illegible] on the right key at once. It is nature reduced to an
artistical standard and abounding in the most noble suggestion. Bloody
Mackenzie’s Tomb [in the Greyfriars’ Churchyard] what a perfect Romance.
Oh had I the power of music what a theme I could make that suggest in the
grand solemn style.⁸³

Hill sent James Wilson the calotype album as a farewell gift, because he was going to India. Wilson had been concerned in an examination of the Scottish fishing industry in the 1840s and therefore knew the people. Hill would have expected him, looking at the pictures and reading the captions from songs like ‘The boatie rows,’ to see the representative people of Scotland and to experience the emotional force of the music. Through the familiar musical revivals and reconstructions, the eye and the responsive ear could connect the calotypes with the vernacular tradition of song and add, astonishingly, the sound of the people to the sight of the photographs.

The importance of vernacular culture is expressed in the calotypes and mirrored photographically in the work taken a hundred years later by Paul Strand in the Hebrides, which involves a visual tribute to the heroic, beautiful and popular strength

⁸¹. Hill to Macdonald, July 1853, NLS Acc 11782.

⁸². Burns to Margaret Chalmers, 16 September 1788, *The Letters of Robert Burns*, 2nd ed., ed. G. Ross May, vol. 1, Oxford 1985, p. 318. The lines ‘sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy’s child,/ warble his native wood-notes wild’ come from Milton, ‘L’Allegro,’ l. 127.

⁸³. Nasmyth to Hill, 30 April 1845, ROE.

of the Newhaven calotypes. The text for this, written to Strand's photographs by Basil Davidson, says:

The telling of stories still keeps alive the ancient and honoured tradition of the bards ... Within these last few years it was still possible to meet old men and women who could remember many of the ancient stories - strange and magical, often immensely long ... But these Uist bards had also the gift ... of composing poems and stories from contemporary events ...

I have heard Mrs Archie's mother sing two or three of her oldest songs; and the effect is strange. Here in a living mouth are the hint and music, faint as a rustling amid dry leaves, of a time when the Romans were comfortably settled in Britain ... when those who would make and chant the Song of Beowulf, oldest of surviving English songs, had several hundred years to wait for birth.⁸⁴

The romanticism inherent in this account should not obscure the understanding that both for Strand and for Hill such Romance was sounding in their ears and was a leading part of the motive and the character of the work. This is, in some active sense, photography which sings of history and the present time together.

⁸⁴. Paul Strand, *Tir A'Mhurain*, commentary by Basil Davidson, London 1962, pp. 46-7.

Chapter five

Time and Mortality

Practical time

The only account we have of Robert Adamson at work was given by the photographer, James Good Tunny (d. 1887):

Time after time have I gone and stood on the projecting rock below Playfair's monument on the Calton Hill, and drawn inspiration from viewing Mr Adamson placing a large square box upon a stand, covering his head with a focussing-cloth, introducing the slide, counting the seconds by his watch, putting the cap on the lens, and retiring to what we now know to be the dark room. Oh! if only I could have got an introduction to these men, it would have been the consummation of my happiness!¹

This wistful note tells us little beyond the obvious point that Adamson used a watch to regulate and measure the length of the exposure and thereafter to regulate the printing time for the negatives. Photography has this straightforward relation to time.

It was not a coincidence that the uniform appreciation of time became both public and personal in the early to mid nineteenth century. It was, through the advanced mass production of clock parts, increasingly possible for people to own a time piece; by about 1850, even poorer families might have their own clock and the watch became a common possession. The development of the Post Office, the telegraph companies and the railways had brought in the need for consistency and the drive for it coincided with the great railway boom of the 1840s. At the beginning of the decade, Captain Basil Hall wrote to Rowland Hill, who introduced the penny post, proposing:

to regulate all post-office clocks in the Kingdom, by means of the time brought from London by the mail-coach chronometers; and he had no doubt that, ere long, all the town clocks, and, eventually, all the clocks and watches of private persons, would fall into the same course of regulation; so that only one expression of time would prevail over the country, and every clock and watch indicate by its hands the same hour and minute at the same moment of absolute time.²

¹. J. G. Tunny, 'Early Reminiscences of Photography,' *The British Journal of Photography* (12 November 1869): p. 545. Tunny was one of the photographers Hill knew and to some degree encouraged in the 1850s, when he took a series of portraits of the Academicians.

². Reported by Abraham Follett Osler in the first issue of the *Illustrated London News*. Hall credited William Hyde Wollaston with the original idea. The passage is quoted in Derek Howse, *Greenwich time*

Basil Hall was particularly conscious of the need for consistent time because he was a sailor and navigation depended on the relation of the stars, the landfall and calculations of time. Uniform Greenwich time was established throughout the country through the readiness of individual towns on railway routes to accept it over the natural time established by the rising of the sun. Glasgow and Edinburgh were only persuaded to adopt Greenwich time by the Chairman of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway in January 1848. By 1852, Britain was still divided between towns, which kept, publicly, to Greenwich time and those which held to local time.³ Time, what it was or should be, was a general concern, if only in such banal terms as catching a train or the post.⁴

Framing time

The image of Robert Adamson standing with his watch in his hand, counting seconds, seems a specifically photographic idea. The photograph is tied to the time of its exposure; in that time, the camera has to stand in front of its subject to take the image. Photography, therefore, apparently allows us the privilege of the photographer's place and time. It is an illusion, but it is an important illusion, and it maintains, through our belief in it, a sense of historical immediacy.

Painting is supposedly free from such elementary limitations. But the painter's interest in time could be as precise; the study of nature, as the base of painting, required that same attention to the passage and the effects of time. A practical textbook owned by Hill included this passage:

As the best practical hints are derived from accidental combinations in nature, whose sudden changes prevent the possibility of sketching, the mind ought to be trained to the most regular and even mechanical mode of arranging the ideas; that in an instant we may be able to determine whether the effects, which we perceive,

and the discovery of the longitude, Oxford 1980, p. 86.

³. The remaining eccentricity centred on the English West Country, with all the Scottish towns except Peebles using Greenwich time, from a map illustrated in *ibid.* p. 110.

⁴. The minute calculations of time, enabled by the use of the telegraph and electricity, generally postdate the calotype partnership. In 1858, Charles Piazzi Smyth demonstrated, through simultaneous observations of the stars in Edinburgh and Greenwich, that the difference in longitude between Greenwich and Edinburgh was 12 minutes 56.005 seconds. See H. A. Brück and M. T. Brück, *The Peripatetic Astronomer. The Life of Charles Piazzi Smyth*, Bristol and Philadelphia 1988, p. 83. Piazzi Smyth was an inventive photographer.

depend upon a particular form, upon particular arrangement of the light and shade, or upon the manner in which the hot and cold colours are brought in contact.⁵

The ability to catch the character and appearance of transient effects and action involved a kind of mental snapshot. It is clearly true that celebrated painters had that ability - Rembrandt, for example, could catch the moment of an elderly woman wrestling with a furious child - the child escaping from her grip and its slipper flying.⁶ The purpose of this study was to secure the psychological or active components of a visibly unified sense of time within a picture (something that, on a surface level, could be seen as through a window). Such history and genre pictures as David Wilkie's *Distressing for Rent* (Fig. 21) were constructed to present a meaningful pivot of time. It was a virtuoso contrivance, apparently offering a particular frozen moment. This was expressed by James Skene:

A painter ... can select the best possible moment of action, the striking event upon which the whole tenor depends ... Well may it be called the mirror of the mind, which it is the painter's peculiar province to hold up to view.⁷

The playwright, Douglas Jerrold, wrote a play based on *Distressing for Rent* and on another of Wilkie's paintings, *Rent Day*.⁸ After viewing the play, Wilkie wrote to Clarkson Stanfield asking him to pass on a compliment to the author:

whose inventive fancy has created out of the dumb show of the picture all the living characters and progressive events of real life and while paying an unprecedented honour from the Dramatic to the Painter's art, has with the help of life, movement, space and time shewn us in comparison how stationary and confined, is that one instant to which our elaborate art is limited.⁹

Wilkie's response was courteous and belittles his achievement. The painting is remarkable precisely because it is not confined; it contains the implications of a history. It occupied the minds of its viewers, in considering how the protagonists had come to that

⁵. John Burnet, *Practical Hints on Composition in Painting*, London 1822, p. 10.

⁶. Illustrated in Jennifer Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions. The origin and influence of Charles Le Brun's Conférence sur l'expression ...*, New Haven and London 1995, fig. 140.

⁷. James Skene, 'Painting,' *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, ed. David Brewster, Edinburgh 1823, p. 198.

⁸. Douglas Jerrold's play, *The Rent Day*, was performed with scenery painted by Clarkson Stanfield. Act One ended with a tableau from Wilkie's painting of that title and Act Two ended with a tableau of *Distressing for Rent*, see Pieter van der Merwe, *The Spectacular Career of Clarkson Stanfield 1793-1867*, exhibition catalogue, Tyne and Wear County Museums 1979, p. 63.

⁹. Copy of a letter from Wilkie to Clarkson Stanfield, January 1832, pasted to the back of *Distressing for*

point and what would happen next, what they were thinking and what they would do; unlike the play, the picture leaves us without certainty and it achieved its poignancy from the surrounding doubt. George Bell, in his work on the destitution in the Edinburgh slums (see Chapter one), expressed the difficulty of understanding such desperate conditions in a way that suggests he may have been thinking of *Distraining for Rent*:

The describing of such a scene involves very much more than the telling of what one has beheld. It involves a reference to the past and future of the people as well as to the present. It involves the transfer of our perception of their moral condition, which is the spirit, or rather the demon of the scene.¹⁰

Hill was concerned to contain known history within his paintings. His landscapes were often exhibited with historical narratives to give his audience the associations to draw their minds into the picture and towards historical contemplation (see Chapter seven). His Disruption painting is, at first sight, picturing a moment focussing on the signing of the Deed of Demission by the Rev. Dr Patrick MacFarlane on 23 May 1843, and this gives the painting its title. His concern for the subject was far wider. Even when he began work on the picture, Hill was thinking of a broad expression of the activities of the Church around 1843 rather than a precise time and act. The first advertisement for the proposed engraving after the picture, published on 24 May only six days after the Disruption, says that it will contain not just the Free Church ministers but their sympathisers from other groups of dissenters and, ‘other personages who have taken or may yet take part in the eventful proceedings of the Assembly.’¹¹ The picture finally contained groups representing the later activities of the Church: home and foreign missions, the new church buildings and schools. People who were not present at the Disruption, like the Vice Chancellor of the University of Bombay, Rev. Dr John Wilson (1804-75), who was entering Jerusalem on the day of the Disruption and was calotyped in arab dress, were added to give a complete idea of the Church’s membership and actions. One review of the finished painting expressed it thus:

The picture is not chronological. It does not present events in succession as they occur in time, but simultaneously as they occur in a dream. Several incidents are

Rent, in the collection of the NGS.

¹⁰. George Bell, *Day and Night in the Wynds*, Edinburgh 1849, p. 78.

¹¹. Advertisement in *The Witness* (24 May 1843).

thus indicated which were yet undreamt of in 1843, but without which the story of the Church would be so far incomplete ... He has given us a twenty years' history.¹²

One of the curiosities of the picture is the way in which the age of the people in the portraits has spread over the twenty-year period in which the work was underway. Hill's own face is probably drawn from a photograph taken in the mid 1850s, ten years away from the calotype image of Adamson. The portrait of George Bell, standing behind Hill, has been aged by the addition of grey hair and whiskers (Fig. 40). Thomas Annan, the photographer commissioned to make the carbon prints for sale in 1866, was added to the doorway at the back of the painting just before it was photographed.¹³ Hill felt the need to connect the picture to a living future, as much as to a particular past.

The painting was also designed to offer echoes of history. The four-square composition, with the central table parallel to the frame and the grouping of the foreground figures and objects, is reminiscent of David Wilkie's unfinished painting of *John Knox Dispensing the Sacrament at Calder House*, which itself is based on Leonardo's *Last Supper*.¹⁴ The signing of the deed, at the heart of the picture, connects it with the signing of the National Covenant in 1638, a connection that was made deliberately by the Free Church leaders, who used the vocabulary and the ideals of the seventeenth-century action. Thomas Guthrie was himself described in these anachronist terms:

athletic, castle-built, and towering, bearing on his front the signet of a rude independence - you see before you the outward representative of the sturdy Covenanter ... an anomaly in the nineteenth century.¹⁵

The still life element of the picture included 'a piece of the handwriting of Knox, a copy of the "Solemn League and Covenant" and "The Cloud of Witnesses" borrowed from the

¹². Quoted from the *Daily Review* in Anon (presumed to be D. O. Hill), *The Disruption of the Church of Scotland: An Historical Picture ... painted by D. O. Hill*, Edinburgh 1866, p. 22.

¹³. Sara Stevenson, *Thomas Annan 1829-1887*, Edinburgh 1990, pp. 6-7.

¹⁴. *John Knox delivering the Sacrament at Calder House*, was bought by the RSA. In 1842 Hill sketched it and drew up the key. See Lindsay Errington, *Tribute to Wilkie*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh 1985, pp. 76-7.

¹⁵. 'M. H.' 'Rough Pulpit Sketches by a Wayfarer, No.VIII Thomas Guthrie,' *The Fife Herald* (17 September 1846).

antiquarian, David Laing.¹⁶ The Free Church was making the point that it was returning to the principle and propriety of the Presbyterian Church, that it was the Church of Scotland itself that had strayed. Even the frame of the Disruption Picture has a consciously historical inscription written round it, echoing an inscription in the entrance hall at Abbotsford:

These are the effigies and memorials of the men quha keipit the marches of the Scottish Kirke in the days of the Ten Years' Conflict; they were gude men in their time, and in their defence God he them defendit.¹⁷

This points to a connection with Walter Scott, but he had no indiscriminate admiration for the Covenanters and disliked fanaticism. He had been attacked for his view of the Covenanters, presented in *Old Mortality*, and defended himself in reply:

The reader may bear in mind that he is reading not the history of saints and martyrs on one side and heathen persecution on the other, but that of two fierce contending factions in a half civilised country, who alternately tyrannised over each other's persons and consciences.¹⁸

Scott's view of history presented times that were different from the present, in some ways better and in others worse. Hill is promoting rather the view of the Free Churchmen that they were reclaiming a kind of moral time with its ancient and simpler religious standards.

The part-time cat

In painting the Disruption Picture, Hill became conscious of the problem of time in an elementary sense, because it took him twenty years to finish. The picture developed a visual disjunction as people died or grew older. A philosophical or spiritual idea of presence in absence could here have been illuminated by a photographic idea. One of the notable facts of the long exposures of early landscape photography is that people could walk through a picture, leaving only a blur to mark their presence. Hill would have been

¹⁶. *The Disruption* (as in n. 12), p. 17. Hill did not return these until 1867, see his letter to Laing, University of Edinburgh Library, mss. 4814.

¹⁷. See Katherine Michaelson, *A Centenary Exhibition of the Work of David Octavius Hill 1802-1870 and Robert Adamson 1821-1848*, exhibition catalogue, Scottish Arts Council, Edinburgh 1970, p. 32.

¹⁸. Quoted in Marinell Ash, *The Strange Death of Scottish History*, Edinburgh 1980, p. 127.

familiar with this in the calotype photographs taken in the city, which appear unpopulated but in which human or wheeled traffic has simply passed by. The camera has collected a generalised rather than a specific image, something that would not have been seen intelligently by the photographer. Such partial appearance was far from evident in the blurring of the calotype but became clearer in the later paper processes. An example of such absence/presence was taken by John Adamson around 1860, in the albumen print, *Home from the Burn* (Fig. 41).¹⁹ In the picture, Adamson's nephew is showing the contents of his fishing basket to his aunt. On the step beside him is the family cat. But the cat is transparent; it has presumably moved away after discovering that there is no fish in the basket. It is a part-time cat.²⁰

As a matter of study, rather than a practical difficulty, the part-time cat is an interesting idea. In the photograph, it registers as 'not really there.' But the cat was there in precisely the same way as the humans. It occupied space, formed part of the group and influenced the way the other two were thinking. Moreover, it continued to have that influence after its departure, because human thought and feeling do not commonly turn on and off like a electric switch. It is possible to assume the thoughts of the two people - concerned to enact an engaging subject, distracted by the quasi-reliable cat but consciously staying still for the photographer. Presumably, they and John Adamson found the result entertaining, as such mild anarchy is liable to be.

This partial and transparent photographic presence was revived and exploited in the double exposures (the overlaying of two separate takes of photographic time) of both comic and serious spirit photography, later in the century. Hill's serious interest in this can be connected to the landscape paintings he made when his daughter died in 1862 (see Chapter seven). We cannot see her in the landscapes as a visible figure, but she had been there. She had touched and altered that landscape – run up the hill, cast a shadow, planted a flower. The photographic experience may have been no more than a metaphor for Hill

¹⁹. In the UOSA, Album 8. See Graham Smith, 'A St Andrews Ghost Story,' *History of Photography*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1990): p. 76

²⁰. There is an affinity with Lewis Carroll's Cheshire Cat and, indeed, in the relation of perception to reality, with early twentieth-century physics and quantum theory. See John Gribbin, *In Search of Schrödinger's Cat*, London 1985.

but it was a natural metaphor and one that he could transform into the comforting thought that she was, in some positive manner, there within the frame. Hill may well have involved this photographic knowledge with his practical use of photography in the Disruption Picture. His scene presents a Free Church containing people as an active reality even after their death, or as a presence in their literal absence at the supposed date. This is a religious idea in essence; the idea of a broad Church existing in the past, present and future, composed of the dead as well as the living, the ‘Church invisible’ - but here transposed to a corporeal reality, rather than a separation via some conventional system of symbolism, such as people perched on clouds or wearing wings.

In working with photographs and by aiming to make natural groupings within a real setting, Hill made the picture oddly surreal in its sense of time. It is indeed the arbitrary reflection of a dream. The painting looks strange to us, because we are comparing it with the photographs; we shift our glance from one to the other and the subjects age ten or twenty years. It was probably less startling for his contemporaries, because they were turning from the people themselves, whom they knew in old age, to look at the painting. The effective, emotional impact of this may be judged by the way Hill and George Bell have grown older, while Robert Adamson was halted in his youth by death. In combining the photographic idea of the instant or specific time of the photograph’s taking with the painter’s idea extended by the conscious construction and reworking of the picture with the passing of time, Hill may have meant to combine the characters of mortal immediacy and immortal future – adding the poignancy of the one to the depth of the other.

Catching life and immortality: the calotypes of Thomas Chalmers

Generally speaking, the urge to catch has a troubling edge to it – it is a metaphor of hunting and prey. In theory, speed obviates the need for human contact and reduces the social element of photographing people to a fragment of time. The photographer, again in theory, is hidden by that speed. In practice, modern experience has shown that subjects can react with similar speed to the presence of a camera. Human life is sufficiently brief; to sum it up in a fractured second is liable to pile authority on action, beyond its capacity to bear meaning.

Hill was not working with a process which would freeze life in a pin-point measurement. He liked his portraits breathing and he was looking for an emotional or sociable moment; a time in which personality might be expressed. This time was not encompassed within the calculation of the photograph's taking. It was likely to have been built up beforehand by conversation, generating a warmth of response, which left a trace of the exchange of ideas and pleasure in the face and stance of the subject.

Part of what we are looking at in the calotype portraits is a straightforward extension of the portrait painter's search for the broad, timeless expression of personality. Here, the Rev. Thomas Chalmers's family group is critically important (Fig. 42). James Nasmyth wrote to Hill that it was, 'of all your compositions the most noble and paintably effective.'²¹ The calotype is an impressive expression of Chalmers's role in history and within his own family. The idea of a religious leader as a source of light is expressed through the diffused light of the picture - the way the sun seems to radiate through the man and illuminates the stone ball, the little World, at his feet with the books of the Word. Through his family, his daughters and grandson, we have not just the idea of the patriarch but of his legacy to the future; his human and mortal role is offered in parallel to his religious authority.

John Brown wrote a posthumous essay on Thomas Chalmers, which may serve as a text for the calotypes. It began with a lyrical account of the sinking sun, and continued:

It is no small loss to the world, when one of its master spirits - one of its great lights - a king among the nations - leaves it. A sun is extinguished; a great attractive, regulating power is withdrawn.

He then wrote of the portraits:

Mr. Hill's Calotypes we like better than all the rest; because what in them is true, is absolutely so, and they have some delicate renderings which are all but beyond the power of any human artist; for though man's art is mighty, nature's is mightier. The one of the Doctor sitting with his grandson 'Tommy,' is to us the best; we have the true grandeur of his form - his bulk ... The Daguerreotype is, in its own way, excellent; it gives the externality of the man to perfection, but it is Dr Chalmers at a stand-still - his mind and feelings 'pulled-up' for the second that it was taken.²²

²¹. Nasmyth to Hill, 30 April 1845, ROE.

²². John Brown, 'Dr. Chalmers,' *Horae Subsecivae*, London 1908, pp. 114-5 and 123-4. See also, Sara

Brown's article has a close relation to the photographs. The breadth, the sense of the spread of time and the bulk of the man are common to both. There are other lines of connection. Brown talks of Chalmers's enthusiasm and the simplicity of his heart and life as childlike - the child in the photograph is his grandson, but may also represent himself as a child. He is clearly restless and will stand for the innocent energy of the young in Chalmers's own words: 'When a child is filled with any strong emotion by a surprising event or intelligence, it *runs* to discharge it on others, impatient of their sympathy.'²³ The presence of the boy also expresses Chalmers's pleasure in children, modelled on that of Christ. Brown tells how:

being out one Saturday at a friend's house near the Pentlands, he collected all the children and small people ... and took the lead to the nearest hill-top - how he made each take the biggest and roundest stone he could find, and carry - how he panted up the hill himself with one of enormous size ... [At the top he set the stone rolling down the hill] how he watched him setting out on his race, slowly, stupidly, vaguely at first, almost as if he might die before he began to live, then suddenly giving a spring and off like a shot - bounding, tearing ... how the great and good man was *totus in illo*; how he spoke to, upbraided him, cheered him, gloried in him, all but prayed for him, how he joked philosophy to his wondering and ecstatic crew, when he (the stone) disappeared among some brackens - telling them they had the evidence of their senses that he was in, they might even know that he was there by his effects, by the moving brackens, himself unseen; how plain it became that he had gone in, when he actually came out! - how he ran up the opposite side a bit, and then fell back, and lazily expired at the bottom ... [he then rolled all the stones down the hill one at a time] till he came to the Benjamin of the flock, a *wee wee* man, who had brought up a stone bigger than his own head; then how wonderfully IT ran! what miraculous leaps: what escapes from impossible places: and how it ran up the other side farther than any, and by some felicity remained there.²⁴

The stones that rolled in the story and the stone at Chalmers's feet in the calotype make a natural point about Chalmers, based on his own impulse to teach through nature. Presumably, Hill found the ball there in the garden, fallen from a gatepost, though he may well have rolled such a pleasing and meaningful shape into the best position for the

Stevenson, 'David Octavius Hill and the Use of Photography as an Aid to Painting,' *History of Photography*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1991): pp. 47-59

²³. Ibid., p. 128.

²⁴. Ibid., pp. 132-3.

photograph. It is an analogically layered object, that will mean more to people the more they know of the man. That it should represent the world in little and mortal concerns is a proposal reinforced in the painting Hill made from the photograph of Chalmers and his grandson as his own posthumous tribute in 1848 (Fig. 43): there he perched a butterfly on the arm of the bench, the fragile symbol of passing time, and, through the gateway into another part of the garden, the sun is falling on a sundial with a scythe propped against it. The stone adds the human, touching memory of Brown's story. The photograph, through elementary gestures of this kind, could open up the imaginative mind to philosophical speculation and a sense of time that ranges through Chalmers's life and the following generations. It offers an approach to his immortality through a knowledge of his mortality.

It is of some interest that John Ruskin's response to Brown's essay on Thomas Chalmers makes the three points: how pleased he was by the memoir, how he found the actual extracts from Chalmers's writings disappointing and how valuable he thought a calotype would be:

I do not recollect anything that has given me greater pleasure than the account of the Doctor's Sisyphean labours and ratiocinations on the Pentlands ... The worst of it was, that after all that we hear of your noble old friend's Thunder and Lightning, one is - at least I was - a little disappointed by the quietness and sobriety of the extracts from the Scripture readings. Is it at all possible to get a Calotype of him? I suppose it must be now. There is certainly nothing like them for rendering of Intellect, nor to my taste for everything else except beauty.²⁵

Chalmers was more effective as a preacher than as a writer; but it does remain as an extraordinary proposal that Ruskin hoped to understand Chalmers's mind from a calotype rather than from his written work.

New lights

In a letter from Hill to Henry Bicknell, he says of the calotypes, 'you will find they will always be giving out new lights.'²⁶ In the photographs of Thomas Chalmers, the great

²⁵. *Letters of Dr John Brown*, ed. by his son and D. W. Forrest, London 1909, p. 291.

²⁶. Hill to Bicknell, 17 January 1849, George Eastman House Collection ms AC H645 acc 830.

man advanced in age and reputation, it may be that Hill intended the full implications of the work; that he had heard the story of the stones rolling downhill. In another case, the portrait of his young niece, Patricia Morris, the picture probably meant more to him years later (Fig. 44).

Hill writes an account of an operation undergone by Patricia Morris, in 1853 when she is Mrs Orr. On first reading the letter, we do not know her fate. We are placed, as Hill was, in suspense. This is, in historical terms, a rare position to be in, because our knowledge usually works from the other direction and we know what happens later. The letter reads:

The news of Mrs Orr, I rejoice to say are wonderfully encouraging. You know that [Professor John] Syme who saw her on Saturday week last was to go back on Tuesday to operate - Her sufferings meanwhile - on Sunday and Monday were something awful to hear of - & to witness as [her sister] Mrs Finlay did - never to be forgotten. She could not have lived a week under them. But she was ready & eager for the Doctors. On the Tuesday she ordered in the table on which she was to be disposed - when under the knife - and when the awful hour of twelve came - she the only composed person in the house asked for her watch which the Nurse had kindly removed from the bed curtain where it generally hung, and the good soul returned it having put it back 1/4. Patricia said it is twelve - I know by the shadow on the floor - the Doctors will soon be here - she was told they had arrived. She said she was ready - and resigning her husband's hand which she had a long time held - she told him to go away - Syme had with him Dr Duncan from Edinburgh & Dr Macfarlane of Glasgow with two of his [insert, might be 'Jeffry'] principal assistants. The Chloroform did its work completely and Syme as was said by the other Doctors men of great eminence [?] & experience - said with blanched faces - had that day done a wonderful work. Syme thinks it is removed - so does Macfarlane. Duncan still doubts it may be in the system. But Syme speaks cheerfully giving much hope. Meantime Patricia has had rest peace & absence from pain - she has now been 8 days in one position which you may well believe is of itself awful [*sic*] while the natural course of the discharging of such a wound must entail much suffering, though as compared to the first of a modified nature. Syme saw a letter today from Isabella telling these symptoms, and he says the pain of the wound, its discharge & the other symptoms are life - another abscess now would be fatal, and so you see wonders are not yet ceased. Let us hope she may be spared.²⁷

²⁷. Hill to Paton, 15 March 1853, NLS Acc 11315.

Mrs Orr benefited from James Young Simpson's recent discovery of the anaesthetic properties of chloroform; her operation was the more likely to be successful. But the need for antisepsis was only demonstrated efficiently by Joseph Lister in the 1860s. Hill's next reference to her is, in clinical terms, not surprising: 'I fear poor Mrs Orr is in a very bad way. She has retrograded for 8 or 10 days - and the hopes of her doctors, her husband and relations are very low indeed.'²⁸

Hill's account alters our view of the picture, but was not in his thinking when he made it. The photograph is only a pre-vision of her fate in the broad sense of the vulnerability of young women when they married and bore children. However, Hill's interest in the photographs as 'giving out new lights' would mean that he saw them as revealing truths after time. In this case, it is not simply the young woman but the flowering plant in the picture, which could be read, after the fact, for its natural meaning. We are used to the idea that a photograph may contain accidental information and in a more sophisticated (or optimistic) view, accidental meaning. It is possible that Hill saw more - a natural, revealed message - in the plant, after Patricia Morris's death, than he may have seen or meant in the first instance.²⁹

Hill had given a literary meaning to the calotype group of the McCandlish girls, in which Margaret figures as a milkmaid with a wooden bucket and Mary has a small basket of flowers, by titling it *The Gowan*, or daisy (Fig. 45). The calotype shows the young Mary asleep with Margaret leaning over and tickling her neck with the flower. The photographs echo Robert Burns's poem, 'To a Mountain Daisy, On turning one down with the Plough, in April – 1786.' This is a moral verse, which compares the little flower growing unprotected in the field, vulnerable to the cold blasts and the plough's casual ruin, to the fate of a simple country maid and the country poet:

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betray'd,
And guileless trust,
Till she, like thee, all soil'd is laid

²⁸. Hill to Paton, 11 July 1853, NLS Acc 11315.

²⁹. The flower is a common symbol of mortality, for example, 'The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.' Isaiah, 40. 8

Low i'the dust.³⁰

The specific date of the title and the idea of Burns halting the plough to consider the flower, unites the photographic idea of precise time with anxiety for the future. Hill complicated his picture by adding the line, ‘As if a fly had tickled slumber,’ linking it to the Roman Britain of Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*. The phrase is spoken of Imogen who, being heavily drugged, appears to be dead and is assumed to have died of melancholy whilst ‘smiling, as some fly had tickled slumber,/Not as death’s dart being laughed at.’³¹ *Cymbeline* has a complicated plot but there are connections beyond the simple coincidence of the idea of tickling a sleeper. The play opposes the corruption of the court to the simplicity and honesty of the country, and the language of the men exiled to the country has that natural reference. The son of Cymbeline, who has brought out the ‘corpse,’ proposes to put wild flowers on the grave:

thou shalt not lack
The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose, nor
The azur'd hare-bell, like thy veins, no, nor
The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander,
Out-sweetened not thy breath.³²

The ideas of change and mortality in these connections suggest a comparable meaning for the flower in Patricia Morris’s portrait. It is a convolvulus or bindweed and, judging by the heart-shaped leaves, is the cultivated version, the Morning Glory. Miss Morris is not just standing beside it, she has her arm partly through it. The convolvulus is a twining plant, an obvious symbol of love and affection; it flowers in a day, its beauty is lost rapidly in fruition and it dies in bearing its seed. Hill may have seen the picture with a new eye, as having an in-built message that the divine proposal was for her, as for the flower, that she had fulfilled her purpose - a consolation for his wasted hope that: ‘she

³⁰. ‘To a Mountain-Daisy, On turning one down with the Plough, in April – 1786,’ *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. James Kinsley, Oxford 1968, vol. 1, pp. 228-9. The manuscript title of this was ‘The Gowan.’ The daisy became a symbol of the poet. The statue of Burns by Flaxman, intended for the monument in Edinburgh, shows him with a daisy plant in his hand. This is now in the hall of the SNP.

³¹. William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, Act 4, scene 2, 210-1. Hill’s captions appear in the album he gave to James Wilson, in the British Library. Hill exhibited a painting from the play in the RSA in 1834, no. 222, ‘Sketch: Forest Scene in “Cymbeline.”’

³². Ibid., 220-4.

may be spared and that God has some good work for her to do.' This idea would include the extraordinary proposal that a natural photograph, constructed with that idea of truth uppermost, could convey the kind of divine truth that a sensible examination of nature would achieve.

'Only a shadow'

The fragility of photographs on paper and the tendency of ill-fixed photographs to fade proposed an analogy between photography and human mortality. This moral and emotional idea connected photography to the humblest end of the art market, the making of silhouettes. This, however, inherited the respectability of classical tradition, from the story told by Pliny of the Corinthian maid who traced her lover's shadow on the wall, which he described as the origin of painting. The subject was treated by two Scottish painters, David Allan and Alexander Runciman, in 1773 and 1775, and by Joseph Wright of Derby for Josiah Wedgwood in the 1780s.³³ Oscar Rejlander staged a photograph of it in the 1850s, entitled 'The first negative.'³⁴

An anonymous, hyperbolic article, published in 1856, made the link to photography:

The production to be sure was only a shadow on the wall: but it was the first likeness on which complacent love could dwell, and the original prototype of the portrait, dear to the heart even when so faint and imperfect ... And here the simple effect rested for centuries, unless the black, unmeaning silhouette stirred up a disagreeable memory of it ... Photography ... is of splendid descent. Its fountain is the glorious luminary of life and day; its medium is the wonderful hyparxis of Plato, light (the *what it is!*); and its production is the realization of the third and last element of this sublime philosophy, the work of ineffable agencies applied to material purposes by human ingenuity and skill.³⁵

Victor Burgin has discussed 'The Origin of Painting' in the same terms, as the motivation for photography: 'the origin of the graphic image is in the portrait, and ... the

³³. The particular Scottish emphasis in the first two paintings is discussed by Murdo Macdonald, *Scottish Art*, London 2000, pp. 65-6.

³⁴. In a private collection.

³⁵. Anon, 'Photography and the Elder Fine Arts,' *Journal of the Photographic Society*, vol. 3 (1856): p. 30.

origin of the portrait is in the desire for protection against the loss of the object.³⁶ The human need behind the portrait makes it far from surprising that photography, invented generally as a method of public reproduction, became popular as a method of private portraiture. The mortal relation of the photograph to its subject is often underlined by the reflex terminology of the snapshot: 'old, faded, torn.' It has seen life, like the person it represents, and touchingly shares his mortality. The Rev. Edward Bradley provides an example of this analogy in 1855:

The widower holds before him the likeness of her who was his wife. It is a Calotype, and was but the work of an amateur; and yet, how he values it! upon the wall hangs another portrait of her; it was painted by a skilful artist, but it has the artist's conventional face, his conventional attitude, his conventional background. How it sinks in interest before that little Calotype! In it the husband sees the living likeness of his wife ... She lives before him again; she is snatched once more from the tomb, and he is permitted to gaze on her for a time. Amid the blinding tears of recollected love, he presses the portrait to his lips, and speaks to it with child-like affection. And yet it is but a Calotype!³⁷

John Brown's general critical comment on photography, written as a preamble to a review of Hill's second essay in the art in 1861, made the same association between photography and death:

When death comes ... you take out these, it may be, wasted, shadowy, almost vanishing images - how you treasure them for ever, beyond all trim and graceful miniatures by man's hand. That is the very turn of the head, the shape of the bald head, the child's look you so well knew, the restrained smile, the waistcoat, the shawl - the *reality* you can never more forget or see - all are brought back to you, and in that *camera lucida* of your own brain, in that chamber of imagery, from out this poor, imperfect sun-sketch there blooms into life, untouched by time or change, your idea of that face.³⁸

This respect for photography, independent of the province of art, is a focus for meditation. The fading photograph echoes the Bible: 'All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we do fade as a leaf.'³⁹ It is significant that Sir John Robison's report on the

³⁶. This is quoted and discussed by Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography*, Cambridge 1999, pp. 112-120.

³⁷. 'Cuthbert Bede' (Rev. Edward Bradley), *Photographic Pleasures*, London 1855, p. 45.

³⁸. John Brown, 'Mr Hill's Calotypes,' *The Scotsman* (10 February 1862).

³⁹. Isaiah, 64. 6

daguerreotype to the Edinburgh Society of Arts in 1839, focussed on such symbols of mortality:

on examining them by microscopic power, details are discovered which are not perceptible to the naked eye in the original objects; a crack in the plaster, a withered leaf lying on a projecting cornice, or an accumulation of dust in a hollow moulding of a distant building, are faithfully copied in these wonderful pictures.⁴⁰

The photograph could be held in the hand or, like a miniature, be framed and worn close to the heart. It could become a personal relic, alongside the lock of hair, as an object of transferred devotion or melancholic contemplation.⁴¹ The photograph somehow absorbed not just the sorrow of the bereaved as the person of the dead. In this sense, its very unimportance and lack of artistry was supposed to increase its personal and private impact; practical ineptitude on the part of the photographer (or better still, anonymity) made the photograph more real or more poignant, because it suppressed or eliminated the intermediary. In the later discussions of spirit photography, the ignorance of the human medium, attempts to fake results and manipulative incompetence were all turned around and used as evidence for believing in them: the medium (in the photographic sense) was not just the photographic chemistry, it was also the bland transparency of the manipulator.

The interest in the photograph as an unmediated image comes from a number of directions, including literary criticism (see Introduction). The idea that the emotional impact of a photograph may be increased or generated not just by the death of the subject but by the anonymity of the maker is augmented by the twentieth-century idea that the passage of time itself divorces the actor – the photographer – from the subject:

It is the curious property of the photograph that its ‘naïve’ character is not obliterated, but actually confirmed by the passage of time. Since it forms (in Barthes’s phrase) a ‘message without a code,’ it simply persists, gathering historicity as the distance in time between the moment of photographing and the moment of the spectator’s perception grows greater. Walter Benjamin has succinctly pointed out how, while the portrait becomes after a few generations no

⁴⁰. Sir John Robison, ‘Notes on Daguerre’s photography,’ *The Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal* (July 1839): pp. 155-7, quoted in Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, *L. J. M. Daguerre, the History of the Diorama and the Daguerreotype*, 2nd ed., New York 1968, p. 88.

⁴¹. For the impact of such keepsakes, preferred to a painted portrait, see *Noctes Ambrosianae, The Works of Professor John Wilson.*, vol. 2, London 1855, pp. 267-70.

more than a ‘testimony to the art of the person who painted’ it, the photograph affords a ‘new and strange phenomenon.’⁴²

The strict logic of this, which relates to Benjamin’s passage on the calotype of Elizabeth Johnstone Hall (see Introduction), may be challenged. The art of portraiture is distinguished in painting by the claim of sitters to our attention – we know they were individuals, we know they had a life beyond the artist’s interest. It is arguable that in a gallery devoted to painting a portrait may lose this connection, but in other contexts, the portrait gallery or the home of the subject’s descendants, the necessary relation of the historical person to the artwork is maintained.

The celebrated critical example of this naïve idea of the photograph comes from Roland Barthes’s *Camera Lucida*. His transcendent image is a photograph of his mother as a child, which becomes an icon for contemplation: ‘the Photograph was indeed essential, it achieved for me, utopically, *the impossible science of the unique being*.’⁴³ So focussed is that contemplation that the photograph itself becomes transparent and disappears; the picture’s anonymity and unimportance is subsumed into verbal possession. It is not illustrated: ‘It exists only for me. For you, it would be nothing but an indifferent picture, one of the thousand manifestations of the “ordinary.”’⁴⁴ In the end, discoveries made through this way of thinking are not necessarily photographic. They cannot be visually shared.

The idea seems to be rooted in subtraction: photography’s claim to art is gradually abandoned in a natural process of time; the photographer or the photographer’s calculation is an obscuring veil, which gradually rots and frees our perception. It makes the assumption that it is artifice, mannerism or the distracting kinds of local or fashionable device – the pictorial equivalent of slang – that might disappear through time. But the result is often opposite; such anachronisms or oddities may come to dominate the image. The continued impact of Hill and Adamson’s calotypes is based on their ability to look beyond fashionable mannerism to an idea of personality or humanity. Hill observed

⁴². Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio*, Cambridge and elsewhere 1984, p. 135.

⁴³. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida, Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, London 1993, p. 71.

⁴⁴. Ibid., p. 73.

the phenomenon that the calotypes might change in their meaning with time, but he does not seem to have concluded that the growing distance in that time removed them from the province of art. Indeed his reaction was apparently the opposite; while he referred to the calotypes with qualified diffidence in the 1840s, by the 1860s he was convinced of their aesthetic importance (see Chapter nine). He was impressed by the magical or shifting properties of the photograph, while realising the need for artistry in making them appear.

Paper and stone

Brown's passage on the memory evoked by the worst of photographs leads, by contrast, into his praise of Hill's work:

You get a shock of surprise and pleasure when, in the midst of others, you come on them, powerful, gentle, full of space, full of the play of light and shadow, of the play of human life and feeling, of that same element that makes Sir Joshua, Velasquez, or our own Raeburn and Duncan and their subjects immortal.⁴⁵

One of the necessary attractions of photography, approached from the weighty traditions of formal portraiture, is its close relation to humanity. It was, apparently, in opposition to the ideal looked for in the public portraits of great men. But even in conditions of pomp, that idealising formality might be informed by a concern with time and its effects; mortality was a key moral concern – it was not the opposite of immortality so much as its precursor. Certain of Titian's grand portraits, for example, his group portrait of Pope Paul III with his nephews, express that evanescence – the connection with a time that will, inevitably, pass. Henry Raeburn's portraits may appear oddly photographic in their effect perhaps for this same reason. The age of his sitters is noted in the bloom of the young and the flatness of tired eyes and his breadth of treatment suggests, like the calotypes, the blurring of breathing life.⁴⁶

Hill and Adamson's work may be regarded in the context of formal painting as temporal. Here is the human and touchingly factual contact. The humanity of the calotypes (and such humanity is not a necessary factor of photography) may be seen in

⁴⁵. Brown (as in n. 38).

⁴⁶. See Duncan Thomson, John Dick, David Mackie and Nicholas Phillipson, *The Art of Sir Henry Raeburn*, exhibition catalogue, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh 1997, p. 99.

comparison with other images. The photographs of Professor John Wilson (Fig. 46) may be compared with John Steell's monumental sculpture, which was erected in Princes Street beside the Royal Scottish Academy. The immediate difference between the works lies in the size and elevation of the sculpture and the important fact that the paper image may be held in the hand. But the difference in approach and medium may be better understood by a comment made by Elizabeth Rigby in her journal:

Met D. O. Hill ... and went with him to his brother's rooms to see a bust of Professor Wilson. Such a grand Jupiter, very fine and very like, but wanting his exquisite colours to lighten and refine - the tender, child-like bloom which seems, like his mind, to have survived all the wear of time and care of this world. The substance of the hair can't be imitated: it is a mere halo round the head, of which heavy marble locks give no idea; still the bust is a majestic thing.⁴⁷

In a longer passage, John Wilson's daughter talked of him with reference to the calotype photograph:

despite increasing infirmity, his step was free, and he looked leonine in strength and bearing. So did he when he sat for his photograph to Mr. D. O. Hill ... In this product of that wonderful art, then in its infancy, comes out the character of the man; the block, as it were from nature, not softened down or refined away by that delicacy which so often makes portrait-painting insensate, but great in its original strength; with a something, perhaps more of the man, and a little less of the poet in his look, than painting would have given, yet unmistakable to the very character of the hands, broad and beautiful in form. The hair, not so fine, is rather lost in the hazy shadows of the photograph, but all else is good and true. Why, some one may ask, are those "weepers" on his sleeves? This was a mark of respect he paid to the memory of his wife, and which he continued to wear as long as he lived, renewing these simple outward memorials with tender regularity. The solicitude he showed about his weepers was very touching. Many a time have I sewed them on while he stood by till the work was finished, never satisfied unless he saw it done himself.⁴⁸

Sculpture is solid, serious, loaded with the weight of classical tradition. In Joshua Reynolds's words: 'Sculpture is formal, regular and austere; disdains all familiar objects, as incompatible with its dignity.'⁴⁹ It is petrifaction, designed to endure after the death of

⁴⁷. 24 March 1846, *Journals and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake*, ed. Charles Eastlake Smith, London 1895, p. 183.

⁴⁸. Mrs Gordon, 'Christopher North' *A Memoir of John Wilson*, Edinburgh 1863, vol. II, pp. 304-5.

⁴⁹. Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses delivered to the students of the Royal Academy*, ed. Roger Fry, London 1905, p. 285.

the fragile, mutable flesh. It involves formal discrimination - this man justifies elevation to a pedestal on the principal street of the grand New Town of Edinburgh. He stands by a truncated palm tree, which is presumably a classical reference to his fame and to his own poetic work, *The Isle of Palms*, but it is not a tree native to Scotland. Photography, and especially paper photography, had from its inception a connection with life and people of 'lesser importance.' It was straightforwardly less heavy, less serious, more fragile - emotionally rather than intellectually affecting. While Hill took no interest in the daguerreotype's accurate depiction of costume, his family affections suggest that he would have shared the view of John Wilson's daughter that the weepers - his sustained affectionate tribute to his wife - were important: part of the truth of the man. However, the distinction between the sculpture and the calotype was not as great as might be expected. Mrs Gordon is applauding the calotype for its strength in sculptural terms. Hill's photographic practice was designedly public rather than private, although informed by personal knowledge.

Between Hill and Adamson and Julia Margaret Cameron: humanity and immortality

Hill was concerned with the calotype as an expression of life. His interest was temporal, relating to what he knew of present life but giving that knowledge of present life to immortality. This may be better understood in comparison with the approach of Julia Margaret Cameron.

Hill and Cameron had certain interests and characteristics in common. They were both sociable, both generous and both highly ambitious. They shared an interest in the imperfect and the broad effects of photography. It is easy to oversimplify the distinction between the two bodies of work. It is a distinction that is exaggerated by Cameron's personality and her fluent enthusiasm. She was working twenty years later in the next generation, in England rather than Scotland and with a radically different attitude to

religion and the depiction of the religious ideal - the distance between the Anglo-Catholic Oxford Movement and the Free Church of Scotland.⁵⁰

It is regrettable that we have neither Hill's opinion of Cameron nor Cameron's of Hill and Adamson. It seems plausible that Hill would have largely concurred with Cameron's comments on Sir David Brewster's 'eloquent speech' on photography, in December 1864:

I could not help wishing ... that you had spoken of Photography in that spirit which will elevate it and induce an ignorant public to believe in other than mere conventional topographic Photography - map making & skeleton rendering of feature & form without that roundness & fulness of force & feature that modelling of flesh & limb which the focus I use only can give tho' called & condemned as "*out of focus.*" What is focus - & who has a right to say what focus is the legitimate focus - My aspirations are to ennable Photography and to secure for it the character and uses of High Art by combining the real & Ideal & sacrificing nothing of Truth by all possible devotion to Poetry & beauty. ⁵¹

However, while there is an expressive sympathy between Hill and Adamson and Cameron, the difference in practice and aim was radical. Hill was looking more for a result of social interaction. Cameron was looking for the effects of introspection: the inward turning, even facial blankness, generated by the self-hypnotic effect of posing for long minutes at a time in bright light. Cameron's sitters stare beyond us; they do not connect. She deliberately extended the exposure times to achieve this, and the ribald accounts of such mild torture explain what she was doing, physically and psychologically. Marianne North, who submitted to twelve attempts to photograph her in Sri Lanka in 1877, recalled:

She ... dressed me up in flowing draperies of cashmere wool, let down my hair, and made me stand with spiky cocoa-nut branches running into my head, the noon-day sun's rays dodging my eyes between the leaves as the slight breeze moved them, and told me to look perfectly natural (with a thermometer standing at 96°)!⁵²

⁵⁰. See Mike Weaver, *Whisper of the Muse. The Overstone Album & Other Photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron*, Malibu 1986.

⁵¹. Cameron to John Herschel, quoted by Colin Ford, *The Cameron Collection. An Album of Photographs by Julia Margaret Cameron*, Wokingham and New York 1975, pp.140-1.

⁵². Quoted in ibid., p. 21.

The difference between Hill and Cameron, both of whom admired their subjects uncynically, lay in this. Hill wanted the human warmth of a conversation and contact. His portrait of Thomas Chalmers sits in a family group; his picture of John Wilson shows him with the weepers on his sleeves to mourn his dead wife. Cameron wanted the sitter to express an individual ideal of genius or beauty, that was an abstract of her enthusiasm as much as a reaction to their personal nature. Hill's photography is more responsive and more understanding; it is hard to imagine Hill instructing his sitters to look natural. They were both generous, but Cameron's generosity was aggressive, she sometimes pursued rather than courted her sitters. There is an element of un-kindness in her photograph of Sir John Herschel at the age of 75, which has been described as 'one of the most moving images of a great intellect caught in the process of physical dissolution.'⁵³ In seeking sociable and temporal dislocation, she has here achieved an abstraction of despair - tragedy rather than nature. Cameron wanted to fit her sitters into a mould of immortality; Hill was offering a framing of mortality – it was a kinder vision.

⁵³. Malcolm Rogers, *Camera Portraits. Photographs from the National Portrait Gallery 1839-1989*, London 1989, p. 82.

Chapter six

The Figure and Expression

Figure study: the classical cast, anatomy and phrenology

The two earliest of Hill's surviving letters were written to the Board of Trustees for Arts and Manufactures in Edinburgh. The first was written when he was eighteen years old, and requests readmission to the Trustees' Academy. It says:

his principal reason for residing in Edinburgh is that he may have the benefit of attending this institution, as he has no other opportunity of drawing from the Figure.¹

The second is dated seven years later, when Hill was a practising artist:

having of late given part of my attention to the painting of Figures, (of which class of subjects my first picture viz "A Scottish Bridal" is now in the Royal Institution) I am deeply impressed with the importance of obtaining a better knowledge of drawing the figure, to which end I have the strongest desire of being allowed to attend the Academy in the evenings ... I have ... with the advice of Mr Allan of the Academy who has kindly expressed his desire that I should continue my studies under him, taken the liberty of addressing you to request you would, if it meets your approval, further my desire of being admitted to draw in the Academy in the evening during the pleasure of the Honorable Board.²

Hill is known principally as a landscape painter, so this repetition of an interest in drawing the figure is a little surprising. In fact, his ambitions lay also in the practice of *genre*, and his decision to paint his great *Signing of the Deed of Demission* was based on an efficient knowledge of the human figure and face. He did not need photography to aid him, and had started work on the studies for the picture before Brewster introduced him to Robert Adamson. There is a group of small oil sketches of individual ministers, which Hill apparently decided not to use in the Disruption Picture and gave to an aspiring painter to study, which make it clear that he was a competent portrait painter (Fig. 47).³ This makes it less surprising that the practice of

¹. Hill to the Board of Trustees, November 1820, uncatalogued Board of Trustees papers, SRO.

². Hill to Sir William Arbuthnott, March 1827, uncatalogued Board of Trustees papers, SRO.

³. The illustrated portrait is probably identifiable as the Rev. William Bevan, Secretary of the British Evangelical Alliance of Protestant churches, established, after meetings in Scotland in 1843 and 1845, in London in 1846. See John W. Ewing, *Goodly Fellowship: A Centenary Tribute to the Life and Work of the World's Evangelical Alliance 1846- 1946*, 1946. Amongst those present were Adolphe Monod and J. H. Merle d'Aubigné, from Europe and Lyman Beecher and Samuel H. Cox

the calotype partnership was substantially the expression of an informed interest in photographing people rather than city and landscape.

The two contemporary painters Hill most admired were Turner and David Wilkie. It is in relation to Wilkie's painting that David Brewster's letter to Talbot, announcing the partnership, should be read. The letter first expresses the initial success of their experiments and Brewster's own excitement at the results they were achieving. It then continues:

They have succeeded beyond their most sanguine expectations. They have taken, on a small scale, Groups of 25 persons in the same picture all placed in attitudes which the Painter desired, and very large pictures besides have been taken of each individual to assist the Painter in the completion of his picture. Mr D. O. Hill the Painter is on the eve of entering into Partnership with Mr Adamson, and proposes to apply the Calotype to many other general purposes of a very popular kind, & especially to the execution of large pictures representing difft. bodies & classes of individuals ... I have seen one of the groups of 25 persons with our distinguished Moderator Dr Chalmers sitting in the heart of them, and I have never seen anything finer.⁴

Having been persuaded to consider the calotype as an aid to the one large painting, which he expected to occupy him full time for three years, Hill was already, after just a few weeks, struck with the exciting possibility of extending his interest to 'purposes of a very popular kind, & especially to the execution of large pictures representing difft. bodies & classes of individuals.' This brief and confusing phrase has not signalled clearly that this – figure study - was the focus of the partnership.⁵

For the Edinburgh painters, the principal aid to the study of the human figure was the impressive collection of classical casts owned by the Trustees' Academy - housed in the same building where Hill worked as Secretary.⁶ It is this collection Hill referred to when he requested permission to study from the figure. Thomas Dibdin commented in 1836:

from America, who were calotyped and appear in the Disruption Picture. The oil sketches are now in the SNPG. I am indebted to Helen Smailes for the information.

⁴. Brewster to Talbot, 3 July 1843, NMP 1937-4926.

⁵. Helmut Gernsheim interpreted the phrase 'general purposes of a very popular kind' to mean the enlargements Hill and Adamson made through a solar microscope, while I would think that popular may mean 'relating to the people.' Helmut Gernsheim, 'The David Octavius Hill Memorial Lecture delivered at Edinburgh University on 9 May, 1970,' *Creative Camera* (September 1971): p. 302.

⁶. See Helen E. Smailes, 'A History of the Statue Gallery at the Trustees' Academy in Edinburgh,' *Journal of the History of Collections*, vol. 3 no. 2 (1991): pp. 125-143.

The rooms upstairs devoted to the *casts* in plaster of Paris, are admirably arranged: for instead of the sepulchral, lateral light of Somerset House, you have the light immediately descending from above. If the Chantreys, Westmacotts and Baileys, that are to be - in Scotland - do not feel the Phidias-flame rising in their bosoms, it will not be from the want of classical stimulants, in casts of the most approved marble-forms of antiquity.⁷

Hill himself referred to the collection as: 'the finest gallery of casts perhaps in the world.'⁸ George Paul Chalmers, who studied there from 1853, described the advantage:

In Edinburgh we had a long gallery with windows on the roof at intervals ... I shall never forget the exquisite beauty of the middle tint or overshadowing which the statues had that were placed between the windows; those which were immediately underneath them were of course in a blaze of light, and we had all gradations of light, middle tint, and shadow.⁹

It is worth consideration that Hill had followed here, as a draughtsman, the study proposed by Talbot and others for the camera, of statuary seen and defined in different angles and strengths of light.¹⁰

Alongside the study of the cast, stood the more difficult study of anatomy. From the Renaissance to the later nineteenth century, the anatomical study of the human form was a theological and aesthetic consideration as much as a professional concern of the surgeons.¹¹ The idea of man, both in Protagoras's phrase, 'as the measure of all things,' and as the focus of God's Creation meant that the study was sanctified and elevated by philosophical and religious principle. It was a study of the highest order, and anatomical lectures and dissection took place in public theatres. Such painters as Leonardo and Michelangelo exemplify the idea of the artist-anatomist, who contributed to the knowledge of the human body in the Renaissance and offered a

⁷. Thomas Froggall Dibdin, *A Bibliographical Tour in the North Counties of England and in Scotland*, vol. 2, London 1838, p. 556.

⁸. Hill to Roberts, 25 March 1846, NLS microfilm 381.

⁹. Quoted in Lindsay Errington, *Master Class: Robert Scott Lauder and his pupils*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh 1983, p. 32.

¹⁰. William Henry Fox Talbot, 'Bust of Patroclus,' *The Pencil of Nature*, London, 1844-1846, pl. V, reprinted in *Henry Fox Talbot: Selected Texts and Bibliography*, ed. Mike Weaver, Oxford 1992, p. 89.

¹¹. See Martin Kemp and Marina Wallace, *Spectacular Bodies: The Art and Science of the Human Body from Leonardo to Now*, exhibition catalogue, Hayward Gallery, London 2000, and Deanna Petheridge, *The Quick and the Dead: Artists and Anatomy*, exhibition catalogue, Hayward Gallery, London 1997.

model to later painters. It was understood that physical examination of the body would illuminate greater truths.

The Edinburgh of Hill's time was a centre for surgical teaching and practice. He may well have studied within the extensive collections, housed in the 'magnificent galleried museum,' of the Royal College of Surgeons.¹² This was, like the Royal Institution and later the National Gallery of Scotland, a grand classical building designed by W. H. Playfair. The continuing, essential interlink between art and surgical anatomy may be expressed by the two museum casts noted in the College, which were of the Greek Discobolus and an écorché anatomical figure by Jean-Antoine Houdon.¹³ The first curator of this museum was Dr Robert Knox (1791-1862), who acquired the collections of Sir Charles Bell and James Wilson for the College. He was himself an anatomist and maintained in his practice the idea of a grand 'theatrical' tradition:

Knox was a famous and brilliant teacher and attracted large audiences, sometimes as many as 500. Unprepossessing in appearance – small pox had left his face severely marked and unattractive – he compensated with a flamboyance of dress, a superb histrionic ability, and the complete assurance that men small in stature often display. His lectures – sometimes repeated several times a day – were regarded as the greatest intellectual treat in 'Modern Athens.'¹⁴

There are three calotypes which show men in the act of lecturing or preaching, with the right arm outstretched in the dramatic gesture, seizing the attention; two are of the ministers, Thomas Chalmers and Robert Candlish (Fig. 26), and the third is of Robert Knox (Fig. 48). This grouping may be coincidental, but it may contain an echo of the tradition linking theological and anatomical exposition.

However, there was an inherent difficulty to this honourable study:

The secular and religious laws that reluctantly sanctioned dissection of human cadavers from the late Middle Ages to the nineteenth century, generally reserved the violation of dissection for those condemned to die at the hands of an executioner.¹⁵

¹². J. Smith, *The Origin, Progress, and Present Position of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh 1505-1905*, Edinburgh 1905, p. 20.

¹³. Ibid., p. 47. The Houdon figure 'either in complete casts or in sectioned parts, retains a presence in many academies across the world, including that of St Petersburg.' See Kemp and Wallace (as in n. 11), p. 83.

¹⁴. John Bruce, 'The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh,' *Scottish Medical Journal*, vol. 6, no. 578 (1961): p. 583.

¹⁵. Kemp and Wallace (as in n. 11), p. 29.

The bodies of executed criminals were the only certain supply for anatomists. William Hogarth's moral series, *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, ends with *The Reward of Cruelty* and the hanged man on the dissecting table. Even such a professional anatomical work as the artist/surgeon, John Bell's *Engravings Explaining the Anatomy of the Bones, Muscles and Joints* (1794), offers a suggestion of prison and punishment, with an unplastered wall and a knotted rope, in the background.¹⁶ In Edinburgh in the early nineteenth century, surgeons were supplied by the sinister 'resurrection trade,' the theft of newly-buried bodies. The problematic morality which lay behind this criminal collusion was brought to light in a drastic fashion in 1827. It was then discovered that Burke and Hare had been supplying corpses to the anatomy schools not just by stealing the bodies of the dead from the cemeteries but by murdering people. Dr Robert Knox was the surgeon involved in this case and, while many people were persuaded of his innocence, the scandal effectively finished his career in Edinburgh. The natural revulsion the murders caused may have made practical anatomical study as difficult for the painters as for the surgeons.

Another consideration may have come into play. Anatomy depended on death, and the often mannered results of the study were criticised in a letter from James Nasmyth to Hill:

The disgusting pedantry of showing forth the mean knowledge of the position of a few muscles and by mistaking the means for the end and giving us skinned men placed in attitudes to show off the artists knowledge of anatomy in place of telling the story of the picture is a species of affectation [that] I will never give in to let it be the work of Mr Courbould or Micael Ang [*page torn*] No I am your mere goth who can see no beauty but in a noble and yet true representation of nature in her best moods either quiet or excited. Give me your Rembrandt [*illegible*] and they may walk off with all the skinned men as have such muscles as shine through the dress be it never so thick. I am really not up to that mark of the sublime yet.¹⁷

The Royal Institution opened the first official life class in Edinburgh in 1829. In 1838, Dr David Monro offered a course of lectures on anatomy to the Trustees' Academy, using the collection of classical casts and drawings. In 1839, he was assisted by a life model, Private Davis of the Third Dragoon Guards.¹⁸ This turn to life may also have

¹⁶. Illustrated and discussed in Petheridge (as in n.11), p. 38 and fig. 40.

¹⁷. Nasmyth to Hill, 5 August 1835, ROE.

¹⁸. Minutes of the Board of Manufactures, 12 December 1838 and 17 March 1840, SRO NG1/1/37. I am indebted to Helen Smailes for this reference.

made the study of phrenology or physiognomy more attractive.¹⁹ Historically, it was the purpose of the portrait to reveal something of the greatness or the soul within the subject; theoretically, phrenology, as the analytical study of the surface structure of the head, might help to shift the onus from the artist as ideal image-maker to the artist as respectful observer. George Harvey expressed a bias in favour of phrenology in a letter to George Combe in 1844, responding to his work, *On Phrenology and the Fine Arts*:

I have read the letters with deep interest and cordially concur in the views which you have adopted as to the superiority of that class of Art, in whatever department which embodies most of the qualities of mind, as opposed to that which rests its claims for the supremacy on the merely beautiful in form. This opinion I have long entertained, but have found little sympathy in regard to it among my professional brethren, particularly those who may have been for a time resident in Italy.²⁰

For Harvey, the depiction of character or mind through a drawing of the real face was not so much an opposition to the perfection of the ideal, as a proposal contrasting a Protestant truthfulness with a Roman Catholic untruth. The Dutch painters were Protestant and acted upon the principle of personal responsibility and individuality, which Protestantism presupposes. This interest helps to explain the attraction of the Dutch model to the Scottish *genre* painters, led by David Wilkie. Moreover, the Protestant idea released both Harvey and Hill into a method of religious expression, based on national character and history. It lay behind Hill's interest in the calotype and added strength to his motive in making such an inherently truthful picture of the Free Church.

However, this does not necessarily imply a belief in phrenology. A little wit and knowledge of humanity would introduce doubt. It cannot have helped to convince the doubters that they were readily dismissed on the specious basis that they lacked the relevant intellectual bump to understand; Lord Jeffrey's vehement opposition was so treated. The actress, Fanny Kemble, herself a friend of Combe, was similarly dismissed:

¹⁹. See Jennifer Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions: the origin and influence of Charles Le Brun's 'Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière'*, New Haven and London 1994.

²⁰. Harvey to Combe, NLS Ms 7272, fo. 4. Combe had a close relationship with the sculptor, Laurence Macdonald, whose work was greatly influenced by phrenology. See Fiona Pearson, 'Phrenology and Sculpture 1820-1855,' *The Leeds Art Calendar*, no. 88 (1981): pp. 16 and 19-20.

I have had innumerable opportunities of hearing his system explained by himself; but as I was never able to get beyond a certain point of belief in it, it was agreed on all hands that my brain was deficient in the organ of causality ie in the capacity of logical reasoning, and that therefore it was not in my power to perceive the force of his arguments.²¹

Hugh Miller introduced his article on the calotype with a sardonic comparison between the impact of photography and a blatantly fraudulent version of phrenology:

Phrenomesmerism and the calotype have been introduced to the Edinburgh public about much the same time; but how very differently have they fared hitherto! A real invention, which bids fair to produce some of the greatest revolutions in the fine arts of which they have ever been the subject, has as yet attracted comparatively little notice; an invention which serves but to demonstrate that the present age, with all its boasted enlightenment, may yet not be very unfitted for the reception of superstitions, the most irrational and gross, is largely occupying the attention of the community, and filling column after column in our public prints.²²

Phrenomesmerism was a public performance, in which the expert first (apparently) hypnotised the subject and then pressed the relevant bumps to generate the behaviour of loving children, miserliness and so forth. The subject then capered about the platform displaying these characteristics, to considerable admiration. One of the travelling performers, a Mr Mair from Dundee, walked, by a nice irony, into the arms of Dr John Adamson in the same month Hugh Miller published his article, and the story may have prompted his remark. Mair began his performance in St Andrews by first putting a boy into a ‘cataleptic state’:

He then invited any gentlemen present to examine the boy. Dr Adamson, who happened to be present, having procured a weight of about 14lbs, attached a cord to it, and put it over the boy’s arm, and suddenly cut the cord, when the arm started up, plainly shewing that the weight had been supported by an ordinary voluntary exertion of the boy. The performers were a little abashed.²³

Since the medical profession was currently in desperate pursuit of anaesthetics for the pain of surgery and one of the proposed solutions was hypnotism, Adamson’s interest and suspicion here may have related rather to the mesmerism than the phrenology.

²¹. Frances Anne Kemble, *Record of a Girlhood*, London 1878, pp. 245-7.

²². Hugh Miller, ‘The Calotype,’ *The Witness* (12 July 1843).

²³. *The Fife Herald* (6 July 1843).

I do not know if Hill shared the cynicism. He and Adamson calotyped George Combe, and the letter he wrote to him, in August 1844, is friendly. But there is a natural opposition between the physical measurements of phrenology and the abstract breadth of the calotype. Arguing from a belief in phrenology, the most straightforward record photography could make the critical connection between the mind and the outer appearance of the sitter. This, in Hill's terms, would be the province of the daguerreotype, the belittled ideal image.

Expression and beauty

In 1755 the portrait painter, Allan Ramsay (1713-84), published his *Dialogue on Taste*, which proposed that beauty was a matter of personal affection, and that the classic ideal was a reduction: 'in the antique, we find a sort of common measure, but which falls mightily in its value when we consider that it is only of a negative kind, from which no striking grace can be expected.'²⁴ This is in contradistinction to Johann Winckelmann's aesthetic theory that the ideal beauty of the classical artists, whilst built on nature, was constructed to achieve harmony, free from emotion and 'had no existence but in their elevated conceptions'.²⁵ Duncan Macmillan has traced Ramsay's belief in the beauty of individual humanity from the eighteenth century to Hill and Adamson's photography, through David Hume's proposal, 'Everything in nature is individual,' and Archibald Alison's *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*:

If in the human countenance and form there were only certain colours or forms or proportions, that were essentially beautiful, how imperious a check would have been given, not only to human happiness, but to the most important affections and sensibilities of our nature!²⁶

These arguments opened the field of aesthetics to subjectivity and variability. They imply, moreover, that need for a sociable relationship between the artist and subject which was the key to Hill's work. Artist and subject connect and reflect. This attractive proposal was to be found in the work of the surgeon, Charles Bell (1774-

²⁴. Allan Ramsay, *Dialogue on Taste* (1755) quoted in Alastair Smart, *Allan Ramsay: Painter, Essayist and Man of the Enlightenment*, New Haven and London 1992, p. 141.

²⁵. J. J. Winckelmann, *Reflections Concerning the Imitation of the Grecian Artists in Painting and Sculpture*, Glasgow 1766, p. 36.

²⁶. Quoted by Duncan Macmillan, *Scottish Art 1460-1990*, Edinburgh 1990, pp. 104 and 154.

1842), *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression as Connected with the Fine Arts*.²⁷

Bell believed that emotion made beauty:

A countenance which, in ordinary conditions, has nothing remarkable, may become beautiful in expression ... When we look forward to the meeting with those we love, it is the illuminated face we hurry to meet; and none who have lost a friend but must acknowledge that it is the evanescent expression, more than the permanent form, which is painfully dear to them ...

Those who have professedly written on the antique say, that, to arrive at the perfection of the ancient statue, the artist must avoid what is human, and aim at the divine. But we speak of what stands materially before us, to be seen, touched, and measured. With what *divine* essence is the comparison to be made? ... the idea of representing divinity is palpably absurd; we know nothing of form but from the contemplation of *man*.²⁸

Bell, like Ramsay, was challenging the dominant idea of the classical or platonic ideal - the proposal of the superiority of a universal design. It was Plato's belief that the individual was a mere imitation of a divine pattern and that the further imitation, by art, of nature was destructive of that ideal. Neoplatonism answered this problem by moving the artist into the higher sphere, endowing him with divine inspiration and with the ability to perceive and seize the eternal pattern. Ernst Gombrich points out that the apparent achievement of this abstract harmony was more likely to derive from the artist's youthful training in the study of classical statuary than from the understanding of a pure idea.²⁹ The establishment of the classical cast collection in Edinburgh was in itself a continuation of this uneasy proposal - offering standards of inspiration and models from an invented divine ideal.

Hill's enthusiasm for the arts was generously eclectic and his whole-hearted enthusiasm for the ideal representations of sculpture can be read in his letters to Paton. The calotype of Hill with the sculptors, John Henning and Alexander Handyside Ritchie and Henning's casts of the Parthenon frieze, implies the kind of serious admiration and discussion which must have been a commonplace among the Scottish artists of the time (Fig. 49). It was not necessary to reject a classical ideal in order to pursue nature; the classical model could be reassessed in terms of that nature. John

²⁷. Charles Bell, *The Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression, as Connected with the Fine Arts*, 7th ed., London 1877, first published as, *Essays in the Anatomy of Expression* (1806) and substantially revised and republished in 1842, after Bell had visited Italy and examined both paintings and sculpture for their expressiveness.

²⁸. Ibid. pp. 18-19.

²⁹. I have paraphrased Ernst Gombrich's analysis here, see *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology*

Brown, tellingly, spoke with admiration of the Newhaven fishwives in his review of the calotypes:

we have often been struck, when seeing them sitting together round their oyster creels, with their likeness to those awful and majestic women, the Fates of the Elgin Marbles, the casts of which are in the Gallery of the Royal Institution.³⁰

Hill's interest in the calotype process, however, like Bell's argument, offered an alternative to the uncritical imitation of the classical, in examining the natural and the individual. He was looking at the idea of the 'illuminated face,' which connects with another sentence from Bell's work: 'Peace, comfort, society, and agreeable studies, preserve the features mobile, and ready to conform, as an index of the mind, to the sentiments we love.'³¹ It was not an urge to replace the perfection of the classical or the grandeur of sublimity with a mild, domestic principle. Bell was not convinced that an abstract of perfection made beauty. His view was human rather than classical or divine and connects with the mortal idea discussed in Chapter five.

Bell had a sophisticated understanding of love and the working of society - that when communicating with each other, people are relaxed into an openness, a readiness to reveal their own nature; when studied coldly for an abstraction, their faces will close communication. Individual beauty may disappear under a cold touch. It is a portrait painter's understanding, exemplified in the story told of Leonardo, that while he was painting the Mona Lisa, 'he engaged people to play and sing, and jesters to keep her merry, and remove that melancholy which painting usually gives to portraits.'³² Bell's argument derived from the dominant practical tradition of portraiture in Scotland, with its necessary relation both to nature and courtesy, expressed by Allan Ramsay and Henry Raeburn. It ties in with the idea of character described by Walter Scott and painted by David Wilkie, who was a pupil of Charles Bell. G. F. Waagen, the Director of the Berlin Museum, compared Wilkie's work

of Pictorial Representation, Washington 1960, pp. 155-6.

³⁰. John Brown, review of Hill's pictures in the RSA exhibition, *The Witness* (22 April 1846).

³¹. Bell (as in n. 27), p. 131. This also connects with eighteenth-century ideas of society, expressed for example by Adam Smith in his *Theory of Moral Sentiment*, discussed by Nicholas Phillipson, 'Manners, Morals and Characters: Henry Raeburn and the Scottish Enlightenment,' *The Art of Sir Henry Raeburn 1756-1823*, exhibition catalogue, National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh 1997, p. 34.

³². Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, trans. A. B. Hinds, London and New York 1927, vol. 2, p. 164.

favourably with that by David Teniers and William Hogarth, because Wilkie understood the need for an affectionate approach:

I find in Wilkie a close affinity with his celebrated countryman Sir Walter Scott. Both have in common that genuine, refined delineation of character which extends to the minutest particulars. In the soul of both there is more love than contempt for man.³³

This approach shifted the balance of elevated representation from the imagination to sympathetic observation and contact. It made art a sociable business – the artist had a responsibility to draw out socially, rather than to create, what he wished to see. Hill's talent for generating affection is important - the openness of the calotype portraits depends on this. He wrote to Roberts of his plan for a work on British statesmen, that he needed to be assured that potential sitters liked the work and to know the scheme to be: 'well backed ... coldness on the part of those to be calotyped unmans me quite.'³⁴ Stanley Cursiter, the painter and Curator of the National Gallery of Scotland, identified and admired the social skill behind the calotypes in 1928: 'In single figures the pose is always simple and natural, and invariably personal in that we feel it to be true to the sitter rather than a preconceived attitude determined by the photographer.'³⁵ The responsive warmth of the sitters underlies the relaxed appearance of nature, revealing rather than concealing character. The emotional strength of the calotype portraits lies in a restrained interaction with his sitters, where the mind is kept attentive.³⁶

There is a practical distinction between the social skill discussed in Chapter one, of communicating with and accommodating people, and the unnatural construction of the same appearance for art. The difficulty of achieving this apparently natural relationship may be illustrated by comparing Hill's practice with that of the successful London photographer, Antoine Claudet, who indulged in the commercial defence of

³³. G. F. Waagen, *Works of Art and Artists in England*, vol. 1, London 1836, p. 240.

³⁴. Hill to Roberts, 14 March 1845, NLS microfilm 381. See Sara Stevenson, 'Cold Buckets of Ignorant Criticism: Qualified Success in the Partnership of David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson,' *The Photographic Collector*, vol. 4, no. 3 (1983): pp. 337-47.

³⁵. Stanley Cursiter, 'D. O. Hill. Famous Calotypes,' *The Scotsman* (28 November 1928).

³⁶. An earlier interest in this idea was expressed Robert Cullen, in the context of the moral philosophical discourses of the eighteenth century, from Adam Smith to Henry Mackenzie, 'In the more trifling circumstances of manner and behaviour, and in the more ordinary occurrences of life, which tend to no particular object, and in which therefore, men are less upon their guard, the disguise is forgot to be assumed, and we give way to the natural cast of our mind and disposition.' Quoted by Phillipson (as in n. 31), p. 34.

declaring the sitter responsible for the failure of a picture: ‘If ladies, however, *must* study for a bit of effect, we will give them a recipe for a pretty expression of mouth – let them place it as if they were going to say *prunes*.³⁷ However skilful Claudet was as a photographer, this is extreme social ineptitude. It justifies John Brown’s hostile criticism of Claudet’s work, which he contrasted with Hill’s in 1862:

Take Claudet’s best - everything is there that the perfection of skill, manipulation, materials, light, and infinite practice can achieve, and what have you? A clever, leaden, flat miniature, with a background as hard and as *blae* as a slate - no spaciousness, no substance, no ease or grace, power, or life, or play - nothing but surface, and a poverty of invention, of posture, of meaning, of total result quite odd and lamentable.³⁸

Among the early calotype studies for the Disruption Picture, the series of Thomas Chalmers attempts a number of different angles to the face and includes one of him smiling. Here, Hill was presumably intending to give himself a number of possibilities in composing the painting around the critical figure of Chalmers. Hill’s interest in expression is generally distinguished from the later, scientific explorations of expression, conducted by G.-B. Duchenne de Boulogne or Charles Darwin. Duchenne de Boulogne applied electrical impulses to different muscles in the face to create expressions for the camera, with the intention of building a thesaurus of human expressions.³⁹ Charles Darwin, who used one of Duchenne de Boulogne’s most troubling images - the man showing horror - also employed Oscar Gustav Reijlander, whose histrionic abilities enabled him to enact emotion - ‘Indignation,’ ‘Disgust,’ ‘Helplessness.’ Hill did not attempt either the comprehensive or analytical approach to the subject. He used neither models nor actors in his photographic work, presumably because they would have been apt to introduce professional mannerism into a field of nature. He may have also been familiar with Duchenne de Boulogne’s idea that natural expression could not be achieved by an actor, because such an imitation did not connect with the divine origins of expression:

³⁷. Review in *The People’s Journal* (1846), quoted by Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, *L. J. M. Daguerre: The History of the Diorama and the Daguerreotype*, New York 1968, p.161.

³⁸. John Brown, ‘Mr Hill’s Calotypes,’ *The Scotsman* (10 February 1862).

³⁹. G.-B. Duchenne de Boulogne, *Méchanisme de la physionomie humaine*, Paris 1862; Charles Darwin, *On the Expressions of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, London 1872. The subject is discussed in Robert A. Sobieszek, ‘“Gymnastics of the Soul.” The Clinical Aesthetics of Duchenne de Boulogne,’ *Ghost in the Shell: Photography and the Human Soul 1850- 2000*, Los Angeles and Cambridge, Massachusetts 2000, pp. 32-79.

He [God] wished the characteristic signs of the emotions, even the most fleeting, to be written briefly on a man's face. Once this language of facial expression was created, it sufficed for Him to give all human beings the instinctive faculty of always expressing their sentiments by contracting the same muscles. This rendered the language universal and immutable.⁴⁰

Hill and Adamson did photograph the Shakespearian actress, Isabella Glynn (1823-89), but she is shown turned away from the camera. The only life study, from a nude figure, is Dr George Bell (Fig. 50).

Resemblance and the photogenic

Sir David Brewster signalled an unease with the calotype process early on, when he found that portraits were not consistent in their resemblance. He wrote to Talbot:

I have been very much struck with the different calotypes of the same person. In many of them, where the sitter was steady, - the family likeness is scarcely preserved [note below 'Compare the enclosed one of myself with those taken by you.'] Does this arise from the camera? I have seen among Mr Adamson's calotypes pictures of men & women in one of which the sitter was decidedly good looking and in the other hideous. There is something yet to be done in reference to this point.⁴¹

Brewster saw this photographic variation as a technological failing, and pursued its solution to the end of his career. By 1852, he had discovered that the clarity of the albumen process did not, as he had hoped, resolve the problem, and he turned his attention to the camera lens. He proposed to a meeting of the British Association that 'all the photographic portraits taken with large object glasses or mirrors must necessarily be distorted,' because the pupil of the eye was only 2/10 inch diameter.⁴² His last correspondence with Antoine Claudet, in 1867, showed him still in pursuit of the greater perfection of photo-portraiture by means of small lenses made of materials of different dispersive powers.⁴³

Hill can be found mutely expressing the same problem in a story told of his attempt to photograph Thomas Duncan's wife, Mary:

I can remember my grandmother telling us that D. O. Hill had been set on making a really good photograph of her: so she duly posed for him, and he

⁴⁰. Quoted by Sobieszek (as in n. 39), p. 440.

⁴¹. Brewster to Talbot, 28 November 1843, NMP 1937-4929.

⁴². Anon, review of Brewster's paper, *The Art Journal*, vol. 4 (1852): p. 312.

⁴³. Quoted by Mrs Gordon, *The Home Life of Sir David Brewster*, Edinburgh 1869, p. 164.

disappeared to develop it. When next they saw him, he just came and sat down in a chair, and buried his face in his hands, and that was the last of it!⁴⁴

From the evidence of Hugh Miller's article on the calotype, Hill apparently accepted the variability of human appearance as part of the interest of calotype portraiture and as an important creative idea. Hill probably discussed with Miller the resemblance between the calotypes and mezzotints after Joshua Reynolds, and showed or lent him an album of the prints for comparison:

There is one particular kind of resemblance between the two, which strikes as remarkable, because of a kind which could scarce be anticipated. In the volume of prints there are several likenesses of the artist himself, all very admirable as pieces of art, and all, no doubt, sufficiently like, but yet all dissimilar in some points from each other. All this dissimilarity in the degree which it obtains, one might naturally deem a defect – the result of some slight inaccuracy in the drawing. Should not portraits of the same individual, if all perfect likenesses of him, be all perfectly like one another? No; not at all. A man at one moment of time, and seen from one particular point of view, may be very unlike himself when seen at another moment of time, and from another point of view. We have at present before us the photographic likenesses of four several individuals – three likenesses of each – and no two in any of the four sets are quite alike. They differ in expression, according to the mood which prevailed in the mind of the original at the moment in which they were imprinted upon the paper. In some respects the physiognomy seems different; and the features appear more or less massy in the degree in which the lights and shadows were more or less strong, or in which the particular angle they were taken in brought them out in higher or lower relief.⁴⁵

The problem has a number of strands, both in human perception and in technological mutation. The portrait presents us with something abstracted from experience, because it does not move; our knowledge of people is based on a constantly shifting reality, which builds up a generalised idea.⁴⁶ This is the critical problem of portraiture; how to make a face recognisable within one static image without eliminating much of the sitter's character or even more simply different facets of their appearance. Ernst Gombrich has addressed this problem and concludes that the viewer must be invited to take an active part:

⁴⁴. R. Esmé Dell, granddaughter of Thomas Duncan, to James A. Finlayson, 9 February 1937, transcribed into Finlayson's notebook, NLS Acc 9297, vol. II, p. 671.

⁴⁵. Miller (as in n. 22).

⁴⁶. There is a helpful discussion of this problem in relation to painting and photography in Montagu (as in n. 19), pp. 2-8.

The portraitist who wants to compensate for the absence of movement must first of all mobilise our projection. He must so exploit the ambiguities of the arrested face that the multiplicities of possible readings result in the semblance of life. The immobile face must appear as a nodal point of several possible expressive movements.⁴⁷

The sophistication of response which Gombrich requires here had been expressed in different terms by John Ruskin. He qualified the recognition of portraits as dependent on the intelligence of the artist and the intelligence of the viewer:

Recognition is no proof of real and intrinsic resemblance ... A man is known to his dog by the smell, to his tailor by the coat, to his friend by the smile: each of these knows him, but how little or how much, depends on the dignity of the intelligence. That which is truly and indeed characteristic of the man, is known only to God.⁴⁸

Brewster's complaint against photography, which Miller neatly identified with painting, is critically connected with physiognomy and its representation. The photogenic character, defined as the unexpectedly eccentric ability to maintain a consistent image, is one of the most interesting questions raised by photography. It is almost a pre-condition of modern public life, to be reliably photogenic. In discussing this question of recognition, Gombrich used the example of Emmanuel Shinwell, whose political success might be partly explained by the remarkable way the structure of his face dominated his appearance in photographs, from infancy to old age.⁴⁹

It is difficult to quantify the photogenic character. The rejection of an image by the sitter is usually attributed to vanity and not taken seriously. Moreover, the bystanding audience often urge the resemblance in a curiously conciliatory manner - as though to bring the picture and the person together. However, a significant example of the non-photogenic may be found in the face of Robert Louis Stevenson. He was continually critical of his portraits and, indeed, did not 'take' well either in painting or photography. He wrote to his cousin: 'Dew-Smith has taken a photograph of me which is like you, drunk; very odd, it has your nose instead of mine.'⁵⁰ Strange though the idea is, Stevenson's nose proved to be a photographic difficulty:

⁴⁷. Ernst Gombrich, 'The Mask and the Face,' *Art, Perception and Reality*, Baltimore and London 1972, p. 17.

⁴⁸. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 1, *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, vol. 3, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, London 1903, p. 147.

⁴⁹. Gombrich (as in n. 47), p. 4.

⁵⁰. Stevenson to his cousin, Bob, October 1885, *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Bradford A.

A-propos of the odd controversy about Shelley's nose: I have before me four photographs of myself, done by Shelley's son: my nose is hooked, not like the eagle indeed, but like the accipitrine family in man: well, out of these four, only one marks the bend, one makes it straight, and one suggests a turn up. This throws a flood of light on calumnious man - and the scandalmongering sun. For personally, I cling to my curve.⁵¹

The objection that the mouth is wrong is an understandable and frequent complaint levelled at portraitists. That such an inexpressive feature as the nose could be transcribed wrongly is extraordinary.

This natural difficulty in portraiture further illuminates the skill of the calotype partnership. We can recognise people from a very generalised image, which might be regarded as an inherent advantage in the blurring of the calotype. But the generalisation of the calotype was arbitrary. It was an awkward medium, offering less control and more accident in this key question of recognition. It may be said, therefore, that Hill and Adamson's portraits were remarkable both for being good pictures and, for that apparent photographic tautology, being like the sitter. This is a proposal that is still difficult to understand. It depends heavily on the interpretative sympathy of the photographers, inheriting the responsibility of the portrait painters whilst working with different materials.

The group and *tableaux*

Figure groups were usually constructed from sketches of isolated individuals. Physical and emotional interaction between figures would have to be recalled or invented. The frustration this caused explains the impulse behind the performance art of the painting world in the nineteenth century, the *tableau vivant*.⁵² It is no coincidence that David Wilkie was a passionate enthusiast for *tableaux* and that Hill had followed his interest. The *tableau* was a frozen performance or a 'real' re-presentation of a painting. The first Wilkie encountered, in Dresden in 1826, was an imitation of Teniers. He regarded it as, 'the most beautiful reality I ever saw ... but so evanescent is the group, that the curtain drops in twenty seconds, the people being unable to remain for any

Booth and Ernest Mehew, vol. 5, Yale 1994, p. 133.

⁵¹. Stevenson to Will H. Low, 1886, in *ibid.*, p. 177.

⁵². See Sara Stevenson and Helen Bennett, *Van Dyck in Check Trousers*, exhibition catalogue, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh 1978, pp. 45-63.

longer period in one precise position.⁵³ The time was brief, but it enabled a sustained contemplation of a situation which, in reality, would have passed by in a fraction of a second. Where it was the imitation of a known painting, it offered a different experience of the idea and potentially a measure of understanding of the painter's vision. Hill spoke of organising *tableaux* in a letter to Noël Paton in 1852:

We rehearse at Miss Murrays tomorrow night some tableaux – [James] Archer assists me ... Now do you think you could lend me your armour and perhaps the Highland Shield - any dresses [?] any, everything that would be useful I think I would like to get up your eve of St Agnes. Come and suggest some [affecting?] subjects.⁵⁴

It is a measure of the seriousness of this idea of real translation and the need for such experience that Hill expected Paton to be interested in a staging of his own painting.

From Hill's point of view, photography immediately opened up the possibility of real groups for study and publication. Hugh Miller saw the early pictures of himself as a stonemason and the studies of ministers in these terms. He wrote, in his article, after the description of his own portrait:

The other drawing presents a *tableau vivant* on a larger scale, and of a much deeper interest. It forms one of the groups taken under the eye of Mr Hill, as materials for the composition of his historic picture. In the centre Dr Chalmers sits on the Moderator's chair, and there are grouped around him, as on the platform, some eighteen or twenty of the better known members of the Church, clerical and lay. Nothing can be more admirable than the truthfulness and ease of the figures. Wilkie, in his representations of a crowd, excelled introducing heads, and hands, and faces, and parts of faces into the interstices behind, - one of the greatest difficulties with which the artist can grapple. Here, however, is the difficulty surmounted - surmounted, too, as if to bear testimony to the genius of the departed - in the style of Wilkie.⁵⁵

Practice in designing and taking part in *tableaux* were naturally useful to Hill in approaching his calotype groups. It was useful not simply in the costume groups, where the relationship is obvious (Fig. 24), but in the practical confidence to be found in most of these compositions. The most natural are apt to be those of the people used to posing in *tableaux* - especially the calotypes in which Hill is expressively relaxed or involved in conversation with others. This is an ironic but simple proposal. The

⁵³. Quoted in Allan Cunningham, *Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, London 1833, vol. II, p. 216.

⁵⁴. Hill to Paton, undated, around 22 December 1852, NLS Acc 11315. Paton exhibited a painting after Keats, in the RSA in 1852.

painters in particular had an interest in picture-making, which meant that they could think beyond the experience of being pictured, to the purpose of the exercise; they were involved in the work and had not just an idea of what was intended, but how it could be achieved. They were conscious rather than self-conscious. This helps to answer the question posed by Stanley Cursiter, in admiring the skill and organisation behind the portraits and groups:

One wonders how he managed to instil into his sitters the dramatic sense which allows them to become groups, rather than merely conglomerations of individual figures, a distinction which is due to the presence of some unifying thought or concentration on a single idea on the part of the sitters.⁵⁶

The thinking behind such groups may be examined in two photographs where the idea is offered in a title: *Edinburgh Ale* and *The Morning After*, 'He, greatly daring, dined' (Figs. 23 and 51). The two pictures are not formally designed as a pair, but they have the obvious moral and narrative relation: the pleasures of alcohol followed by the hangover. We know from the letters that Hill was not averse to drink. His explanation of *The Poet's Dream at Lincluden* (Fig. 30) accepts cheerfully the idea that Robert Burns's inspiration comes to him in drunken sleep. The innocent sociability of *Edinburgh Ale* depends on our idea of the title. James Nasmyth's letter to Hill recalling the family gatherings at 47 York Place, sheds light on the convivial aspect of the picture:

ah sirrah! them was the days for right pleasant songs, when old 47 was in its glory and Finnan Haddies, Ale of potency and most worshipfull toddy sent each its radiating aroma around and erected cracks worthy of being put in print.⁵⁷

Robert Chambers spoke of Younger's Edinburgh ale, in the context of the alcoholism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, as 'a potent fluid, which almost glued the lips of the drinker together,' and required careful decanting.⁵⁸ He described the pleasurable and interesting social mixture achieved in consequence of this insobriety, in his descriptions of the fashionable resort to oyster cellars:

⁵⁵. Miller (as in n. 22).

⁵⁶. Cursiter, (as in n. 35).

⁵⁷. Nasmyth to Hill, 10 December 1856, ROE.

⁵⁸. Robert Chambers, *Traditions of Edinburgh*, new edition, Edinburgh and London 1868, p. 184.

One of the chief features of an oyster-cellars entertainment was, that full scope was given to the conversational powers of the company. Both ladies and gentlemen indulged without restraint, in sallies the merriest and wittiest; and a thousand remarks and jokes, which elsewhere would have been suppressed as improper, were here sanctified by the oddity of the scene, and appreciated by the most refined and dignified.⁵⁹

This was the social background of much of the literary life and inspiration of the time, which can be seen particularly in the work of Robert Burns, James Hogg and John Wilson. It may indicate an appropriate literary reference for the calotype, in Burns's 'O Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut:'

Here are we met, three merry boys,
Three merry boys, I trow, are we;
And mony a night we've merry been,
And mony mae we hope to be!⁶⁰

It became a commonplace of the descriptions of this sociability that the wit and intelligence improved with the greater quantity of drink and the lateness of the hour. A conscious model for this idea appears in John Gibson Lockhart's account of the Burns's festival, at which John Wilson was one of the principal speakers and praised James Hogg. At another party, Lockhart drew Hogg, hilarious on champagne, and the drawing accompanied his text.⁶¹ William Allan, who was clearly charmed both by the description and the drawing, constructed a painting around Lockhart's sketch, which illustrated this culturally profitable hilarity with a party including Hogg, John Wilson, Walter Scott and Alexander Nasmyth (Fig. 52).⁶² Hill would have known the painting, and it is reasonable to suppose that a similar idea of catching that particular sociability lay behind *Edinburgh Ale*.

Looking back from the mid nineteenth century, Chambers commented:

It seems difficult to reconcile all these things with the staid and somewhat square-toed character which our country has obtained amongst her neighbours.

⁵⁹. Ibid., p. 160.

⁶⁰. 'Willie brew'd a peck o' maut,' *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. James Kinsley, Oxford 1968, pp. 476-7, quoted and discussed by Graham Smith, 'Edinburgh Ale by David Hill and Robert Adamson,' *Source Notes in the History of Art*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1983): p. 15.

⁶¹. John Gibson Lockhart, *Peter's Letters to His Kinsfolk*, Edinburgh, London and Glasgow, 1819, vol. 1, pp. 106-43 and vol. 3, p. 133.

⁶². The painting by Sir William Allan has only recently come into the SNPG and has not been fully analysed, see Sara Stevenson, entry on the painting, *The National Art Collections Fund, 1998 Review*, London 1998, p. 127. Allan's readiness to use the work of an amateur caricaturist is, in itself, notable evidence of the difficulty in capturing expression.

The fact seems to be, that a kind of Laodicean principle is observable in Scotland, and we oscillate between a rigour of manners on the one hand, and a laxity on the other ... In Edinburgh, seventy years ago, intemperance was the rule to such a degree that exception could hardly be said to exist.⁶³

There is no visible suggestion of the dark side of alcohol in *Edinburgh Ale*, and it may be that *The Morning After* was constructed to offer a balance. It shows Hill, hung over, his wrist held by Professor James Miller with the lax shadow of his hand cast by an appropriately low light onto the plinth of the heroic classical bust, known as *The Last of the Romans*.⁶⁴ The slumped and disshevelled figure Hill is personating is in a condition he has experienced. He made a jocular reference to a hangover after a dinner at Sir John Watson Gordon's house:

I delivered myself of a speech drinking Craigs health and soon after went off ... with a splitting headache, having taken a roasted potato at dinner - the effects of which were not obliterated by seven or eight glasses of capital champain - because my dear friend of a vegetable diet. Take a warning by me.⁶⁵

The bust of the Emperor, whose profile is turned pointedly away, offers a wry comment on the difference between the ideal of man and wayward humanity. In contrast, Hill, the real man, could be the Goth, the democrat and student of nature.⁶⁶ He is making a comparison between himself, the sculpted Roman and the upright doctor, carefully and properly dressed, holding his furled umbrella like a defensive sword to his breast – a figure of Christian and medical rectitude. Miller was a temperance reformer. As a doctor he had seen too much of the appalling effects of drunkenness to take it entirely lightly, so the joke has a serious meaning as well. Hill, it may be supposed, was torn between admiration of the sociability and its pleasurable and productive character and the contemporary realisation of the destructive force of alcoholism.⁶⁷ He wrote to his wife from Ireland in 1840, in admiration of ‘the great apostle of Teetotalism,’ Father Matthew:

⁶³. Chambers (as in n. 58).

⁶⁴. John Stevens may have brought this large sculptural head for his portrait, taken at Rock House on 3 August 1844. There are three versions of this bust of Lucius Verus, the co-emperor of Marcus Aurelius, in the collection of casts purchased by the Royal Institution and now in the NGS. This, from the design of its pedestal, would appear to be a fourth.

⁶⁵. Hill to Paton, 19 November 1851, NLS Acc 11315.

⁶⁶. An opposition proposed, for example, in Allan Ramsay’s *Dialogue on Taste*.

⁶⁷. His first wife was one of a family of wine merchants.

who has already got more than 500,000 disciples to take his pledge of total abstinence. I asked the waiter at the Inn where I now am if the people ever broke it ... he replied there were 500 in that town and he did not know of any who had broken it - they will break an oath but not the pledge. He says I was never a drunkard sir but was fond of porter and all that, and rather than not have my fun out of a night, I would think nothing of a pound for my frolic - and now sir, the family gets it, and it does them good. Many's the poor family, sir, that have got both meat and quiet by it, and I think it is the gift of God Almighty himself - So much for Father Mathew. I think I could almost take the said pledge myself, if a poor friend of ours would join me in it.⁶⁸

The calotype's title added a play on words. The phrase, 'he, greatly daring, dined' comes from the epitaph of Phaeton - 'he, greatly daring, died,' in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.⁶⁹ Phaeton, discovering he was the child of the sun god, asked to drive the sun's chariot for a day. He proved too weak to control the four wild, winged horses, caused dramatic destruction on earth, and was felled by a thunderbolt from Jupiter. This implies that the joke is also an offering - an apology to the sun for the arrogant attempt to harness its power to photography – and a propitiation for the inevitable, sunstruck headache. It echoes Hill's awareness of his high ambitions for the calotype, when he wrote of his plans to Roberts and added:

which I hope will not make you rate me as absolute and arrogant as Petruccio making you exclaim.

"Why! This gallant will command the sun."⁷⁰

Hill's interest in Ovid's story surfaces again in the comic drawing of himself being dragged four ways by the sun's winged horses (Fig. 12). The light of the sun was, of course, the critical factor in Hill's atmospheric landscape painting. The drawing illustrates his difficulty of decision – he is not heading into the country solely for recreation, despite the sign that reads 'Welch Ale,' but to paint.

There is yet another potential layer of meaning. The punning version of the original, 'he greatly daring dined,' comes from Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad*: 'Judicious drank, and greatly daring din'd.'⁷¹ It was picked up by the unlikely combination of Lord Byron and Thomas Carlyle to express the idle and boastful

⁶⁸. Hill to Ann Hill, 19 October 1840, NLS Acc 11608.

⁶⁹. 'Here Phaeton lies: his father's car he tried/ Though proved too weak, he greatly daring died.' Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. and intro. Mary M. Innes, Harmondsworth 1970, p. 58.

⁷⁰. Hill to Roberts, 12 March 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

⁷¹. Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad*, 1. 318.

courage of men who drink and threaten violence but do not perform.⁷² Hill may be making another moral point about heroism and its dissipation.

There is, for both calotypes, the precedent of a Netherlandish, *genre* tradition in painting, both the drinking scene and the idea of ‘The Doctor’s Visit’.⁷³ Both kinds of picture were notable as illustrating emotion and tension. Both pictures involve expression; and both, it is reasonable to assume, may be related to Charles Bell’s ideas. James Miller was the Professor of Surgery in the University of Edinburgh and Professor of Pictorial Anatomy to the Board of Manufactures’ School of Design. The presence of the medical men in the two pictures, *Edinburgh Ale* and *The Morning After*, makes a further connection with the historic conjunction of surgeon and artist in the study of the human body.

The Unsupported Group

The two groups are also remarkable because only James Miller was provided with artificial support. *Edinburgh Ale* is the more relaxed picture. Hill has arranged his friends through the camera and then entered the composition, apparently laughing. *The Morning After* is carefully posed and calculated, with Hill fixed in position by Miller’s hand on his wrist – it may even be that this picture is a conscious expression of Hill’s interest in the classical idea of construction, and that by contrast *Edinburgh Ale* is consciously about unfettered nature. I would not assume that the less structured picture necessarily predated the other. *Edinburgh Ale* has its own ambition.

An idea of the support required by an inexperienced subject may be gathered from the negative image of Robert Candlish, shown preaching (Fig. 26), which was presumably one of the early trials for the Disruption Picture. There is an upright support to his outstretched arm, a diagonal support disappearing behind his back and someone is sitting on a chair behind him so that the chairback will steady him in position. Despite this, his other hand, holding the book, has moved and blurred the image. This is a single figure. The group took time to organise and involved establishing a relationship between the figures, which they could maintain for the

⁷². George Gordon, Lord Byron, *Don Juan* (1821), and Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution* (1837).

⁷³. Smith (as in n. 60).

minutes of organisation as well as the actual time of photography. Hill did not abandon the use of supports, and certain of the pictures, such as those of Alexander Campbell Fraser and his class, would have been impossible without them (Fig. 53). Within his closer circle of artists, family and friends, he preferred to risk the natural support that other people and furniture could offer. This would ensure the muscular balance required by the idea of physical expression. Bell had pointed out the problem in using academy models:

When the academy figure first strips himself, there is a symmetry and accordance in all the limbs; but when screwed up into a posture, they indicate constraint and want of balance. It cannot be supposed that when a man has the support of ropes to preserve him in a position of exertion, the same action of muscles can be displayed as if the limbs were supported by their own efforts; hence in all academy drawings we may perceive something wrong from the ropes not being represented along with the figure. In natural action there is a consent and symmetry in every part ... The painter, therefore, cannot trust to the man throwing himself into a natural posture; he must direct him, and be himself able to catch, as it were intuitively, what is natural and reject what is constrained. Besides those soldiers and mechanics who are employed as academy figures are often awkward and unwieldy; hard labour, or the stiff habits of military training, have impaired the natural and easy motion of their joints.⁷⁴

Hill attempted the unsupported pose in calotypes where the risks were great - the radical Chalmers's family group is a prime example (Fig. 42). Because this was an important photograph, he risked not using supports and, because he persuaded Chalmers and his family of that importance, they were prepared to pose in a difficult and potentially tedious manner (see Chapter five). There are several photographs in this group, which were taken in the grounds of Merchiston Castle School, because Thomas Chalmers's brother, Charles, was headmaster there. The photographs of adolescent schoolboys, presumably taken on the same occasion, demonstrate a remarkable capacity for human organisation - one of the successfully realised groups contains around fifty, unregimented people, including a boy up a tree.⁷⁵

The Gordon Highlanders, stationed at Edinburgh Castle in 1846, figure in some of the finest of Hill and Adamson's groups. The regiment was notable for its heroism at

⁷⁴. Bell (as in n. 27), pp. 200-1.

⁷⁵. Illustrated in John Ward and Sara Stevenson, *Printed Light. The Scientific Art of William Henry Fox Talbot and David Octavius Hill with Robert Adamson*. Edinburgh 1986, fig. 150. The negatives are in the GUL.

the Battle of Waterloo. The photographs vary in character, but include one of the most remarkable of the calotypes, which is an extraordinary compositional blur (Fig. 36). It is not even clear how many men are involved in the group. This is all the more striking, because it pictures men who were trained to stand immobile and were employed in life classes for this discipline. But a static pose fails to express the energy of the military. While the man on the left is supported by the cannon and is comparatively still and calm in effect, he is imbalanced by the slight movement in the men on the right and the sense of suppressed activity. The picture is crowded, especially at the top, by the blurring fur of the busbies, which are used as a compositional mass to fill the space and break the pale line of the architecture. It expresses the strength and coherence of the regiment and may be intended to offer an idea, as opposed to a narrative, of unexpressed Highland history, through the ambiguity of the blur. This is the distance between anatomy and animation.

Direction and nature

In his passage on the academy model, Charles Bell described a film director's talent - the ability to direct people in being natural. The role of construction and direction in still photography may need restating, because it sounds contrary to nature. The problem in capturing nature is that the photographer is there and the subjects will respond to his presence. Even later photographers with concealed detective cameras or faster film were obviously there and affected the reactions of their subjects.⁷⁶ If the photograph was designed to show what someone was normally doing or how they usually were, the presence of both the camera and the photographer was an interruption, an abnormality increasing the self-consciousness of the subject.

The projected series, *The Fishermen and Women of the Firth of Forth*, was an important demonstration of Charles Bell's advice to watch people in action in their natural setting: 'At the gaming house, on the exchange, in the streets, this study affords amusement of the highest interest and gratification.'⁷⁷ Hill was concerned to photograph the fishermen and fishwives within the village and on the shore, rather

⁷⁶. An example of this may be seen in Paul Martin's street photographs taken in the 1890s with the concealed 'facile hand camera.' See Roy Flukinger, Larry Schaaf and Standish Meacham, *Paul Martin, Victorian Photographer*, London 1978, p. 81.

⁷⁷. Bell, *Essays* (as in n. 27), p. 19.

than inviting them up to the photographic studio. The candid appearance of the Newhaven photographs is based on thoughtful observation of how people behaved in their own territory. Hill had painted in the village in earlier years and his sense of the importance of the location of the figures is seen in the titles of his pictures. In 1835 he exhibited in the Academy three paintings: *The Peacock Inn - sketch at Newhaven*; *Evening: scene on the beach at Newhaven - painted on the spot*; *Sketch of an oyster boat painted on Newhaven beach*. The fishermen and women were both willing and, presumably both through discussion and the experience of posing, capable of the same kind of relaxed or interested participation as Hill and his friends.⁷⁸ Within the series, two of the most impressive examples, in terms of the risk and the control established under difficulties, are the two pictures taken in the Fishergate in St Andrews (Fig. 54). Most of the photographs for *The Fishermen and Women* were taken in Newhaven, but the village was closely built and without this kind of open space. Presumably, Hill and Adamson went especially to St Andrews to take advantage of the setting. The site and the high camera angle, enabled by a flight of steps, were calculated to offer an elevated view of the scene.⁷⁹ In practical terms alone, Hill should be admired as a prototype film director - where people, especially children, and animals are concerned, an outside location is an open stage. These photographs demonstrate an impressive capacity for management beyond the frame. The number of children, who have been induced to take the work seriously, rather than as a free entertainment, is in itself remarkable.⁸⁰ In the actual construction of the calotypes, the co-operation of around thirty women and children must have been secured beforehand. They have

⁷⁸. A calotype of two Newhaven fishwives, attributed to a member of the Edinburgh Calotype Club, demonstrates how natural confidence and beauty were submerged by incompetent direction. This is illustrated in Sara Stevenson, *Hill and Adamson's 'Fishermen and Women of the Firth of Forth'*, Edinburgh 1991, p. 34.

⁷⁹. The buildings seen in the calotypes have been demolished, but there remains on the other side of the street an outside stair with a broad ledge to perch the camera on, about eight feet up.

⁸⁰. The Cuthbert Bede drawing, from the 1850s, of the man photographing a landscape on a long exposure, with the assistance of a small knot of keenly-interested children, is a fine illustration of the problem of photographing in public: 'giving an opportunity to children of a speculative turn of mind, to solve their doubts as to what your camera really contains.' 'Cuthbert Bede' (Rev. Edward Bradley), *Photographic Pleasures*, London 1855, p. 61. The difficulty of photographing even one fishwife out of doors defeated most photographers for some time thereafter. The *carte de visite* photographers of the 1860s and 70s not merely invited them to pose in the studio but stood them in front of painted backdrops of the reality outside. Henry Peach Robinson advised photographers to buy the clothes from country people and use models: 'I seldom find the "real thing" to quite answer my purpose. The aboriginal is seldom sufficiently intelligent to be of use, especially if you have intention in your work.' H. P. Robinson, *Picture-Making by Photography*, London 1897, p. 52.

been arranged, looking through the camera, in a structured and balanced composition centring on the female figure, who appears to stride across the street, carrying a child on one arm and a basket in the opposite hand. The triangle of white in the split of her dark skirt gives the sense of forward movement and the whole thinly-grouped composition around her is constructed in the balance of light and shade, dark and light. The picture is dependent on a lack of wind (in a coastal town), and on the appearance of the sun to lay the critical shadow of the woman across the street. The calculation and organisation behind the photographs is phenomenal - it resembles and anticipates a film still; it is also a happily contrived expression of nature, and the result is convincingly easy.

Photography has a close relation to film-making; construction is as important to the still as it is to the moving picture. *The Fishermen and Women* series is the earliest example of a documentary sequence in photography, and it shows extraordinary control and organisation in achieving natural effect, balanced by an equally extraordinary tolerance, which we cannot see in the pictures. This is outdoor photography, wholly dependent on natural light and the generous co-operation of a complete age range of people from an infant in arms to elderly fishwives. The calotypes are not merely a tribute to Bell's idea of physical expressiveness, they are a most effective demonstration of the virtues of the idea.

Chapter seven

D. O. Hill's Landscape

The tradition of landscape

In the sale after Hill's death, the works listed include 'brilliant impressions' of Richard Earlom's engravings of Claude's *Liber Veritatis* published in 1774.¹ The *Liber Veritatis* was one of the essential models for the British landscape artists of the day, and it is reasonable to see Hill as influenced by Claude, the leading exponent of the classically poetic in landscape; the painter of calm and beautiful landscapes, made lyrical by a unifying golden light and the introduction of figures from Virgil, Ovid and the Bible.

Murdo Macdonald has traced a connection between Hill's work and the landscapes of Claude, through the Scottish painters, Jacob More, Alexander Nasmyth and John Thomson of Duddingston. It is his contention that Hill was, 'the final representative of the mainstream Claudian tradition in Scottish landscape painting.'² However, as Macdonald suggests, Hill's connection with Claude may be largely indirect. There is no evidence to show that he had seen or studied Claude's painting. It is possible to construct a sequence which traces such a classical connection in the frontispiece of the second volume of *The Land of Burns* (Fig. 55).³ The painting was exhibited in the Academy in 1834, as *Scottish merry-making: view of Nithsdale from the Dalswinton hills, with Friarscarse, Burns' farm of Ellisland, Criffel, Solway Firth & part of the Cumberland mountains*. The design resembles an engraving after Alexander Runciman of a landscape treating Milton's 'L'Allegro,' which was itself based on Virgil's *Georgics* (Fig. 56). Runciman's landscape was removed from its Italian setting and placed in Scotland with a

¹. Also in the sale were sixteen landscapes engraved after Turner and seven after Rubens. *Catalogue of the Valuable Collection of Pictures, Engravings, Sketches, Drawings, Calotypes, and other art property of the Late D.O. Hill, Esq., R. S. A.*, auction catalogue, T. Chapman, Edinburgh 18, 19 and 21 November 1870, lot 386D

². Murdo Macdonald, 'Wood Notes Wild: A Tale of Claude,' *Essays on the Poetry and Art of Ian Hamilton Finlay*, ed. Alec Finlay, Edinburgh 1995, pp. 124-130.

³. D. O. Hill, *The Land of Burns, A Series of Landscapes and Portraits, illustrative of the Life and Writings of the Scottish Poet*, text by Robert Chambers and John Wilson, Glasgow, Edinburgh and London 1840.

distant view of Perth.⁴ Hill took the idea a stage further – he presents a real landscape with the country people of the area and his poetic inspiration is Scottish - although the picture is still arguably linked to classical reference, by the thought of Robert Burns as the farmer poet and a natural heir of Virgil.

The essential connection between Hill and the classical tradition is his reputation as a poetic painter. As discussed in the Introduction, the relation between poetry and painting was initially designed to give the weight of classical critical authority to painting.⁵ The attempts to unify the two from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century caused practical difficulties, which were partly resolved in distinguishing painting from poetry by giving space and immediate apprehension to the picture and the time of narrative to the poem. The subject matter of one was regarded as appropriate for the other. Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses*, delivered to the Academy in 1778, spoke of this need for a landscape painter to improve on the imperfections of reality by associating his work with the ideal of classical literature:

Like Nicolas Poussin, he transports us to the environs of ancient Rome, with all the objects which a literary education makes so precious ... or, like Claude Lorrain, he conducts us to the tranquillity of Arcadian scenes and fairy land. Like the history-painter, a painter of landscapes in this style and with this conduct, sends the imagination back into antiquity; and like the poet, he makes the elements sympathise with his subject.⁶

When John Brown was persuaded to take up art criticism for *The Witness* in 1846, his article on Hill included the following passage:

Mr Hill has, in one word, as many faults, but more beauties, - greater reach of imagination, - more of the true poetical temperament, - more power of rendering his own, and bringing out the emotions of others, - in a word, more *genius*, than any other of our native landscape painters.⁷

⁴. Discussed in Leslie Parris, *Landscape in Britain c.1750 – 1850*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, London 1973, p. 53.

⁵. Rensselaer W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanist Theory of Painting*, New York 1967.

⁶. Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses delivered to the students of the Royal Academy*, intro. Roger Fry, London 1905, pp. 360-1.

⁷. John Brown, review of the RSA exhibition, *The Witness* (22 August 1846).

Brown's meaning is far different from Reynolds's. The radical shift may be briefly indicated.⁸ Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) had proposed a direct emotional experience of love and hate, based on attraction and repulsion, which disturbed the ordered calm of the Claudian model. The Picturesque movement, exemplified in a series of books by the Rev. William Gilpin published from 1783 onwards, added a middle ground of interest, in an area of pleasure between the two exaggerations of the Sublime and the Beautiful, dependent on variety and irregularity. The Romantic movement brought in subjectivity and personal expression and an enthusiasm for exploring the range of nature. Hill's understanding of landscape practice would have inherited all these strains. Essentially, however, his poetry was personal, local and national. His idea of poetic association and of beauty was based on experience, and derived from the thinking of the Rev. Archibald Alison (1759-1839) in his *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790):

Instead of a few forms which the superstition of early taste had canonised, every variety, and every possible combination of forms is thus brought within the pale of cultivated taste.⁹

Hill's *The Land of Burns* took advantage of this character in Robert Burns's writing. But he also expected to translate his own direct experience of familiar nature, and like Alison, but apparently unlike Burns himself and Alexander Nasmyth, Hill would have concurred with Alison's view that this subjective approach to nature was ultimately justified by religion.

Poetry and the national landscape

Through the intervention of the British poets, the country became an object of educated admiration. Following in their wake, respectful tourists headed into the country to experience the same emotions, carrying with them not just the guidebooks and guides to the Picturesque but the poems and novels set in that real landscape.¹⁰ Lord Cockburn was

⁸. With reference to William Vaughan, *Romanticism and Art*, London and New York 1994.

⁹. Quoted and discussed in Duncan Macmillan, *Painting in Scotland: the golden age*, Oxford 1986, p. 149.

¹⁰. See James Reed, *Sir Walter Scott: Landscape and Locality*, London 1980. For Scott's influence on Scottish landscape painting, see James Holloway and Lindsay Errington, *The Discovery of Scotland*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh 1978. For his impact on tourism, see

moved by Allan Ramsay's poem, 'The Gentle Shepherd,' to hold regular picnics in its setting, Habbie's Howe in the Pentland Hills. He satirised this respectful idea in a letter to his daughter in August 1833, which recounted the gathering of twenty-three friends and the riotous preparations:

I sat on a stone retired, and reasoned high of Patie and of Ramsay. My soul was with the Gentle Shepherd. But I trust that I kept my temper sufficiently not to let them see how I despised their low tastes. Their food (Oh! to think of food in such a place) consisted of rolls, butter, honey, marmalade, jelly, eggs, cold veal pie, tongue (no want of that) broiled salmon hot (Oh! Oh! hot salmon under the ray of an August morning sun in a pastoral, classical valley) tea, coffee, chocolate - closed on the part of the male, and a few of the female, brutes by a dram - an absolute dram - God bless me - of Whisky!!!¹¹

But it was a serious occasion. He had established the picnic on Allan Ramsay's ground and regularly gathered his friends together there. Hill was, in Cockburn's terms, 'one of the faithful.' These parties had their formal graces. In 1852, Hill noted with pleasure the carefully presented flowers:

A pleasant day of Idlesse at Bonaly yesterday ... Sally [Hill's niece, Sarah Watson] was with me at Lord Cockburns ... & enjoyed him much, he was full of mirth & good stories ... the delicate daughter was with us at breakfast & lunch, and as usual decorated the dinner table to each guest an exquisite bouquet - a peculiar and most beautiful feature of the Bonaly banquets.¹²

Hill and Adamson were invited to take calotypes on at least one of these occasions.¹³ James Nasmyth devoted three pages of his autobiography to another meeting at Bonaly, when all the guests were artists: David Roberts, Clarkson Stanfield, Louis and Carl Haag, George Harvey, James Ballantine and Hill. He described this favourite spot as 'a semicircular hollow in the hillside, scooped out by the sheep for shelter. It was carpeted

William Chauncy Townshend, *A Descriptive Tour in Scotland*, 1840, discussed in Mark Haworth-Booth, *The Golden Age of British Photography 1839-1900*, exhibition catalogue, Victoria and Albert Museum, London 1984, p. 12.

¹¹. *Some Letters of Lord Cockburn with pages omitted from the Memorials of His Time*, ed. Harry A. Cockburn, Edinburgh 1932, p. 35.

¹². Hill to Paton, 11 August 1852, NLS Acc 1135.

¹³. A group on the hill slope is illustrated as Group 71, Sara Stevenson, *David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson. Catalogue of their calotypes taken between 1843 and 1847, in the collection of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery*, Edinburgh 1981, p. 160.

and cushioned with a bed of wild thyme, redolent of the very essence of rural fragrance.¹⁴

John Gibson Lockhart's account of the beginning and end of Walter Scott's career is specifically written to make the physical connection between the man and the country. He tells of Scott lying on the turf as a crippled child and first hearing the history and poetry of Scotland:

He says that the consciousness of his existence dated from Sandy-Knowe; and how deep and indelible was the impression, which its romantic localities had left on his imagination, I need not remind the readers of *Marmion* and the *Eve of St John*.¹⁵

Lockhart rounded off the story of Scott's life with an echo of his adult admiration of the Eildon Hills from the viewpoint, still known as Scott's View, where his funeral cortège was delayed: 'on the summit of the hill at Bemersyde – exactly where a prospect of remarkable richness opens, and where Sir Walter had always been accustomed to rein up his horse.'¹⁶

The idea of the Scottish landscape acting as the poet's muse appears in Robert Chambers's account of Lincluden Abbey, written for *The Land of Burns*:

To stroll in the evening along the bank of the Nith, to lounge amongst the ruins of Lincluden, to linger there till the moon rose upon the scene, formed a favourite recreation of Burns. His eldest son ... pointed out to the present writer a little knoll to the south of the church, from which a view is obtained of the landscape beyond the Cluden, set as it were in a pair of picture-frames formed of two ruined windows. On this spot Burns used to fix himself, and gaze on the scene for many minutes at a time. Dr Currie [editor of Burns] states that the muse was favourable to him during these delightful walks.¹⁷

Hill's own interest in this idea of a fictionally possessed landscape is expressed from this place in *The Poet's Dream at Lincluden* (Fig. 30). Burns lies asleep on the turf before the Abbey, surrounded by the figures of a dream – a 'phantasma' of historical characters and fairies, helpfully catalogued by Hill: 'elves, spunkies, brownies, kelpies, mermaids

¹⁴. James Nasmyth, *Engineer, An Autobiography*, ed. Samuel Smiles, London 1891, p. 335.

¹⁵. John Gibson Lockhart, *The Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, London 1893, pp. 22.

¹⁶. *Ibid.*, p. 754.

¹⁷. Chambers (as in. 3), vol. 2, p.22.

... witches, warlocks and worricows.¹⁸ His concept consciously derives from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*:

As on another 'mid summer night' a difference of opinion arises between the royal pair, in regard to the nature of the vision to be presented. The voice of the king is still for war, and he wishes to inspire the poet to sing of high and noble deeds. The queen gives her voice for gentler and humbler themes; and the poet accordingly profits by the dispute, for instead of one class of subjects, his soul is gladdened with a varied series of spectral tableaux, which go to fit him for excelling in all the walks of his art.¹⁹

John Wilson commented on this picture:

It is but justice to Mr Hill to add, that much of the expression, and particularly the *national* expression, of his sketch, has vanished in the process of its transference to steel, notwithstanding the best skill of an excellent engraver.²⁰

This is a somewhat obscure remark but it leads to an important point. This frontispiece is a counterpart to the frontispiece of the second volume, discussed above, which addresses the reality of Burns's setting – the natural or visible inspiration of his work. *The Poet's Dream* offers Burns's historical and fictional inspiration but the figures in the dream are equally British. Spunkies and worricows have replaced nymphs and dryads.

Here again, Hill was following Walter Scott's lead. His *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1801-2) published a number of ballads with fairy themes and included an essay on 'The Fairies of Popular Superstition,' which related the fairies to lesser classical gods. He wrote of the land around a classical altar erected near Roxburgh Castle:

a vicinity more delightfully appropriate to the abode of the silvan deities can hardly be found ... altogether a kingdom for Oberon and Titania to reign in.²¹

Scott distinguished fairies as the invention of the Celts, and claimed they displayed 'that superiority of taste and fancy which, with the love of music and poetry, has been

¹⁸. Hill (as in n. 3), vol. 1, pp. 104-5.

¹⁹. Ibid.

²⁰. Wilson (as in n. 3), vol. 1, p. 105.

²¹. Sir Walter Scott, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (first published 1830), London 1884, pp. 101-2.

generally ascribed to their race.²² This seductive idea of the fairies he added to the historic idea of them holding a kind of medieval court:

At their processions they paraded more beautiful steeds than those of mere earthly parentage – the hawks and hounds which they employed in their chase were of the first race. At their daily banquets, the board was set forth with a splendour which the proudest kings of the earth dared not aspire to.²³

Scott was offering a visual and poetic idea in which remarkable beauty was tied to a historic and cultural nationalism. This helps to explain the particularly Scottish obsession with fairies in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Scott's fairies were an ancient part of the country's culture, to be preserved and respected in the same manner as a ruined abbey. They became earthly personifications left over from a sophisticated Celtic culture: historical spirits of the land.

The affection for fairies, which has been addressed recently as a Victorian idea, comes from the poetic convention, starting obviously with Edmund Spenser's *Fairy Queen* and Shakespeare.²⁴ It seems possible that the impulse at the end of the eighteenth century is more a part of the Romantic movement than has been allowed: both William Blake and Fuseli painted Oberon and Titania. With the celebrations of Ossian and the increase in Christian spirituality, Romanticism followed imagination and a line of faith rather than rationality. It is ironic that the rationality of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century took the fairies out of the nursery – declaring such imagination damaging to the infant mind – and they were only allowed to return there in force in the 1840s.²⁵ The sense that they were an adult concern was perhaps exaggerated by the dream convention and the related consumption of alcohol or narcotics, which might lead to such fantasies. The fairies in Hill's *Poet's Dream* are an adult set if only because they have their own whisky still:

²². As opposed to the northern spirits –‘spirits of a coarser sort, more laborious vocation, and more malignant temper,’ *ibid.*, p. 102.

²³. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

²⁴. Jeremy Maas, *Victorian Fairy Painting*, exhibition catalogue, Royal Academy, London 1997.

²⁵. Gillian Avery, *Nineteenth-Century Children: Heroes and Heroines in English Children's Stories*, London 1965, pp. 41-2.

[The scene] is lighted up from the fire of a fairy distillery, which [shows] the very nature of that spell of power which has conjured up the vision; namely the very potent “but very natural necromancy of the punch-bowl.”²⁶

The past, both historical and imaginative could occupy the landscape invisibly and intangibly – the fairies could ride through cornfields and in the morning ‘the faint of a hoof mark was there nor a blade broken.’²⁷ Hill’s paintings naturally contained that sense of allusion and absent/present opposition. Here the idea of ‘dissolving views’ or the pantomime transformation scene, whilst childish, provide an easy analogy to the more profound attempt to express spirituality in the spirit or association of place. For Hill this could be human, modern, fairy, religious, historical, literary or mythological.²⁸

Hill and Turner

One ostensible connection between Hill’s painting and the model of Claude is simply his interest in sunset light, which emerges strongly in the 1850s. In 1851, for example, four of his paintings in the Academy exhibition had the word ‘sunset’ in the title. Here the connection may well have been made or at least reinforced by Hill’s overt admiration for J. M. W. Turner.

When Hill moved in to Rock House in 1844, it could be assumed that his reason was practical – to work more closely with Adamson on the development of the calotype and to share the rent. He unquestionably had a second motive. Rock House was the highest private building on Calton Hill, with a magnificent view of the City. It is no coincidence that the first 360 degree panorama was devised by Robert Barker in the 1780s from Calton Hill.²⁹ J. G. Lockhart wrote, from this standpoint:

²⁶. Hill (as in n. 3), vol. 1, p. 105.

²⁷. Allan Cunningham, *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*, quoted in David Hogg, *Life of Allan Cunningham*, Dumfries 1875, p. 135.

²⁸. Hill’s *Poet’s Dream* may well have been the inspiration for Noël Paton’s two large-scale works, *The Quarrel* and *The Reconciliation of Oberon and Titania* (exhibited in 1846 and 7). Hill’s enthusiasm for the paintings was great. It is a mark of their respectability as ‘national’ subjects that *The Reconciliation* won a prize of £300 in the Westminster Hall Competition in 1847 and both pictures were acquired for the nation, now in the NGS.

²⁹. Ralph Hyde, *Panoramania! The Art and Entertainment of the ‘all-embracing’ View*, exhibition catalogue, Barbican Gallery, London 1989, pp. 13 and 62.

Here there must always be present the idea of the comparative littleness of all human works. Here the proudest of palaces must be content to catch the shadows of mountains; and the grandest of fortresses to appear like the dwellings of pygmies, perched on the very bulwarks of creation. Everywhere – all around – you have rocks frowning over rocks in imperial elevation, and descending, among the smoke and dust of a city, into dark depths, such as nature alone can excavate. The builders of the old city, too, appear as if they had made nature the model of her architecture. Seen through the lowering mist which almost perpetually envelopes them, the huge masses of these erections, so high, so rugged in their outlines, so heaped together, and conglomerated and wedged into each other, are not easily to be distinguished from the yet larger and bolder forms of cliff and ravine, among which their foundations have been pitched. There is a certain gloomy indistinctness in the formation of these fantastic piles, which leaves the eye, that would scrutinize and penetrate them, unsatisfied and dim with gazing.³⁰

Turner's watercolour, taken from just above Rock House for Walter Scott's *Provincial Antiquities and Picturesque Scenery of Scotland* (1819–26), has the same kind of sublime exaggeration inherent in Lockhart's description (Fig. 57).³¹ In the watercolour, Rock House, an ordinary brown building, occupies a prominent position as a foreground anchor to the golden view of the City. Scott wrote in the text:

The point which Mr Turner has selected for the view is precisely that upon which every passenger, however much accustomed to the wonderful scene, is inclined to pause, and with eyes unsatisfied with seeing, to gaze on the mingled and almost tumultuous scene which lies before and beneath him.³²

This means that, by the time Hill moved in to Rock House, the site of Calton Hill had become a notable Romantic platform, endorsed by the poetic presence of Scott and Turner. That Hill looked at and discussed the view in these terms is suggested by an entry in Elizabeth Rigby's journal, in December 1844:

³⁰. John Gibson Lockhart, *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, Edinburgh, London and Glasgow 1819, pp. 8–9.

³¹. Turner's previous, large-scale watercolour, worked up from sketches made in 1801, is less overtly Romantic; the New Town had not advanced so far and he was not then seeing through Scott's eyes. For the c.1819 watercolour, he sketched a panorama of nearly 180 degrees and contracted it to within half the real proportion. These works are illustrated in Katrina Thomson, *Turner and Sir Walter Scott. The Provincial Antiquities and Picturesque Scenery of Scotland*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh 1999, p. 27 and pls. 5 and 11.

³². Quoted in Gerald Finley, *Landscapes of Memory: Turner as Illustrator to Scott*, London 1980, p. 61.

The view from Mr Hill's garden of the city with its wreaths of smoke reminds you of Turner more than Turner does you of it, because he has seen Nature more truly than most that look on her.³³

Hill's enthusiasm for Turner is revealed in letters to David Roberts in the 1840s and early 50s, when he managed to secure, with Roberts's help, important examples of his work to show in the Academy's exhibitions.³⁴ In 1845, when Turner's *Palestrina* was sent up to Edinburgh, Hill retired to bed with a cold and the first volume of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*:

As I felt on Saturday Evening that something was coming on, from a most presaging & uncomfortable shiver all over, I before going home purchased the Oxford Graduates Modern Painters, which I have devoured with intense interest and gratification. I rejoiced to find that my early admiration of Turner which has increased upon me, is and has been raised on no sandy foundation, but that what the world has called his caprice is in reality to be considered as almost divine revealings. I envy you coming in contact with the head which could conceive - and the hand which could execute such a work as your kindness has procured to gladden and revive us here - and no less the mind which could so analyse and the pen so describe the creations of that mortal mind.³⁵

After Turner's death, Hill described him as: 'A most glorious artist.'³⁶ In the earlier part of the century, Turner was a familiar figure in the Scottish landscape.³⁷ There is, indeed, a

³³. *Memoirs and Correspondence of Lady Eastlake*, ed. Charles Eastlake Smith, London 1895, p. 151.

³⁴. In 1846, the RSA exhibited Turner's *Ivy Bridge, Devon* and *Mercury and Argus*; in 1849, *The Wreckers*; in 1850, *The Wreck of a Transport Ship*; in 1851, *The Opening of the Vintage of Mâcon* and *The Wreck of the Minatour*; in 1852, *Admiral Van Tromp putting about in a stiff breeze*. See Graham Smith, 'David Octavius Hill, David Roberts, and J.M.W. Turner's Wreck of a Transport Ship,' *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal*, vol. 14 (1986): pp. 153-6.

³⁵. Hill to Roberts, 25 February 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

³⁶. Hill to Roberts, 14 January 1852, NLS Acc 7723.

³⁷. Turner also worked in Scotland from 1818, on Scott's *The Provincial Antiquities of Scotland*; in 1822, for the visit of George IV; and in 1831 and 1834, for the *Life, Prose Works and Poetical Works* of Scott, for which he made 77 vignettes and views. While most of his book illustrations, from the mid 1820s, were worked up from designs already in his sketchbook: 'the Scott illustrations were treated as a special case and prompted additional visits.' Martin Butlin, Andrew Wilton, and John Gage, *Turner 1775-1851*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, London 1974, p. 98. Turner was caught up in the Scottish publishing revolution. Hill would have known these works and he owned a number of Turner's engravings. John Macrone, who commissioned Turner to illustrate the work of Thomas Moore, was a close friend of Hill, from the evidence of a letter, Macrone to Hill, 10 January 1836, NLS Acc 11782.

possibility that his appreciation of the idea of painting in atmospheric terms was first learnt in Scotland, in 1801:

Finberg points out the novel freedom and rapidity of many of the drawings in the Scottish sketchbooks, suggesting that they mark the final disconnection from the topographical discipline of Turner's youth. It seems likely that the atmosphere of Scotland, especially of its mountains, contributed largely to his sense of emancipation.³⁸

The idea of Turner's reception in Scotland has been coloured by Walter Scott's apparent preference for the landscape work of the Rev. John Thomson.³⁹ Lockhart's opinion of the state of landscape art in Scotland in 1819 offers a different and more complimentary view:

For the first time is Scotland now possessed of admirable landscape painters, as well as historical painters. With regard to landscape painting, it is very true that she has not yet equalled the present glories of the sister kingdom; but then the world has only one TURNER, and Scotland comes far nearer to the country which has had the honour of producing that great genius than any other country in Europe.⁴⁰

This was published when Hill was only seventeen years old, but he was by then already studying in the Trustees' Academy in Edinburgh. Some five years later, James Skene, who worked alongside Turner, wrote:

One of the greatest landscape painters of the present age, Mr. Turner, seems to have grappled so vigorously with this important desideratum in the art, that much may be expected from his system of study and acute observation. So far as he has gone, eminent success has attended his footsteps; and, aided by the discoveries daily making in the mysteries of light, his scrutinizing genius seems to tremble on the verge of some new discovery in colour, which may prove of the first importance to art.⁴¹

Despite his admiration, the only written indication Hill gave that he might be emulating Turner comes unexpectedly when he is discussing his intention of publishing a

³⁸. Ibid., p. 45, quoting A. J. Finberg, *The Life of J. M. W. Turner*, R. A., 2nd ed., 1961, p. 74.

³⁹. He apparently found Turner difficult and thought his financial demands excessive but a more balanced view of his appreciation of Turner's work may be seen in the analysis by Finley (as in n. 32).

⁴⁰. Lockhart, (as in n. 30), vol. 3, p. 280.

⁴¹. James Skene, 'Painting,' *The Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, vol. 16, Edinburgh 1831, pp. 263-4. This is discussed as 'the first considered review of Turner's scientific intentions as a painter of the nature of light,' prefiguring John Ruskin by 20 years, by James Hamilton, *Turner, A Life*, London 1997, p. 216.

hundred calotypes as a ‘sort of Liber Studiorum in its way’ (discussed in Chapter nine).⁴² In his calotype of the publisher, John Blackie, a volume of *The Land of Burns* (with Hill’s name written on the spine in the negative) leans against the *Liber Studiorum*. The influence of Turner’s work may be seen in the general sense that Hill may have been spurred by its ambition to offer an exploration of the different characters and conditions of the Scottish landscape.

In 1850, Hill responded to the loan of Turner’s *Wreck of a Transport Ship*:

Nothing I am sure could better show to this portion of the island, the greatness of the mind and the giant power of the poet-painter of the ocean, than this most noble work; indeed I feel that its presence among us would give new aspirations, - and higher resolves to our whole school.⁴³

This admiration suggests a possible connection between one of Hill’s sea pictures for *The Land of Burns* and a picture in the *Liber Studiorum*: Hill’s *Turnberry Castle* (Fig. 58) and Turner’s *The Lost Sailor* (Fig. 59). In Turner’s picture, the storm is at its height and the sailor: ‘yet living, dashed in the night against a granite coast, - his body and outstretched hands just seen in the trough of a mountain wave, between it and the overhanging wall of rock.’⁴⁴ In Hill’s picture, the storm is retreating out to sea with a last flash of lightning in a black sky, leaving the rolling sea, which has wrecked a ship and cast up a sailor on the shore. Hill may have been paying tribute to Turner, acknowledging his transcendent power in the field, by offering the next scene in the drama. Robert Chambers points out in the text that Burns did not write about Turnberry Castle, so the design and inspiration are certainly Hill’s in this case.

While they lack the bravura of Turner’s interpretation, *The Land of Burns* landscapes are defined in terms of Turner’s poetic idea of immediate experience of light and weather, where landscape is a shifting proposal made by and seen through the atmosphere. When the paintings were exhibited at the Academy, they were given titles of this kind: in 1835, *The field of Bannockburn: effect of moonrise and sunset*; in 1837, *Roslin Castle and*

⁴². Hill to Roberts, 14 March 1845, NLS microfilm 381. See Gillian Forrester, *Turner’s ‘Drawing Book’: The Liber Studiorum*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, London 1996.

⁴³. Hill to Roberts, 10 January 1850, Getty Museum, Acc no 84.XG.1003. For a discussion of this letter, see Smith (as in n. 34).

Glen: summer after heavy rain – painted on the spot; in 1840, Abbey and bridge of Kelso: summer night: effect of aurora borealis.

Hill's interest in atmospheric effects was remarked on in John Brown's first review of Hill's work, where he made a deliberate distinction which elevated and defined Hill's poetry: 'I mean, if allowed to go on, to set D. O. Hill above Horatio [MacCulloch] as a Poet or maker.'⁴⁵ He made this distinction by comparing the sky in Hill's *Durham* with the sky in MacCulloch's painting: 'the one is a medium and an element; the other looks like a curtain of clouds, hanging straight down.'⁴⁶ Brown's subsequent review of the first two volumes of *Modern Painters* ends with an analysis of three pictures in Ruskin's terms: one of Turner's sketches for the *Liber Studiorum*, George Harvey's *Glen of the Enterkin* and a sketch by Hill done from his window in Inverleith Row, which was:

done in a fine frenzy of an hour; it has exquisite colour, and is as sweet and deep in its tones as his own voice; but what is it? Look and you will see, wait and you will feel. There is nothing of earth to be seen but the tops of some great trees, among them an old fir with its cones of last year. Lying across them and giving them power, and getting for itself distance and freedom, is a long line of evening sky: under it and above it clouds of unimaginable colours. The broad sun is sinking, all but sunk down "in his tranquillity" and in that line of light, added by the painter (for though the sea was not visible to his eye, he wanted it to be there) you see the sea! and on it is the gentleness of the upper heavens. There we have a scene in itself imaginative to all minds of ordinary sensibility, made more so by a mind of higher sensibility, which works under an exalted condition of its whole nature. And fixes for ever upon that mere sketch, the strong and delicate but evanescent feeling as well as sensations of that hour.⁴⁷

A later opinion of Hill's work, by Elizabeth Sharp, also refers to the idea of Hill as a painter who worked best with an accidental immediacy. Her opinion is presumably based on discussions with Amelia Paton and examination of the works she owned after Hill's death:

⁴⁴. John Ruskin, quoted in Forrester (as in n. 42), p.149.

⁴⁵. Brown to John Taylor Brown, 18 March 1846, *Letters of Dr John Brown*, ed. by his son and D. W. Forrest, London 1909, p. 65. 'Maker' or 'makar' is the old Scots word for poet.

⁴⁶. John Brown, review of Hill's pictures, *The Witness* (22 April 1846). MacCulloch is now generally agreed to be the better painter.

⁴⁷. John Brown, review of volumes 1 and 2 of *Modern Painters*, *The North British Review*, vol. 6 (1847): pp. 418-9.

A greater individuality, however, is seen in his slight sketches, impressions rapidly noted down in a few seconds on paper, with chalk, pencil or watercolors, or when none of these implements was at hand, with the point of a finger dipped into ink. There are stronger contrasts, greater boldness, in these sketches than in his finished work. A careful observation of the play of light characterises his painting and his photography; in his paintings it is of that peculiar quality of light that belongs to a moist climate. He was very sensitive to that wonderful 'swimming' effect of the sea's surface on the sky, an effect often seen in hilly islands, or when the sea's inlets are long and tortuous. With water-colors, in his youth a comparatively new medium, his effort was to keep his colors pure and simple. He learned from William Leech [William Leighton Leitch (1804-83)] ... how to draw with three colors only, red, blue and yellow.⁴⁸

Ruskin's *Modern Painters* was both stimulating and embarrassing to Hill:

The exalted views there [illegible] of Landscape Painting made me as well they might blush for the truant part I had played from a noble profession.⁴⁹

We might assume from this that the sketch Brown admired was an attempt by Hill to paint in response to Ruskin's criticism. However, Brown gave the picture a specific domestic location to stress its immediacy. According to the Edinburgh street directories, Hill lived in Inverleith Row from 1839 to 1844, when he moved to Rock House. The drawing was therefore at least two years old, when Hill read *Modern Painters*. It may be that Hill responded to Ruskin in exploring another familiar reality, *Edinburgh from the Castle*.

Edinburgh from the Castle

By a useful coincidence, Hill and David Roberts painted this same subject in 1846-7, and the comparison is telling (Figs. 60 and 61). Hill was such an amiable man that he rarely expressed dislike, and his aesthetic taste could well have been biased by his friendships. He admired Roberts and relied on his help in bringing in important works for the Academy exhibitions. But an opinion of Roberts's painting emerges inadvertently in a letter Hill wrote to him, in which he said of *Modern Painters*:

⁴⁸. Mrs William Sharp, 'D. O. Hill, R. S. A.', *Camera Work*, no. 28 (October 1909): p. 18.

⁴⁹. Hill to Roberts, 12 March 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

when reading his glowing pages I was so fascinated with the truth and beauty of his remarks, that I more than once thought of communicating to the Author my entire sympathy and admiration of his labours.⁵⁰

This ‘entire sympathy’ fails to consider the passage written shortly before the praise of Turner, which criticised David Roberts’s painting of Roslin Chapel for a lack of interest in natural light. It may be that Hill was tacitly in agreement with Ruskin, who added:

The general feebleness of the effect is increased by the insertion of the figures as violent pieces of local colour unaffected by the light and unblended with the hues around them, and bearing evidence of having been painted from models or draperies in the dead light of a room instead of sunshine … it is bitterly to be regretted that the accuracy and elegance of his work should not be aided by the genuineness of hue and effect which can only be given by the uncompromising effort to paint, not a fine picture but an impressive and known *verity*.⁵¹

Roberts’s painting of Edinburgh is a grand architectural compilation, based on controlled perspective - a splendid, uncluttered stage. His foreground figures are mostly designed to direct the eye to the view, and the soldiers (taken from a calotype group) act as a decorative indication of his standpoint on a corner of the Castle.⁵² Hill’s picture is both less structured and more animated; there are a remarkable number of people in the Castle, on the esplanade below and in the windows of the various buildings. The people are the living embodiment of the City’s history. They are identifiable individuals, not stock figures – some of them are visitors to the capital, like John Ban Mackenzie, the piper, and Finlay, the deerstalker, or the Indian man. Others, like the fishwives, are its normal inhabitants. They range in age from the infant in arms to the old man; and in historical and social reference from the fashionable group on the left to the heralds on the right, from the wealthy to the working man. The very buildings of the scene make a reference to the famous individuals of the past, from the newly built Scott Monument on Princes Street to the sunlit house to the left of the esplanade, where the poet, Allan Ramsay, had lived.

⁵⁰. Ibid.

⁵¹. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, *The Works of John Ruskin*, Library edition, vol. 3, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, London 1903, pp. 225-6.

⁵². David Roberts, working in London, asked D. R. Hay to send him prints of buildings and one of Hill and Adamson’s calotypes of soldiers. From correspondence kindly communicated by Helen Guiterman,

The painting was exhibited in London in 1852 with the particular title, *Edinburgh on the Queen's birthday, viewed from the Mons Meg Battery, Castle – News from India*. The picture has the immediacy of natural light and movement, with a stiff breeze ruffling the standard and shifting the clouds and their shadows, and a puff of smoke from a fired cannon to celebrate the royal birthday. The distance is confused by the foliage of trees and the smoke of the Old Town.⁵³ This is a landscape animated by the present time, filled out by the human histories.

The picture is an extension of Hill's first interest in the calotype process: the proposal to apply the calotype to: 'the execution of large pictures representing difft. bodies & classes of individuals.'⁵⁴ Hill and Adamson took a series of views from the Castle, both with the standard and large camera, as sketches for the painting and it would appear that, by using calotypes, Hill was attempting to achieve true perspective.⁵⁵ One of the great obsessions of art, from the invention of linear perspective by Filippo Brunelleschi in the fifteenth century, had been the problem of making a convincing view of the three-dimensional world on a flat surface.⁵⁶ The difficulty of achieving both accurate and convincing perspective is evident in the limitations of the treatises, whose geometry was most appropriate to classical architecture.⁵⁷ In Hugh Miller's essay on the calotype, there

present whereabouts unknown.

⁵³. In translating the photographs into paint, Hill exercised particular care with the calotype looking South, where the view is veiled by smoke from the chimneys below. This photograph, he apparently first turned into a monochrome oil sketch, to feel his way from the one medium to the other before adding the colour: a reverse of the engraver's habit in working from the painting to the engraving. Discussed in Sara Stevenson, 'David Octavius Hill and the Use of Photography as an Aid to Painting,' *History of Photography*, vol. 15, no. 1 (1991): pp. 47-59.

⁵⁴. Brewster to Talbot, 3 July 1843, NMP 1937-4926.

⁵⁵. There are ten calotype negatives of views from the Castle and three of the cannon, Mons Meg, GUL.

⁵⁶. This complex subject is discussed by Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art: Optical themes from Brunelleschi to Seurat*, New Haven and London 1990.

⁵⁷. The communal interest in perspective may be illustrated by the popular Scottish treatise, written by James Ferguson, *The Art of Drawing in Perspective* (1775). He was self-educated, an author, miniaturist and populariser of science. The book was read by Hugh Miller's friend, the hopeful painter, William Ross, who communicated his enthusiasm to the geologist, and it was later edited by David Brewster. The importance of geometry in landscape painting may be illustrated by the fact that the mathematician, Mary Somerville, first heard about Euclid's *Geometry* from Alexander Nasmyth, who recommended it to the young ladies in his painting class. See Hugh Miller, *My Schools and Schoolmasters Edinburgh* 1879, p. 172; *Personal Recollections from Early Life to Old Age of Mary Somerville*, London 1873, p. 49. See also A. D. Morrison-Low and A. D. C. Simpson, 'A New

is a passage about perspective, relating to a picture of the neoclassical George Street in Edinburgh:

In this little brown drawing ... the truth is truth according to the rules of lineal perspective, unerringly deduced ... Here for the first time, on this square of paper, have we the data on which perspective may be rendered a certain science. We have but to apply our compasses and rules in order to discover the proportions in which, according to their distances, objects diminish ... in the architectural drawings of the calotype the perspective is that of nature itself; and to arrive at just conclusions, we have but to measure and compare, and ascertain proportions.⁵⁸

However, Hill presumably found that the advantage of the calotype lay more in the appearance of a landscape than in the geometric measurement of perspective. He was attempting to express not just the architecture but its necessary relation to the volcanic site of the Royal Mile, which appears to roll and shift as it did in geological history. It might be supposed, from the reduction of distance and flattening of light in the calotypes, that Hill could not seek information on aerial perspective in their construction. There is, however, one engaging example in the calotype work, which is almost a textbook illustration of both linear and aerial perspective (Fig. 62). The wall, the path, the lines of grass and trees all recede conformably to a vanishing point. The pyramidal foreground group is arranged with a visual balance of weight to the right, depending on the two boys in dark jackets and bonnets. Behind the group to the left, some feet away, are two girls wearing straw bonnets, whose position is defined in a lighter range of tone and a lesser focus, expressing the aerial perspective.

The known problem, in using optical devices to measure perspective, was that they offered a one-eyed view from a fixed point. In taking a series of calotypes covering roughly 180 degrees, Hill presented himself with the immediate difficulty that he had a swivelled, rather than fixed position for his factual images. He solved the problem in two ways. Firstly, he stepped back and up, so that his swing of vision was hypothetically reduced; secondly, he had the more interesting idea of building a warp into the foreground – not just flattening the actual curve of the half-moon battery but making a

Dimension,' *Light from the Dark Room*, exhibition catalogue, National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh 1994, pp. 23-6.

sprawling visual curve of stone and shadow. He constructed an s-shape between the sunlit stone ball on the right, round the Castle wall, back up to the left, downwards into the valley, coming back up again to the right through the dark shadow over the old city. This exaggerated the sense of life and movement in the picture and encouraged sympathetic movement in the viewer.⁵⁹ This use of light and shadow enabled him to suggest the poetic and moral truth in such details as the light stone of the new Free Church buildings, which pierce the real and moral shadow over the Old Town. A lesser detail, like the illuminated stone ball, echoes the ball in the calotype of Thomas Chalmers and his family (Fig. 42), and might serve as an indication of a little world, expressing the function of the foreground groups.

An examination of the landscape calotypes in relation to the *Edinburgh* painting shows that Hill had considerable respect for their truth. Even minor detail, like the drawn blinds in the windows of the building at the end of the esplanade on the left and the awnings on the shops in Princes Street, was transcribed, albeit selectively, to indicate the human activity indoors. This engaged the idea of trivial and unimportant truth, captured naturally by the camera, as a poetic idea of transience and humanity. The manifest difference between Hill's view and Roberts's is simply that, in Hill's picture, the buildings are proportionately smaller.⁶⁰ Roberts enlarged and squared the buildings to his frame, built arbitrary parallels and flattened the land to achieve greater dignity for the New Town – his city is a stage for drama. Hill's city is organic, it is built and lived in by real people and grows from a real landscape.⁶¹

⁵⁸. Hugh Miller, 'The Calotype,' *The Witness* (12 July 1843).

⁵⁹. The busyness of Hill's foreground partly disguises the energy of the setting and a possible connection with Turner's experiments in wide-angled landscape, such as *George IV at St Giles* (1822). This is discussed in Maurice Davies, *Turner as Professor. The Artist and Linear Perspective*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, London 1972, pp. 82-96.

⁶⁰. Ernst Gombrich, in analysing Constable's *Wivenhoe Park*, makes the point that, in a view through a window, 'the house in the distance makes a startlingly tiny image ... We all know that distant objects "look small," but we are rarely prepared for the real relationships of objects projected onto a plane.' *Art and Illusion. A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, New York 1960, p. 300.

⁶¹. Hill painted another picture of Edinburgh, from what may have been an impossible angle, above the Castle to the west and full into the morning sun, more than ten years later. This is illustrated and discussed by Murdo Macdonald, *Scottish Art*, London 2000, pp. 100-2. He says of the painting 'Here he remakes Nasmyth's urban vision in the light of Turner.'

Like his interest in the figure, Hill's approach to landscape was less concerned with ideal construction than with the visual experience, which might be tied to a knowledge of the underlying structure but was not dictated by it. The indication, in *Edinburgh, from the Castle*, of an interest in the underlying geology of the city connects the painting with an attempt, probably initiated by Hill, to improve the understanding of landscape. A proposal was put to the Academy in 1851:

The Council considering the widely spread study of Physical Science and particularly of Geology and that a knowledge of the phenomena is now as necessary to the Landscape Painter as Anatomy is to the Historical Painter resolved to recommend to the General Meeting the propriety of adding a Professor of Geology to the Academy's list of its other Honorary professors – and ... to recommend to them to elect to this office Mr Hugh Miller as a gentleman whose knowledge and genius would do much honour to the Academy and probably much advantage to its members and students.⁶²

The idea was eventually dismissed, on the grounds that: 'this application and elucidation can only be made by one who is both a geologist and a painter – because he ought to be competent to instruct the student how to apply that science to his art.'⁶³ The proposer on record is John Syme, a portrait painter. Hill, as Secretary, did not have a voice in the proposals or voting of the Council but he was the man who prepared the agenda (ensuring that the question was raised at four meetings), and he spoke positively of the proposal to Noël Paton.⁶⁴ It seems reasonable to suppose that it was Hill's idea.

Geological discoveries and speculation were amongst the most dramatic and disconcerting explorations of the time, unsettling the established concepts of human history.⁶⁵ Hill's advocacy was presumably based on the assumption that a knowledge of the structure of the landscape would lead to understanding of something more than the composition of stone and the character of the land it supported. The apparent practicality of this study was still designed to explore areas of poetic inspiration, justified by Miller

⁶². RSA Minute Books, 10 November 1851, p. 62. The official correspondence for the Academy is missing for this period.

⁶³. Ibid., 27 November 1851, pp. 73-4.

⁶⁴. Hill to Paton, 19 November 1851, NLS Acc 11315.

⁶⁵. The interest of artists in geology in the 1850s is discussed in Marcia Pointon, 'Geology and landscape painting in nineteenth-century England,' *Images of the Earth. Essays in the history of the environmental sciences*, ed. L. Jordanova and R. Porter, Chalfont St Giles 1979, pp. 93-123.

himself. Miller saw no division between such reality and its potential meaning or ultimate import. He wrote:

It is said that modern science is adverse to the exercise and development of the imaginative faculty. But is it really so? Are visions such as those in which we have been indulging less richly charged with that poetic pabulum on which fancy feeds and grows strong, than those ancient tales of enchantment and *faery* which beguiled of old, in solitary homesteads, the long winter nights. Because science flourishes, must poesy decline? The complaint serves but to betray the weakness of the class who urge it.⁶⁶

The historic and moral landscape: Greyfriars Churchyard

In common with Miller and Turner, Hill wanted to explore the real landscape. The end purpose was the Romantic proposal, suggesting ‘a deeper and otherwise unknowable reality behind what can be perceived.’⁶⁷ His landscapes were full of history and often a melancholy sense of the past. There is only one picture of Edinburgh in *The Land of Burns*, which was *Edinburgh Castle from the Gray Friars Churchyard* (Fig. 63).⁶⁸ The Castle is seen behind and above the tombs, in a haze of distance. The churchyard offers a frame and a support to the Castle as the religious and mortal base to the secular power, reflected in the painting’s exhibition title, *In the Greyfriars Churchyard, Edinburgh: Cameronians visiting martyrs’ graves*. Chambers’s text for this engraving makes no particular connection with Burns, but he does add a verse written in defence of the Covenanters:

The solemn league and covenant
Cost Scotland blood – cost Scotland tears;
But it seal’d freedom’s sacred cause –
If thou’rt a slave, indulge thy sneers. ⁶⁹

⁶⁶. Quoted in George Rosie, *Hugh Miller: Outrage and Order. A Biography and Selected Writings*, Edinburgh 1981, p. 219. Rosie comments on this lecture: ‘As a piece of earth-science Miller’s reconstruction is very dubious, as a piece of imaginative writing it is superb.’

⁶⁷. A. W. Schlegel, quoted in William Vaughan, *Romanticism and Art*, London and New York 1994, p. 11.

⁶⁸. Exhibited in the RSA in 1834.

⁶⁹. ‘The Solemn League and Covenant,’ *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. James Kinsley, Oxford 1968, vol. 2, p. 803, quoted by Chambers (as in n. 3), vol. 2, p. 3.

Greyfriars was historically important as the place where the Presbyterian Covenant was signed. When Thomas Guthrie was appointed as minister to the parish of Greyfriars, a friend wrote:

within its walls the first signatures were appended to the Covenant; and I doubt not many on that day felt that the Lord was there. The ground that encircles it is sacred, and the man must be dead to all feeling whose soul is not stirred within him, when everything that meets his view reminds him that he is ‘compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses,’ and brings him into contact with ‘the noble army of martyrs.’⁷⁰

Several hundred of the Covenanters were imprisoned here after the Battle of Bothwell Bridge in 1679. It was therefore a place of religious pilgrimage. The Cameronians were both the regiment formed originally of Presbyterians, who rallied to the cause of William III, and the seventeenth-century sect who later became the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland. In the choice of setting and the identification of the figures, Hill had made a picture admiring the purer form of Presbyterian worship, in advance of the Disruption.⁷¹

Hill debated issuing an album of calotypes of Greyfriars alone. The churchyard is remarkable for its seventeenth-century tombs, vigorously carved from designs equally appropriate for bookplates, and one of the Greyfriars’ calotypes appears as a frontispiece for the album of a hundred calotypes. This resemblance underlines the purpose of graveyards as a kind of textbook, where the inscriptions on the tombs were intended to be read for their moral and historical content.⁷² Hugh Miller’s passage, quoted in the Introduction, endorses the natural authority of the gravedigger and the stonemason, as the interpreters of the place. In one of the calotypes, *The Artist and the Gravedigger*, Hill posed with two of his nieces, listening to the gravedigger at the Dennistoun tomb. In the painting, a gravedigger directs the attention of two elderly people, and there is also a

⁷⁰. Rev. Thomas Doig to Guthrie, 16 July 1837, quoted in *The Autobiography of Thomas Guthrie, D. D. and Memoir by his sons, Rev. David K. Guthrie and Charles J. Guthrie*, vol. 1, London 1875, p. 358.

⁷¹. Hill drew a thoughtful group standing by the Martyrs’ Monument in Greyfriars’ Churchyard, to illustrate James Hogg, *Tales and Sketches of the Ettrick Shepherd*, vol. 1, Glasgow 1837, p. 435, and repeated the motif with a calotype group of Free Church ministers, negative in the SNPC, illustrated in Stevenson (as in n. 13), p. 192.

⁷². The Protestant unease about iconography within the church had placed a greater emphasis on the meaning of the funeral monument. See Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death: Visual culture in the English death ritual c. 1500- c. 1800*, London 1991, pp. 121-136.

soldier, with his wife and child, who is reaching out to the tomb. This sense of narrative within the landscape is also indicated in *Edinburgh from the Castle* by the little group on the battery of country people with a guide.

To the left of the soldier's family in the Greyfriars painting is the Nasmyth tomb. There are at least six calotypes of this, some of which were taken for George Harvey's moral allegory, *Children blowing bubbles in Greyfriars Churchyard, Edinburgh – Past and Present* (1848).⁷³ Probably the most significant calotype shows Thomas Duncan, sitting pointing to an inscription while Hill listens, sketchbook in hand (Fig. 64).⁷⁴ The tomb commemorated the ancestors of Alexander Nasmyth, who was the friend and teacher of both Duncan and Hill and who had died in 1840. The two painters are, therefore, offering respect to his memory. The stone apparently bore several inscriptions. On the plaque behind the figure were the words, 'O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory?' from St Paul's promise of resurrection.⁷⁵ An early eighteenth-century account offered a translation from a Latin inscription, which read:

Here lies a Flower, that with the too much haste,
Of fates cut down, did in her blossom waste;
What graver Eye, contemplating thy dust
O happy Nasmyth, after thee, will trust
The smiles of Nature? Or presume to say,
This well set morn foresees a hopeful day?
O may thy grave untainted like thy years,
Grow ever green, bedewed with Sister-tears.⁷⁶

The monument originally showed a shrouded figure, rising up from the dead, but the figure has broken. A sapling has split the stone, turning the grave to green. The tree is a

⁷³. 'Mr. Harvey said that at one time he had got Mr. Hill to photograph for him some of the tombs in the Grey Friar's Churchyard; but he had found them quite useless for the purpose.' Said in discussion of Thomas Sutton's paper 'On the Uses and Abuses of Photography,' *The British Journal of Photography*, (1863): p. 57. The painting is in a private collection in the United States. The setting of the picture most nearly resembles the calotype, *Edinburgh 45*, in Stevenson (as in n. 13), p. 191.

⁷⁴. The connection with Poussin's *Et in Arcadia ego* is made by Roy Strong in Colin Ford and Roy Strong, *An Early Victorian Album. The photographic masterpieces (1843-1847) of David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson*, New York 1976, p. 60. See Erwin Panofsky, 'Et in Arcadia Ego,' *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, London 1970, pp. 340-67.

⁷⁵. I Corinthians, 15, 55. These inscriptions are visible in the engraving in *James Nasmyth, Engineer, an Autobiography*, ed. Samuel Smiles, London 1891, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁶. Robert Monteith, *A Theater of Mortality*, Edinburgh 1707, pp. 9-10.

powerful symbol in Christianity – it is the ‘tree of knowledge of good and evil,’ the origin of death in the Book of Genesis; it is its counterpart, the Tree of Life, the cross that Christ dies on and the source of human redemption.⁷⁷ The actual tree breaking the grave is an ash, the natural tree of graveyards. It takes no particular taste for punning to see the living ash springing from the ultimate sign of death – dust and ashes – and with it, such complementary poetic reference as:

Ev’n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Ev’n in our ashes live their wonted fires.⁷⁸

And it may be that Hill also thought of the Norse Yggdrasil, the universal tree, described by Thomas Carlyle:

Igdrasil, the Ash-tree of Existence, has its roots deep-down in the kingdoms of Hela or Death; its trunk reaches up heaven-high, spreads its boughs over the whole Universe ... At the foot ... sit Three Nornas, Fates, - the Past, Present, Future; watering its roots from the Sacred Well ... Its boughs are histories of Nations. The rustle of it is the noise of Human Existence ... the breath of Human Passion rustling through it ... It is the past, the present and the future ... I find no similitude so true as this of a Tree. Beautiful; altogether beautiful and great.⁷⁹

The tree may have had a further personal meaning for Hill and Duncan. James Nasmyth talked of his father’s enthusiasm for old trees when assisting landowners with landscape design. He made little models also for his painting and one of these was known as, ‘The Family Tree,’ each of the family making a twig or small branch.⁸⁰ Such a historical, natural and literary focus for contemplation was a phenomenal argument for the potential revelation of truth in nature and, by extension, in photography.⁸¹

⁷⁷. Genesis, 2, 9. The interrelated pagan and Christian symbolism of the tree is discussed in Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, London 1995, pp. 214-226.

⁷⁸. Thomas Gray, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, xxiii.

⁷⁹. Thomas Carlyle, ‘The Hero as Divinity. Odin. Paganism: Scandinavian Mythology,’ *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, Lecture given May 1840, *The Works of Thomas Carlyle. Centenary Edition*, vol. 5, London 1897, p. 20.

⁸⁰. James Nasmyth (as in n. 14), pp. 36-8. The model tree is illustrated on p. 37.

⁸¹. The same subject was photographed by Thomas Keith in the 1850s, with the carved stone showing the skull of death, lit and visible between the branches. See John Hannavy, *Thomas Keith’s Scotland*, Edinburgh 1981, p. 30.

In Memoriam

Hill's most poignant pictures were the two he painted for his son-in-law after his daughter's death in 1862.⁸² These were the scenes of her childhood in Rock House (Fig. 65) and her adult life in Newington.⁸³ The historical precedent for painting a landscape as a memorial comes from Constable's tribute to Joshua Reynolds, which was exhibited in 1836, and from Turner's *Peace - Burial at Sea*, in memory of David Wilkie, exhibited in 1842.⁸⁴ Constable's picture uses the landscape to encompass the carved stone memorial to the artist. Sir George Beaumont built the monument in his grounds, and planted an avenue of arching trees as a natural Gothic aisle. Wordsworth wrote a tribute in verse. Constable added imaginary busts of Michelangelo and Raphael to the scene and introduced nature itself in the presence of the deer and the robin. It is a landscape weighted with authority: constructed by the patron, the sculptor, the gardener, the poet and the painter. Turner's picture is a Romantic and atmospheric expression of grief, using the sea, the sky and the stark blackness of the ship in that expression. In both cases, the subject was one of public and professional admiration.

Hill's paintings dealt with the death of his only child. *In Memoriam: The Calton* is a metaphor, which carries consolation. It is not just about her death but about her life and her hope of redemption. In the foreground is Rock House, with the slope of the hill where Robert Adamson's camera is perched. A larger camera or canvas is being carried out of the gate and the family dogs are playing on the steps, a woman is laying out a rug to air on the wall and Hill has a painting on an easel in the garden. This is the 1840s and the world of life, facing south into the sun. The Calton Cemetery sits in the centre of the picture representing death, with the obelisk of the Political Martyrs' Monument springing up towards the skyline. There, the Royal Mile, with its church spires and the crown of St

⁸². The interest in memorial portraits and casts is discussed in Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, Oxford 1996, pp. 284-297. However, this chapter on 'The Consolations of Memory,' which explores the way the Victorians sought to preserve memory as part of the mourning process, does not include the idea of landscape painting.

⁸³. *In Memoriam: The Calton* is in the collection of the Edinburgh City Art Centre. The whereabouts of Newington is currently unknown.

⁸⁴. Illustrated and discussed in Leslie Parris, Ian Fleming-Williams and Conal Shields, *Constable: Paintings, Watercolours, and Drawings*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, London 1976, pp. 186-8 and Butlin (as in n. 37), pp. 145-6.

Giles's Cathedral, is seen through the light, misted and obscured by smoke from thousands of chimneys. It presents an idea of the mysterious, invisible city of immortal life in an extraordinarily unstrained analogy - the poetry of a reality. It was a landscape, which Hill had examined at length. The scene was real but it was true in the deeper, spiritual sense and was designed as an act of mourning and a focus of sorrowful contemplation – a familiar place where Charlotte's absence was an acute part of the grief.

When the two paintings were exhibited they were described as:

gems of the opal kind with the colour and the fire, as it were, not laid upon the surface but all coming out from within ... Both pictures are gems into which ... we gaze, and could gaze for hours without wearying.⁸⁵

The Romantic gaze of Lockhart and Scott from the standpoint of Calton Hill is here offered as a Christian idea, and the visual hunger they express has become the hunger of mourning. In these pictures, Hill had taken the poetic concept of association from its grand classical origins to the truly personal.

The changing landscape: right and responsibility

The emotional connection with the land was based on physical knowledge. The principle of common right in the land was declared, in the 1840s, in a test case against the Duke of Leeds for denying access to Glen Tilt, ostensibly to protect the deer. Lord Cockburn described the situation:

His grandfather, the last sane duke, who died about twelve or fifteen years ago, made a private drive several miles up the glen, and although he was by far the greatest deer-killer in Scotland, he not only permitted but encouraged strangers to use it freely ... ever since, it has required a ducal ukase to see this portion of God's creation ... I wrote a note with respectful compliments, etc., and re-duking and re-gracing him, and humbly begging that such a worm might be permitted to set its base wheels on this once free drive.⁸⁶

The idea of liberty in the land was important to Hill as a landscape painter, and he took a practical interest in it. He wrote to David Roberts about the committee set up in

⁸⁵. 'Euphranor' (J. B. Manson), *Contemporary Scottish Art. A Series of Pen and Ink Sketches Drawn from the Exhibition of 1864*, Edinburgh 1864, p. 38.

⁸⁶. Lord Cockburn, *Circuit Journeys*, Edinburgh 1888, pp. 310-1.

Edinburgh in 1845 to protect public rights, ‘in and through interesting portions of the scenery around Edinburgh, which have been wrested from the public by proprietors.’⁸⁷ At the first meeting, Hill was principally concerned to raise the question of the railways coming into the city but he later became one of the directors of the committee.

The issue became a religious concern for the Free Church, because landowners could block its progress by refusing to sell land to build new churches. One of the Free Church celebrities was Janet Fraser, a stocking-weaver:

This woman, Jenny Fraser, occupied a few yards of ground in one of the Duke of Buccleuch’s parishes which, it was discovered, were not his but hers, being the only spot in that inconvenient condition. She was offered an extraordinary price for it. Though but a poor crofter she had the spirit to say – ‘Na! It cam’ frae the Lord, an’ the Lord wants’t again, an’ he shall hae’t’ And now there is a Free Church erecting upon it.⁸⁸

Some landowners had refused the congregations the right to meet at all on their territory. Hugh Miller wrote a series of articles for *The Witness*, subsequently published as *The Cruise of the Betsey*, concerning one displaced minister, the Rev. Mr Elder, who lived substantially on a small yacht sailing between the Hebridean islands.⁸⁹ Hill provided the illustration for a fund-raising prospectus for a floating church for the western congregations, capable of holding 1500 people (Fig. 66). Hill was further involved in this particular battle in the production of a series of lithographs issued with the ironic title, *Illustrations of the Principles of Toleration in Scotland*, which had a polemic intention on a par with Miller’s articles.

The preface expressed the unexaggerated veracity of the drawings, ‘taken on the spot,’ and explained the action of the artists:

The existing state of things has been patiently suffered for three years, during which every effort has been made to conciliate them, but in vain; and it has occurred to some friends of Religious Liberty, to adopt the present mode of making known to the Public the nature and extent of an abuse which, short of

⁸⁷. Hill to Roberts, 3 April 1845, NLS microfilm 381. This committee expressed concern about Drummond of Hawthornden’s determination to shut out the public from the Esk valley and re-published articles from journals on the Glen Tilt closure, as *No Passage This Way. The Opinions of the Press on the Stopping of the Highland Passes*, Edinburgh n.d. (1 July 1847).

⁸⁸. *Journal of Henry Cockburn 1831-1854*, vol. 2, Edinburgh 1874, pp. 80-1.

⁸⁹. Hugh Miller, *The Cruise of the Betsey*, Edinburgh 1870.

ocular proof, could scarcely be believed to exist in Great Britain in the nineteenth century, in the hope that such publicity may aid them in their efforts to obtain from the Legislature what they have been unable to obtain from the toleration, humanity, or justice of individual Proprietors.⁹⁰

The lithographs showed services held on arbitrary patches of common land, a road, a gravel pit or the sea shore, to evade the legal rights of the landed proprietors. Hill drew the first two of the lithographs (Fig. 67), and led the attack in depicting the parishes of Canobie and Wanlockhead on the Duke of Buccleuch's estates. Wanlockhead was an isolated lead-mining village, where all the inhabitants were employed by the Duke, and it was a telling fact that three quarters of the village had seceded to the Free Church. They were obliged to worship outside the village in a ravine 1500 feet above sea level. Hill's drawing illustrates the villagers struggling uphill against the wind in a shower of sleet, the kind of weather they must have experienced for much of the year, mostly standing and for hours at a time.

Wanlockhead was the most dramatic image. The drawings are deliberately factual rather than impassioned, designed, like later documentary photographs, as an 'ocular truth' for public judgement. The prints were on sale in five major cities, Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, Manchester and Liverpool, and were intended to make a national impact, to shame the landlords.

Improving the land

The sense of right in the land implied responsibility for its development. Hill saw landscape as open to improvement, rather than hallowed ground to be preserved in its historical state. His mentor, Alexander Nasmyth, was a practical planner who was so far involved in the building of the New Town of Edinburgh that, although he had no official position, he was regularly consulted. We know, from an account sent by Hill to the Royal Institution in 1826 for '3 large drawings in Pencil of Views in Edinburgh shewing the different proposed situations for placing his Majesty's Statue,' that he was involved in

⁹⁰. Anon, *Illustrations of the Principles of Toleration in Scotland*, Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, Manchester and Liverpool n. d. (1846). The drawings were by Hill, James Drummond and the lithographer, Andrew Maclure.

landscape planning from an early stage.⁹¹ His particular contribution to the development of landscape, in terms of admiration, criticism and such drawing for development, may relate to the great railway boom of the 1830s and 40s. Hill's first commission of this kind, in 1831, came from the railway engineer, John Miller, who continued a friend and patron.⁹² Characteristically, Hill improved the commission and enhanced its ambition (Fig. 68). His preface to *Views of the Opening of the Glasgow and Garnkirk Railway* explained the situation:

The author of these Views, while on a sketching excursion in the West of Scotland last autumn, was requested by a friend connected with the Glasgow and Garnkirk Railway to supply one or two drawings of objects on the line, which were intended to be engraved on a small scale, and a limited number printed, for the gratification of a few of the Directors and Shareholders. These drawings, when executed, suggested the more extended plan of the present series which, without any pretensions as works of art, are respectfully submitted to the Public as professing to give, not only a tolerably correct picture of the localities of the Railway in question, but a characteristic and unexaggerated view of the generally important subject of Railway travelling.⁹³

According to the railway historian, Jack Simmons, Hill alone of the early illustrators of the railways displayed an understanding of the way trains worked in his drawing, 'attesting careful observation; he could draw railway machines very well.'⁹⁴

In 1840, Hill wrote to his wife of his satisfaction in sketching Sir Samuel Brown's suspension bridge over the Kenmare Strait, in County Kerry, Ireland:⁹⁵

⁹¹. Royal Institution papers, SRO NG3/5/15 (27).

⁹². Charlotte Hill was staying at John Miller's house, Millfield, during the 1851 census.

⁹³. *Views of the Opening of the Glasgow and Garnkirk Railway*, by D. O. Hill Esq ... Also, an Account of that and other Railways in Lanarkshire, drawn up by George Buchanan, Esq., Civil Engineer (published by Alexander Hill) Edinburgh 1832.

⁹⁴. Jack Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, London 1991, p122. This is an interesting echo of the remark of Constable's brother: 'When I look at a mill painted by John, I see that it will go round, which is not always the case with other artists.' C. R. Leslie, *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable*, London 1949, p. 24.

⁹⁵. Exhibited in the RSA, 1842, no. 154. Sir Samuel Brown (1776-1852) invented a link enabling the construction of suspension bridges on a newly-enlarged scale. His first bridge of this kind was the Union Bridge over the Tweed at Berwick. Alexander Nasmyth painted the scene and bridge, before it was built, to show the effect. Since Nasmyth died in 1840, Hill may have inherited the Irish commission from him. See the entry on Samuel Brown, *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Leslie Stephen, vol. 7, London 1886, pp. 27-8.

it would have proved an interesting subject under any circumstances – doubly so you may be sure, when my hopes were not very high as to its picturesque capabilities.⁹⁶

He developed this enthusiasm for engineering projects in his later work on the railways, painting John Miller's great railway viaducts at Falkirk, Linlithgow and the Almond Valley on the Glasgow-Edinburgh line, which were exhibited in 1843. He apparently intended a series of engravings of this line, in parallel with his Glasgow-Garnkirk lithographs.⁹⁷ The large calotypes of Edinburgh and Linlithgow may have been designed for the same purpose, or as further designs for the engraved views on the Glasgow-Edinburgh railway line. If so, then the calotypes of Linlithgow, which are significantly the first photographs known of a railway scene, could have been a part of that project.

Like Turner, Hill was one of the first painters to treat the railways as a serious and large-scale subject. But Turner's *Rain, Steam, and Speed*, exhibited in 1844, was a virtuoso impressionistic performance, 'not a view of the Great Western Railway but an allegory of the forces of nature.'⁹⁸ Turner was interested in the feel and the sense of trains and the effect of speed. His painting expresses the dominance of the black train on the dark, viaduct arching over the still, golden landscape.

Later in the 1840s, Hill painted the Ballochmyle Viaduct spanning the beautiful 'Braes of Ballochmyle.' Simmons again admires Hill's two paintings of the viaduct as 'a proper tribute to a magnificent work of engineering. Here the main arch, accurately depicted as high and wide beyond any other railway bridge, leaps across an Ayrshire river, portrayed with no less truth to nature as romantic.'⁹⁹ Hill's text for the Academy's catalogue unites the grandeur of the engineering with the beautiful landscape:

This celebrated portion of Coil's "banks and braes, her dens and dells," - a favourite haunt of the poet Burns, and otherwise hallowed by many national associations, - extends for several miles along the right bank of the River Ayr, and forms part of the pleasure grounds of Ballochmyle House. The ravine has lately been spanned by a viaduct of stately proportions, designed by John Miller, Esq.,

⁹⁶. Hill to Ann Hill, 19 October 1840, NLS Acc 11608.

⁹⁷. He advertised this series in 1842 and a group of drawings for the project appeared in the sale of his pictures (as in n. 1).

⁹⁸. John Gage, *Turner: Rain, Steam and Speed*, London 1972, p. 19.

⁹⁹. Simmons (as in n. 94), p. 128.

Engineer, which forms part of the Glasgow, Dumfries, and Carlisle Railway. The great central arch, one of the abutments of which is founded on the rock where Peden had his hiding place, is 180 feet in span, and there are six smaller arches, each of 50 feet. The Bridge stands 178 feet above the level of the river.¹⁰⁰

This description cheerfully associates the romantic haunt of the poet and the refuge of the Covenanting minister, Alexander Peden, with a specification of the new bridge. Another, uncommissioned large-scale picture, *The Valley of the Nith from the uplands of Dalswinton*, was exhibited in 1850. The catalogue entry described a landscape, which includes Burns's farm of Ellisland, and follows with a quotation from James Nasmyth, which connects Burns himself with engineering. For Nasmyth it was classic ground:

in the year 1788, the first vessel that ever moved through water by the agency of steam, did on the 14th November of that year skim over the surface of said loch; - a great day was that for mankind: an event of the first magnitude, big with the good fate of nations, as after times have proved. The parties present in the boat on that memorable occasion, were "Miller" (proprietor of the mansion), "Taylor" (the engineer), "Robert Burns" (the poet and farmer of Ellisland,) "Henry Brougham," (the future Chancellor,) "and Alexander Nasmyth," (the father of landscape painting in Scotland,) "a fit and worthy crew to celebrate so great an event."¹⁰¹

Hill's view of industrial development within the landscape is in opposition to earlier models, like P. J. de Loutherbourg's *Coalbrookdale by Night*, which is a Sublime concept and a hellish image.¹⁰² The Ballochmyle painting is a celebration of the great viaduct but the beauty of the landscape it strides across is redolent of the rustic, poetic and historical. *The Valley of the Nith* contains a new component, in the Romantic past of technology. The letter Hill wrote to the Museum of the Commissioners of Patents in 1858, when James Nasmyth suggested the picture might find a home there, is revealing both of Hill's ineptitude in dealing and of his anxious approach to the painting's lack of success:

I shall be happy if it meets your approbation as a work of art, as much as the subject is one not unlikely to excite your sympathy from its interesting associations. It is one of the most elaborated of my pictures, as I have painted all over it again and again since it was exhibited. It would indeed be an event as agreeable as unlooked for that it should have its home in the same hall with the

¹⁰⁰. RSA exhibition catalogue, 1850, no. 220.

¹⁰¹. Quoted in the RSA exhibition catalogue, Edinburgh 1850, no. 292.

¹⁰². Illustrated and discussed in Conal Shields, *Landscape in Britain*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, London 1973, pp. 67-8 and 73.

paddle wheels which moved the craft on the little lake of Dalswinton – the [livening?] germ of the Titanic family of sea-going steamers, of which family I observed with satisfaction that the Leviathan, one of the youngest of the brood, had sent a miniature of herself for the delectation [of] the good old grandmother of the Dalswinton lake.¹⁰³

Edinburgh from the Castle was purchased by John Miller and may, from Hill's concern with the planning of the railway lines and station, have been painted partly with that in mind. Below the Castle in the valley a little train steams past – a comparatively unobtrusive presence. In all three pictures discussed here, Hill is presenting the fusion of old and new rather than a battle between them; he is expressing a positive affection for good engineering. Hill's energy in promoting good design for the structures of the railways, driving into the heart of the city, is in contrast to Lord Cockburn's hostility. Cockburn regarded the railway boom as insane: 'Britain is at present an island of lunatics, all railway mad.'¹⁰⁴ Hill urged David Roberts, in several letters, to make his voice felt, himself talked to the engineers and redirected the town meeting designed to consider rights of way in the country:

I took the liberty of directing their attention to the trouble you have taken in conjunction with Sir William Allan and myself & afterwards in the matter of getting the three Railways Cos whose termini are to be in the Nor Lock near the North Bridge, so far to unite their measures in the designing and erection of these termini, as to get one architect of genius and skill to design and superintend the erection of the whole. I told them ... of my having been asked by Mr Miller the Engineer of the Edinburgh & Glasgow Line about two years ago, to give a design shewing the effect of the works - that the first thing I recommended was the employment of an architect - either Playfair or Hamilton, to design the Buildings... I gave them what I believed to be your views generally in regard to the mighty [or 'weighty'] importance to the beauty and form of Edinburgh - of having these buildings well designed - and I tried to represent to them the effect of the entry into our city by the railway dashing round the [illegible] of Arthurs Seat - skirting the palace grounds beautiful as this [or 'they'] will be - curving in by the cliff rock of the Calton where the norman castle of the prison and Governors house are situated - and then emerging into an area surrounded with tasteful structures composing the various buildings connected with the terminus. - then the gardens laid out round the Scott Monument - and the deformity of the mound

¹⁰³. Hill to Bennet Woodcroft, 3 May 1858, Science Museum, London, Z27B 137. The painting was unsold at his death and appears in his sale catalogue (as in n. 1).

¹⁰⁴. Cockburn (as in n. 88), p. 129.

removed, to give place to our contemplated colonnades [the National Gallery of Scotland] and the New College.¹⁰⁵

This is characteristically difficult to read but Hill seems to be regarding the railway as a dramatic idea, appropriate to good architecture. John Miller had asked Hill to draw the effect. It may well be that some of the photographs taken by Hill and Adamson of the Mound and from the Castle, around this time, were designed with a similar town planning intention, for the benefit of the grand plans for building on the Mound behind the Royal Institution as well as the railways – to achieve a coherent and beautiful design for the area between the Old and New Towns.

Hill was also involved in the development of the railways, in taking photographs of the eighteenth-century Lady Glenorchy's Chapel and the medieval Trinity College Church (Fig. 69), which were demolished in 1845 and 1848 to make way for a railway goods yard.¹⁰⁶ These pictures fit into the custom of recording old buildings before demolition, which became a common photographic practice later in the century.¹⁰⁷ But there is a twist to the story of Trinity Church. As a result of the protest led by the antiquarians and the Lord Provost, the railway company agreed to rebuild the church elsewhere. Disputes about the site delayed the demolition until 1848, when the City accepted payment from the company to take on the responsibility. The masonry was removed to the slopes of Calton Hill. The disputes on re-siting continued, involving ecclesiastic with aesthetic and antiquarian arguments, and the Academy itself joined in the discussion. Hill wrote to Lord Cockburn, with their opinion:

that the site in the Woodyard would bury the Church, defeat a chief object of its conservation & lower the character for taste of the City. That while the Garden site is immeasurably superior neither the Academy nor the public [?] were in a position to pronounce that it was absolutely the best.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵. Hill to Roberts, 3 April 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

¹⁰⁶. See Nicholas M. McQ. Holmes, *Trinity College Church, Hospital and Apse*, Edinburgh 1988 and Graham Smith, 'A Calotype view of Trinity College, Edinburgh,' *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 126 (1984): pp. 781-2.

¹⁰⁷. For example, Thomas Annan's photographs of *The Old Closes and Streets of Glasgow*, taken between 1859 and 1861.

¹⁰⁸. Hill to Cockburn, 28 March 1854, NLS Ms 10994 fo. 67.

Hill does not mention that another potential site was Calton Hill. The Lord Provost had already purchased the ground he favoured there, in 1851: ironically, this turned out to be the site occupied by Rock House.¹⁰⁹ He was proposing to rebuild the Church in place of the house where D. O. Hill lived.¹¹⁰

Curiously enough, this inverted involvement of the Gothic and the railways was prefigured in Hill's *Glasgow and Garnkirk Railway* by a small lithograph at the end of the text, which concluded with the ambition of extending the railway line to Edinburgh (Fig. 70). Hill drew the three figures of St Mungo, St Rollox (patron of the engineering works) and St Giles as monks, celebrating with a bowl of whisky toddy, while a train, seen through gothic arches, steamed through to connect the three places in the modern world.

¹⁰⁹. It was resold in 1858. 'Yesterday the property purchased in 1851 by the Town Council for the sum of £1,260, for the purpose of providing a site for Trinity College Church, as proposed to be restored on the old "style and model" was exposed to public roup in the saloons of Messrs Dowells and Lyon, at the upset price of £650 ... The property has for the last few years been let to Mr D. O. Hill at the annual rent of £42.' *Edinburgh Courant* (10 June 1858). It fetched £880.

¹¹⁰. David Bryce produced a design for this, which is illustrated in Holmes (as in n. 106), p. 23.

Chapter eight

The Disconnected Triangle: Brewster, Talbot and Hill and Adamson

The foregoing chapters have been designed to give a broad overview of the context of and influences on Hill's work and thinking. The last two hope to address more specifically the position of the Hill and Adamson partnership in photography and in the history of camera culture. This chapter is designed largely in a negative sense to attempt an explanation of the unexpected distance between the partnership and the two critical figures in the promotion and practice of the calotype: David Brewster and William Henry Fox Talbot.

Sir David Brewster and the launch of the calotype in Scotland

Sir David Brewster, the distinguished physicist and Principal of the United College of St Leonard and St Salvator at St Andrews University, was the man responsible for bringing the calotype process to Scotland.¹ Brewster had first visited William Henry Fox Talbot, the inventor of the process, at Lacock in 1836 and reported to his wife that the place was 'a paradise.' Talbot's wife, Constance, wrote of the stimulating effect of Brewster's society on this occasion:

You are perfectly right in supposing Sir David Brewster to pass his time pleasantly here. He wants nothing beyond the pleasure of conversing with Henry discussing their respective discoveries & various subjects connected with science. I am quite amazed that scarcely a momentary pause occurs in their discourse. Henry seems to possess new life.²

Brewster was generally remarkable in his ability to excite interest and enthusiasm in others. His daughter quoted a friend, 'himself the possessor of genial gifts and genius,' as saying, 'When I have been with other great men, I go away saying, "What

¹. See A. D. Morrison-Low, 'Dr John Adamson and Robert Adamson: An Early Partnership in Scottish Photography.' *The Photographic Collector*, vol. 2 (autumn 1983): pp.198-214 and 'Sir David Brewster and Photography,' *Review of Scottish Culture*, no. 4, Edinburgh 1988, pp. 63-3, and also, Graham Smith, *Disciples of Light: Photographs in the Brewster Album*, Malibu 1990.

². Quoted in H. J. P. Arnold, *William Henry Fox Talbot, Pioneer of Photography and Man of Science* London 1977, p. 80. For the extraordinary range of Brewster's work, see 'Martyr of Science:' *Sir David Brewster 1781-1868*, Proceedings of a bicentenary symposium, ed. A. D. Morrison-Low and J. R. R. Christie, Edinburgh 1984.

clever fellows they are"; but when I am with Sir David Brewster, I say, "What a clever fellow I am".³ She explained his engaging intensity:

In the walk, at the meal, in society, in solitude, there was a constant observing and experimenting upon some common daily occurrence - the colours and forms of plants, the eye balls of fish and other creatures, the habits of gold-fish, the gambols of mice, abounding in his old house, the scratching of snail shells on the window, the jewels and tinted ribbons of his lady visitors, the patterns of wallpapers and carpets, the shadows of carriage blinds.⁴

It was due to Brewster and his relationship with Talbot that the calotype process was pursued through extraordinary difficulties, until Brewster's colleague, Dr John Adamson, finally succeeded in taking a calotype portrait in May 1842. The St Andrews circle had previously taken daguerreotype photographs but found the calotype process nearly intractable. Brewster's persistence, seen in his correspondence with Talbot, illustrates both the chemical difficulty of the process and his own energy. It was, moreover, Brewster who persuaded Talbot not to patent the calotype process in Scotland and to allow Robert Adamson to set up in professional business as a calotype photographer. He wrote to Talbot in October 1842:

Mr Adamson has arrived at great perfection in the art, and his brother the Doctor is preparing a little book containing his best works which I shall send to you soon.

You will recollect of promising me your countenance and support to any person whom I could induce to practise the Calotype as a profession in Scotland. When the specimens reach you, you will be able to judge of Mr Adamson's work, and to do what you can to support him. I mean to give him a strong recommendation and I trust you will do the same.⁵

Robert Adamson moved to Edinburgh on 10 May 1843. In July of that year, Brewster wrote to Talbot explaining that he had introduced D. O. Hill to Robert Adamson:

Mr Adamson, who is now established in Edinr. with crowds every day at his studio, will be very grateful for your kindness. He will send you specimens of his progress which I think will surprise and delight you ... A grand historical picture is undertaken by a first rate Artist, to represent the first General Assembly of the Free Church. I got hold of the Artist, shewed him the Calotype, & the immense advantage he might derive from it in getting likenesses of all the principal characters before they dispersed to their respective homes. He was at first incredulous, but went to Mr Adamson, and

³. Mrs Gordon, *The Home Life of Sir David Brewster*, Edinburgh 1869, p. 299.

⁴. Ibid., p. 302.

⁵. Brewster to Talbot, 22 October 1842, NMP 1937-4912.

arranged with him the preliminaries for getting all the necessary Portraits. They have succeeded beyond their most sanguine expectations.⁶

The commentary on the Adamsons's progress comes almost entirely from David Brewster. His own archive of correspondence was destroyed in a fire, so we do not have Talbot's letters in response. Hill did not apparently comment in writing on the calotypes until later. Brewster's letter gives us a picture of Hill as reluctant to use photography or more simply ignorant. However, it is most unlikely that Hill did not know about photography. There was in Edinburgh, as in St Andrews, a considerable amount of photographic activity from 1839 onwards.⁷ An article on Hill's plans for the painting, published by Hugh Miller ten days before Brewster's letter, may qualify Brewster's account:

Mr Hill has been led by what at first seemed a scarce surmountable obstacle in his way, to have recourse to an expedient which bids fair to exercise no slight influence on his art; and to add greatly to the interest of his picture. Much of the value of a piece such as he contemplates must of course consist in the faithfulness of the portraits. There was an utter lack of time to get these taken in the ordinary way; - and in a very few days, the members of the Free Assembly would have been scattered all over the kingdom ... in the emergency the artist bethought him of having recourse for his likenesses to the recent invention of drawing by the agency of light. They were first taken by the Daguerreotype in the ordinary way, and with the usual sombre and shadowy effect, and latterly, through the medium of the sister invention, the calotype, - an art introduced into Edinburgh, during the last fortnight, for the first time, by Mr Adamson of St Andrews.⁸

This introduces the interesting possibility that Hill was already working with a daguerreotypist. Brewster might have deliberately deflected Hill from the daguerreotype to the calotype in order to send business in the direction of his own protégé. The circular, lithographed letter sent out by Hill to invite people to sit for their portrait confirms that Hill was at this stage considering, if not using, the assistance of a daguerreotypist:

The preliminary studies of the portraits for this work will in the first instance be made by the use of the Daguerreotype and Calotype - and as Mr Hill has

⁶. Brewster to Talbot, 3 July 1843, NMP 1937-4926.

⁷. See A. D. Morrison-Low, 'Photography in Edinburgh in 1839: the Royal Scottish Society of Arts, Andrew Fyfe and Mungo Ponton,' *Scottish Photography Bulletin*, no. 2 (1990): pp. 26-35. Talbot's photogenic drawings were exhibited in the Exhibition of Arts, Manufactures and Practical Sciences at the Assembly Rooms in Edinburgh in 1839. See Larry J. Schaaf, 'Henry Talbot's First Exhibition in Scotland,' *Studies in Photography* (1998): pp. 25-8.

⁸. Hugh Miller, 'The Two Prints,' *The Witness* (24 June 1843).

made the necessary arrangements with Mr Adamson a gentleman recommended to him by Sir David Brewster as an adept in the latter process, he requests that Dr Gordon will consent to meet him at Mr Adamson's house - Calton Stairs.⁹

In autumn 1843, Brewster was enthusiastic in his reports of the progress of the partnership. He wrote:

I wish I could send you some of the fine Calotypes of ancient Church yard Monuments, as well as modern ones taken by Mr Adamson, and also specimens of the fine groups of Picturesque personages which Mr Hill and he have arranged and photo-graphed. Those of the Fishermen & women of Newhaven are singularly excellent. They have been so inundated with work that they have not been able to send me a Collection.¹⁰

In 1844, Brewster was still actively promoting Adamson's work. He met Carl Gustav Carus, the art critic and physician to the King of Saxony, at Taymouth Castle and particularly directed his attention to the studio. The King and his entourage, travelling semi-incognito, subsequently visited Rock House.¹¹

It would be reasonable to suppose that Brewster and Talbot would have exerted a strong and guiding influence on the partnership. Talbot may well have expected a return for his generosity, if only in the form of communication. In his letter to Talbot, thanking him for a packet of calotypes, on 28 November 1843, Brewster added:

I gave your letter and the two calotypes to Dr Adamson who has sent them to his brother in Edinr. who will communicate with you on the subject of his Negatives.¹²

However, on 18 April 1844, he made it plain that Robert Adamson had not responded:

This delay in writing you, has arisen from his having left Edinr. about the time you wrote me, & from his desire to send you one or two good negatives for your work. Dr Adamson is so annoyed at the circumstance that he has got my camera, for the purpose of getting one or two good negatives for you so that I hope the oversight will be atoned for.¹³

While this could have been simple absence of mind on Robert Adamson's part, it implies a reluctance to proffer his own expert knowledge, even to Talbot. This

⁹. Hill to Gordon, June 1843, New College Library, autograph folder 240.

¹⁰. Brewster to Talbot, 18 November 1843, NMP 1937-4928.

¹¹. Dr C. G. Carus, *The King of Saxony's Journey through England and Scotland in the Year 1844*, trans. S. C. Davidson, London 1846, p. 336.

¹². Brewster to Talbot, 28 November 1843, NMP 1937-4929.

¹³. Brewster to Talbot, 18 April 1844, NMP 1937-4935.

knowledge was, of course, Adamson's professional advantage; he could not afford the amiable amateur exchange of negatives, but his lack of response was discourteous.

William Henry Fox Talbot in connection with Hill and Adamson

The only positively recorded meeting between Hill and Adamson and Talbot took place at the conference of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in York, in autumn 1844.¹⁴ Hill wrote to ask if Talbot would give permission, saying that it had been, 'suggested to Mr. Adamson and myself, to attend the meeting of the British Association at York, for the purpose of making Calotype portraits of some of the eminent men who may be present.'¹⁵ Hill then expressed doubt as to whether they would indeed be able to attend the meeting. The slight awkwardness of the letter and the curious fact that he did not say who had made the suggestion, since it was presumably Brewster, one of the leading figures of the Association, is evidence of an uncomfortable relationship with both men. However, Hill and Adamson were installed in York by 28 September. Hill seems to have met Talbot before he replied to the letter:

I have again to return you an expression of the sincere thanks of Mr. Adamson and myself, for your liberality to us in permitting us to Calotype in York. I trust that our efforts here will add some new interest to your beautiful art ... I hope I may have the pleasure of seeing you again before your train for Scotland.¹⁶

Hill and Adamson set up a studio in the grounds of the York Museum and worked until 4 October. Hill reported his experience of York to David Roberts, the following year:

His Lordship [the Earl of Northampton] I had the honour to Calotype at York, and succeeded in making what I think a singularly Rembrantish [*sic*] & very fine study. I did a few other things at York - which by the Yorkites have since been considered beastly affairs (though a few of them were among the best things I have tried) but one Yorkites opinion consoles me - for Etty saw in them revivals of Rembrant, Titian and Spagnoletto.¹⁷

¹⁴. See Katherine Michaelson, 'The First Photographic Record of a Scientific Conference,' *One Hundred Years of Photographic History: Essays in Honor of Beaumont Newhall*, ed. Van Deren Coke, Albuquerque 1975, pp. 109-16.

¹⁵. Hill to Talbot, 21 September 1844, FTM LA 44-67.

¹⁶. Hill to Talbot, 28 September 1844, FTM LA 44-70.

¹⁷. Hill to Roberts, 25 February 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

He added in his next letter to Roberts, which, from the context, may also refer to York:

Your flattering opinions have been shared by Etty Allan Leitch and many artists and a few [illegible] who know what art is, and these I have used as a warm blanket, to restore me to my natural heat, after a few cold bucketings of ignorant criticism, which my desire to foster and improve this hand maiden of Fine Art, has exposed me to.¹⁸

The York meeting was particularly unpleasant for Talbot, because several participants were presenting variant forms of photography and attacking his patent rights. Presumably Hill and Adamson were also under critical attack because they were working with Talbot's process. This would have meant that they were trying to calotype cool or even hostile sitters. It is a sad irony that Thomas Davidson's large camera, with which they photographed York Minster and Durham Cathedral, apparently made no impact on the meeting (see Chapter nine).

However, Talbot came north with Nicolaas Henneman to take the calotypes for his album, *Sun Pictures in Scotland*, immediately after the Association meeting. He stayed three nights in Edinburgh, in Rampling's Waterloo Hotel from 10 to 12 October, in Waterloo Place, a few yards away from Rock House, to photograph the nearly completed Scott Monument.¹⁹ It may therefore have been at this point that he had the discussion with Hill, which Hill mentioned to David Roberts six months later: 'Mr Talbot I believe may prevent us publishing in England, but I believe he will be inclined to grant permission on certain terms. Indeed he said so to me.'²⁰ From the slightly cryptic evidence of Talbot's notebooks, Talbot had seen and approved a number of Hill and Adamson's calotypes, perhaps on the same occasion. In his 1843/4 notebook, one of Talbot's lists includes, '18 Pilots family, 20 do (cast of a figure)/ 4 two fisher men/ 17 Jeanie Wilson??'²¹ Talbot sent Hill a copy of part two of *The Pencil of Nature* and contemplated using something of Hill and Adamson's work in part five. A loose notebook page with lists of the calotypes he was proposing to

¹⁸. Hill to Roberts, 12 March 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

¹⁹. The account for this is in the FTM, uncatalogued.

²⁰. Hill to Roberts, 14 March 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

²¹. Talbot notebook 1843/4, FTM, uncatalogued.

include has: ‘frame (with something enclosed)/ 8. Something coloured/ one of Hill’s?/ 10 Palais de justice’²²

In 1845, a favourable reaction from the influential Graphic Society in London and a gathering at Lord Northampton’s house excited Hill and Adamson’s ambition to produce a grand album of portraits of important Englishmen. Hill’s letter is responding partly to Roberts’s anxiety that someone else might pre-empt the idea. It is critical to an understanding of the partnership, as the only known letter in which Hill expresses himself at length on the subject. It contains the following passages:

Adamson in answer to some of your queries respecting this Photogenic Process. The Art is the invention of Mr Fox Talbot who is the sole patentee: his patent extends in England only. About three years ago this said process was chemically and artistically speaking a very miserable affair. Dr Adamson of St Andrews - brother of my friend R Adamson whose manipulation produced the pictures now with you, took up Mr Talbot’s process as an amateur. You are aware how jealous some scientific men are, as to their rights in the paternity of inventions or improvements, therefore I say entre nous that I believe Dr Adamson & his brother to be the fathers of many of those parts of the process which make it a valuable and practical art. I believe also from all I have seen that Robert Adamson is the most successful manipulator the art has yet seen, and his steady industry and knowledge of chemistry, is such that both from him and his brother much new improvements may yet be expected. I must tell you that Dr Adamson, up to the time that his brother thought of using the art professionally, was a most liberal communicator to all and every one, of all his improvements - and Mr Talbot had regularly a knowledge of his results. Mr Talbots patent notwithstanding Adamsons improvements of his processes you will thus see prevent us from executing, or at least, selling a work in England without his consent. Some days ago I wrote for this from Mr Talbot – a few days will I hope tell me with what success ...

P.S. In glancing over this hastily written letter, it has occurred to me that I may be construed as speaking depreciatingly of Mr Talbot - which is not my intention in praising - and justly praising my friends the Adamsons. It may be as well however to avoid a collision [?] with Talbot by asserting what it might be difficult to prove if disputed.²³

Hill sent a second, more legible letter, which exhibits further embarrassment and an anxiety not to offend Talbot:

I fear I displayed some bad taste in praising too much the works it adverted to, and perhaps in claiming more for my friends the Adamsons than Mr Talbot or

²². Hill’s name appears in Talbot’s list for copies, notebook 1843/4. On the loose page the general list includes ‘Mr Hill’s / coloured ones’ but the numbering in the list for part five makes it clear that Talbot was not thinking of Hill as painting calotypes. Talbot also refers to Calvert Jones’s images on this page, FTM LAA-49.

²³. Hill to Roberts, 12 March 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

his friends would admit them to be entitled to. The Egotism you must forgive - and the praise of my friends is to my friend and to him only.²⁴

Talbot apparently did not reply to the proposal, and Hill's letter or letters are missing. Talbot may have referred Hill's correspondence to Claudet, who held Talbot's licence for portraiture in London. In 1845, Hill seems to have tried a public approach. Charles Heath Wilson wrote to him:

If I had had the Calotypes I could have done a great deal. I have lately had important opportunities under very favourable circumstances, I have one friend especially who will prove an enormous puffer. I can send them to Mr Rogers the Poet & to other people. 1/2 doz will answer the purpose perfectly. Mrs Jameson is going to take them up strong, but you should guide us what to say in case we get upon wrong ground in respect of the English patent.²⁵

Talbot may well have been seriously offended by the passage on Hill and Adamson's work written by Elizabeth Rigby for the *Quarterly Review* (see Chapter nine), which may indeed be categorised as a 'puff,' and which notices Talbot only in a dismissive footnote:

To Mr Fox Talbot the happy invention is owing, but that artistic application of it, which has brought these drawings to their present picturesque perfection, required the eye of an artist, and for this the public is indebted to Mr. D. O. Hill of Edinburgh, in conjunction with Mr. Adamson, a young chemist of distinguished ability. It is to be hoped that Mr. Talbot, in justice to his own genius, will soon invite these gentlemen to London.²⁶

The Editor of the Review, John Murray, responded to a letter from Talbot and presumably a gift of *Sun Pictures in Scotland*, commenting on this and identifying the author of the article:

I hasten to return you my very best thanks for your valued gift of the Scottish Talbottypes - I am greatly interested in them & in the progress of the invention.

I am also requested by Miss Rigby to offer her acknowledgments for the separate specimens wch. will facilitate a comparison between the Art in Edinburgh & in London. I cannot refrain from wishing that it were possible for Mr Hill to act in conjunction with you. There are points in wch. your

²⁴. Hill to Roberts (as in n. 20).

²⁵. Wilson to Hill, April 1845, RSA. Anna Jameson's readiness to praise the calotypes is in contrast to her low opinion of daguerreotypes, which she felt destroyed the subjective element in portrait painting. Quoted by Mike Weaver, 'The Hard and Soft in British Photography,' *The Photographic Collector*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1983): p. 197.

²⁶. Elizabeth Rigby, review of books on modern German painting, *Quarterly Review*, vol. 78 (March 1846): p. 338.

Calotypes have a decided superiority over his - there are others in wch I think he excels - especially in obtaining artistic effects - a combination of the two would be a step in advance -

I show the specimens English & Scotch to all friends & hope I am making converts.²⁷

In November 1843 Brewster had written to Talbot:

I think your plan of publication excellent. The same idea had occurred to Mr Hill & Mr Adamson, who advertised it some time ago as a plan in contemplation.²⁸

He did not amplify this remark. It is likely that Talbot knew of Hill's *Land of Burns* and possible that he may have thought Hill and Adamson's plan to publish would include the obvious step of calotyping the land of Scott. While photographing the landscape associated with Walter Scott was an unexceptional and even obvious idea, and Talbot had an established affection for Scotland, it may be significant that *Sun Pictures in Scotland* was his first publication with a specific subject.²⁹

The fourth and last photographically illustrated publication Talbot was involved with may also involve some unexpressed rivalry between Hill and Adamson and Talbot's commercial operation with Henneman at the Reading Establishment. Sir William Stirling, later Stirling-Maxwell, (1818-1878) who lived at Keir near Stirling, wrote the first scholarly book on Spanish painting in English and by the mid-century owned the most important collection of Spanish art in Britain.³⁰ For his three volume work, *Annals of the Artists of Spain* (1848), Stirling commissioned Nicolaas Henneman to make twenty-five sets of calotypes after sixty-six paintings, etchings, engravings, drawings and book illustrations.³¹ Amongst the unexplained calotypes in the Hill/Adamson work are a group of prints from five engravings after Velasquez. They calotyped the print of *The Surrender of Breda* three times to give three different negatives, which suggests an intention to publish. These calotypes connect very obviously with William Stirling's project. Hill's interest in the good reproduction of

²⁷. Murray to Talbot, 14 or 19 May 1846, FTM LA46-65.

²⁸. Brewster (as in n. 12).

²⁹. See Graham Smith, 'William Henry Fox Talbot's Calotype Views of Loch Katrine,' *Bulletin of the University of Michigan Museums of Art and Archaeology*, vol. 7 (1987): pp. 49-77.

³⁰. See Francis Haskell, *Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion and Collecting in England and France*, London 1976, pp. 78-9. Stirling's collection was described in G. F. Waagen, *Galleries and Cabinets of Art in Great Britain*, London 1857, pp. 448-53.

³¹. H. J. P. Arnold, *William Henry Fox Talbot*, London 1977, pp. 158-9.

painting (discussed in Chapter two) might suggest that the idea originated in Edinburgh, and that Hill and Adamson started work without Talbot's agreement only to find the project taken over by Henneman.

From the evidence of Talbot's notebooks, he was understandably startled by the statement in Brewster's article on photography in 1847:

The large volumes of Talbotypes published by Messrs Adamson and Hill, at the price of £40 or £50 each, and now in the possession of one or two of the most distinguished artists in London, evince also the perfection of Mr Talbot's process.³²

Talbot and the Reading Establishment lost money in their photographic ventures and it seems likely that he was unaware that Hill, also, had spent more than he recouped - that it was his ambition to sell the albums for such a price, rather than an achievement. Hill seems to have given away the known albums. There were only two ambitious centres of production for Talbot's calotype process in Britain, and the ambitions may have overlapped if not collided.

It is fairly clear that Brewster's role as the intermediary and communicator between the Scottish practice of the calotype and Lacock Abbey ceased to be effective in 1843. Part of this unexpected lack of communication between Brewster, Talbot and Hill and Adamson may simply relate to personality. Brewster, the intermediary, could be not just stimulating and enthusiastic, as he was in the company of the reticent Talbot, but dogmatic and opinionated, which he may have been in his contact with Hill. He expressed his own impatience with the thinking of artists in the following terms:

Poets and painters have, generally speaking, very imperfect conceptions of the force of mathematical and physical evidence. The predominance of the imagination over the judgement indisposes them for patient and profound thought. The slightest resemblances, the most fortuitous associations, are linked together as cause and effect; and even words unburdened with meaning, and sentences unfreighted with thought, suggest to their fancy ideas and propositions blazing with all the lustre of truth.³³

In this instance, Brewster is talking of Goethe's theory of colours and Charles Lock Eastlake's translation and commentary upon it. It is a fair comment on Brewster's

³². David Brewster, 'Photography,' *North British Review*, vol. 14 (1847): p. 479.

³³. David Brewster, review of Goethe's *Theory of Colours*, trans. Charles Lock Eastlake, *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 72 (October 1840): p. 124.

position that he insists that his own theory of colours is, by scientific law, visually harmonic in the practice of painting; where Eastlake says that scarlet may be balanced by a pearly grey, Brewster maintains that it requires a bright green. Hill, who was described as having, ‘a rich versatile, rapid, facile mind, crowded with thick coming fancies,’ presumably would have fallen with fatal ease into Brewster’s category of the unthinking artist, which makes it unlikely that Brewster would have respected any opinion contrary to his own.³⁴ Hill was friendly, rather than confident in Brewster’s mould, and presumably he lacked the scientific or intellectual knowledge which might have helped to establish common ground with either Brewster or Talbot.

Brewster and the pursuit of transparency

Hill and Adamson’s aesthetic approach to calotype portraiture (which will be discussed in Chapter nine), eventually proved antipathetic to Brewster and probably also to Talbot. Brewster’s early unease with the calotype’s inconsistent portrayal of the human face has already been mentioned in Chapter six. By 1847, the critical distance between Brewster and the partnership was so great that, when Brewster reviewed the progress of photography, he included a devastating attack on the calotype process as a portrait medium. This was not disguised by his gracious approach:

In treating of an art so beautiful and enchanting as the Talbotype undoubtedly is, we are unwilling to speak of its defects ... but when it is employed to take portraits, particularly those of children and females, it invariably presents us with unsatisfactory results ... The defect is so great, as to deter many persons from sitting for their portraits ... it is often a hideous likeness, even when female beauty has submitted to its martyrdom. The defect arises, to a certain extent, from the rough grain, so to speak, of the paper, and also from its imperfect transparency - for in the positive picture every imperfection of the paper is copied, and every luminous point re-appears as a black one - so that the positive picture has the appearance of being stippled, as it were, with grains of sand, which give a painful coarseness to the human face.³⁵

Brewster was following a line of thought in this paragraph leading to his own suggestion for improving the calotypes, which involved soaking them with varnish or oils to make the image transparent. He may well have believed that making the image

³⁴. John Brown, review of Hill’s work in the Academy exhibition, *The Witness* (22 April 1846).

³⁵. Brewster (as in n. 32), p. 479.

clearer would make it not merely more distinct and informative but also more consistent. His affections manifestly belonged to the daguerreotype:

If we judge of an art by the beauty of its productions, we can scarcely deny that the Daguerreotype, as applied to landscape and inanimate objects, came almost perfect from the hands of its inventor ... The Talbotype will, we doubt not, make the same start towards perfection; and when a fine grained paper shall be made, and a more sensitive process discovered, we shall have Talbotype portraits the size of life, embodying the intellectual expression as well as the physical form of the human countenance.³⁶

Hill and Adamson must have been appalled by Brewster's sweeping condemnation. Hill tried to redress the situation by using Lord Cockburn's influence to place an article by John Brown in praise of calotype photography. Cockburn wrote merrily to the Editor of the *Review*: 'Certain artists here hold that this is the Paradise of Calotype.'³⁷ The article was not published, and it may have been at this time that Hill gave Brewster a hundred of the calotypes, in the hopes of changing his mind. At the Edinburgh meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1850, when Brewster was President, he exhibited these calotypes. He said:

This series, and indeed all those taken under Mr. Hill's superintendence, are distinguished by the artistic arrangements and drapery of the figures, a merit quite independent of their excellence as photographs. Hence these Talbotypes have been greatly admired and esteemed by artists, and have been justly regarded as valuable auxiliaries to art.³⁸

In the meantime, however, Brewster believed he had found the perfection he sought in the albumen process, in which the chemicals were carried in a transparent film on the surface of a glass negative and on the surface of the paper positive. Hill's pleasure in Brewster's first remarks may well have been destroyed by his second presentation:

This new process has been brought to such perfection in this city by Messrs. Ross and Thomson, that the Talbotypes taken by them, and lately exhibited by myself to the National Institute of France, and to M. Nièpce, were universally regarded as the finest that had yet been executed.³⁹

³⁶. Ibid., pp. 487 and 504.

³⁷. Cockburn to William Empson, 22 November 1847, NLS Dep 235.

³⁸. Sir David Brewster, 'Transactions regarding the recent improvements in photography,' *Report of the Twentieth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science*, relating to the meeting in Edinburgh, July and August 1850, London 1851, p. 6.

³⁹. Sir David Brewster, 'President's address,' in ibid. p. xxxvi.

Hill was undoubtedly distressed in 1851, when the Great Exhibition jury awarded the prizes in photography, substantially in Brewster's terms. The jury awarded a Council Medal to Samuel Buckle and Ross and Thomson and a Prize Medal to Henneman and Malone.⁴⁰ The shortest entry appears for Hill and Adamson, who only received an Honourable Mention for:

very many Talbotype groups, remarkable for easy and graceful arrangement. They are, in effect, after Rembrandt, being made out in broad and deep-toned masses of light and shade. As a whole, they are very sketchy and spirited. The tints are rich and varied both in depth and colour, and are of a rich sepia.⁴¹

The detailed commentary afforded to the other photographers reflects the technical lead of the criticism, even in the Fine Arts Section. Photography was also exhibited in the section for 'Philosophical Instruments and Objects Depending on their Use,' where Brewster was one of the judges, and the terms of praise are sympathetic to his views in both sections.⁴² The awards of the jury were a serious blow. Hill sadly remarked to David Roberts:

I am glad you have not tired of them. I had some hopes the Chrystal Palace Fine Arts Jury would have awarded me a medal for my artistic application of this process - and I am still of the opinion they should have done so - it would have been some consolation for much time and money spent, I hope not foolishly, in making the art respectable.⁴³

The calotypes: Talbot and Hill and Adamson in opposition

Unlike Brewster, Talbot was a practical photographer, and both his opinions and his work may be compared with Hill and Adamson's. However, the inadequate communication between Hill and Talbot may have been visual as well as verbal.

⁴⁰. The terms of praise include: (for Buckle) 'a great many calotype pictures, all of which are characterized by great delicacy of tint and exquisite *cleanliness* of execution'; (for Ross and Thomson) 'In addition to the extreme clearness observable in the details of their landscape scenery, and the great delicacy of their delineation of objects in general, we may take notice of the excessive beauty of the tints which their works exhibit. Not only are the shadows deep and Rembrandt-looking, where suitable to the effect required, but the middle distances display a beauty of colour.'

(for Henneman and Malone) 'These are all natural and pleasing, and great delicacy is observable in the lights and shades, the tone of which is a fine warm sepia brown ... The coloured portraits in this collection are very good, and no little credit is due to the artistic skill which they display.'

⁴¹. *Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851. Reports of the Juries*, London 1852, p. 278. The entry for Ross and Thomson has 52 lines, that for Hill and Adamson has only 8.

⁴². See Mark Haworth-Booth, *Photography: An Independent Art. Photographs from the Victoria and Albert Museum 1839-1996*, London 1997, pp. 25-9.

⁴³. Hill to Roberts, 14 January 1852, NLS Acc 7723.

Beyond the four or five listed in Talbot's notebooks, it is not clear which of Hill and Adamson's calotypes Talbot knew. Hill was not impressed by *The Pencil of Nature* and referred to it disparagingly, when talking of his ambitious plan for an album of English portraits:

this first book of English Calotype pictures for really Talbot's examples in his Pencil of Nature are not intended to be such should be such as to make the French look only second best in their Sun Painting efforts.⁴⁴

Passages of Talbot's text were designed as promotional literature, exploring the range of advantages and uses of photography, some of which would have been antipathetic to Hill. In an obvious example, Talbot expressed Brewster's concern for the ease as well as the factual accuracy of photography. His text for the photograph of the bust of Patroclus reads:

It has often been said ... that there is no royal road to learning of any kind. But the proverb is fallacious: for there is, assuredly, a royal road to Drawing... Already sundry amateurs have laid down the pencil and armed themselves with chemical solutions and with camerae obscurae. Those amateurs especially, and they are not few, who find the rules of perspective difficult to apply - and who moreover have the misfortune to be lazy - prefer to use a method which dispenses with all that trouble.⁴⁵

Hill had no interest in the idea that photography made art easy. His position was that the making of, or the approach to, fine art, whether in painting or in the calotype process was meant to be difficult.

I can only say that Adamson says the manipulation is very liable to go wrong in the hands of most people - that tho' several have now and then produced a good specimen - they find it difficult to succeed often - and the arrangement of the picture is as much an effort of the artist as if he was in reality going to paint it.⁴⁶

Certain of the pictures in *The Pencil of Nature* are visibly opposed to Hill's aesthetic sense. Talbot's calotype, *The Ladder* (Fig. 71), is presented with a text, which reads:

Groups of figures take no longer time to obtain than single figures would require since the Camera depicts them all at once, however numerous they

⁴⁴. Hill to Roberts, 12 March 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

⁴⁵. William Henry Fox Talbot, *The Pencil of Nature*, part 4, 21 June 1845, quoted in *Henry Fox Talbot, Selected Texts and Bibliography*, ed. Mike Weaver. Oxford 1992, p. 97.

⁴⁶. Hill to Roberts (as in n. 44).

may be: but at present we cannot well succeed in this branch of the art without some previous concert and arrangement ... But when a group of persons has been artistically arranged, and trained by a little practice to maintain an absolute immobility for a few seconds of time, very delightful pictures are easily obtained.⁴⁷

Talbot may have introduced the question of groups to *The Pencil of Nature* because he knew from Brewster of Hill and Adamson's practice. In theory, a comparison might usefully be made between their calotypes from this example. However, Talbot's calotype is the only image in *The Pencil of Nature* with figures, and Talbot may have chosen the image for the practical reason that it had a good negative, which would allow of multiple reproduction. Aware of the limitations imposed by this constraint, Talbot had a tendency in *The Pencil of Nature* to write of future ambition rather than what was there in the picture presented. This is a notable example of dislocation between text and picture. It is not an articulated group; the figures do not relate to each other and there is none of the sociable contact set up in Hill and Adamson's groups. But, while this is an extreme example, Talbot's groups usually maintain a distance between the figures. The distinction between Hill's and Talbot's approach to the group might be expressed broadly as a distinction between the emotional and the cerebral, or perhaps more simply as the resulting difference in practice between physical involvement and the issuing of instructions. Hill could understand the social structure of a group – could demonstrate what he wanted and would physically organise people. We can be reasonably sure that Hill was handling his subjects not just from the evidence of such supports as a pile of books under a leaning elbow but because he was also using solidly based metal supports and clamps for inexperienced sitters (Fig. 53). Talbot may well have stood back, asked people to move into position and told them to stand immobile.

The contrast between Hill and Adamson's work and Talbot's may also be considered in an impersonal area, in their photographs of the Scott Monument (Figs. 72 and 73). In this particular case, Hill and Adamson had the advantage that they lived in Edinburgh and could watch and consider the progress of the monument. They could take advantage of a bright day when one occurred. Arguably, Talbot was at a mercy of the weather, but he was fortunate, the sun shone at his chosen time of day and his

⁴⁷. Talbot (as in n. 45), Part 3, 14-29 May 1845, p. 95.

photograph is strong and clear. His experience of lighting, which he practised with the bust of Patroclus at Lacock, is here demonstrated in the use of a low westerly sun to pick out the carved detail. The principal distinction between his composition and Hill and Adamson's derives from the fact that it is taken from the shelter of a particular upstairs room in Princes Street.⁴⁸ The high viewpoint, which is common in Talbot's work, helped to reduce the problem of vertical perspective, and some of Hill and Adamson's calotypes take the same advantage. However, Talbot's position was fixed too close to the monument and he could not move back from the window. The monument is nearly complete, but the calotype cuts off the top of the spire, squaring off a Gothic monument. All of Hill and Adamson's calotypes, taken at several stages of the building, show the complete state of the work.

The distinction to be made here is perhaps two-fold. Talbot, with his many enthusiasms and pursuits, may simply have been too impatient to look for a different viewpoint – he took five negatives from this one position - or to wait a few days until the monument was complete. He took the entire series of calotypes for *Sun Pictures in Scotland* touring through the country between 10 and 22 October.⁴⁹ Talbot travelled with scientific instruments and expected to assess the world as he found it. His impatience as a photographer may derive from his enthusiasm for new paths – the enthusiasm which led him to discover photography. The composition of the photograph might be regarded as an attempt to fill a rectangular frame more fully than a complete Gothic spire may naturally do; it may equally be regarded as a hasty and curiously disrespectful image. His inherent reticence may also have prompted him to retreat indoors to the privacy of a room and a window. Urban photography was too attractive to bystanders and the control of interested crowds was always a problem, which Talbot particularly disliked in photographing views; many of his urban photographs, such as his pictures of the Paris boulevards and the comparable view of Nelson's column, are taken from indoors.⁵⁰ In their calotypes of the Scott Monument

⁴⁸. Identified as Robert Cranston's Hotel in Larry J. Schaaf, *The Photographic Art of William Henry Fox Talbot*, Princeton and Oxford 2000, p. 202.

⁴⁹. Talbot's mother passed on a critical comment in response to his calotype of Chambord, taken in 1843 in poor weather, 'as if you could not have remained there until the weather was clear, particularly with such an interesting object before you.' Quoted in Schaaf (as in n. 48), p. 166.

⁵⁰. In 1845, Talbot took calotypes in York with Calvert Jones, who chose the viewpoints. Talbot wrote, 'Crowds of admiring spectators surrounded the camera wherever we planted it.' Talbot to Constance Talbot, 29 July 1845, FTM LA45-110.

taken on the level, Hill and Adamson seem to have dealt with this problem of the intrusive bystanders to achieve the best view.

'no poetry in the pencil of the Sun'

In this context, it is not practical to undertake an analysis of Talbot's work as a whole in relation to Hill and Adamson's. It is visually distinct, and from such distinctions as have been noted here we can begin to see such a radical difference in personality and approach that it becomes less surprising that the four men practically concerned with the excellence of the new art failed to connect. The difference was neither public nor overt. However, in the 1850s Brewster and Hill came to represent positions of public polarity, in which Brewster stood for the scientific and technical character of photography, its representation of reality, while Hill stood for its use as an art form, its capacity for expression.⁵¹

Hill and Adamson's work was used as a model of the artistic use of photography in an acid debate, in which the authority of professional photographers was challenged. One of the leading professionals in this dispute was James Ross of the partnership of Ross and Thomson, who first appear perched on Calton Hill, above Rock House, in 1847, and whose photographs were promoted by David Brewster:

Thanks to the praise Sir David Brewster bestowed upon our handiwork (in a lecture given in the Music Hall by that great, good, and influential man), public attention was drawn towards our firm.⁵²

The establishment of the Photographic Society of Scotland in 1856 and the increase in the professional practice of photography between then and the early 1860s widened the division. Brewster was the first President of the Society and his introductory speech began:

Photography is pre-eminently a scientific art; it requires no peculiar genius in its cultivators; the Painter and the Sculptor must bring into the world those high gifts which qualify them for the practice of their divine art, but there is no

⁵¹. The artificiality of the this battle may be judged by the experience of George Harvey, a member of the Photographic Society of Scotland, who was attacked as the opponent of art photography on the grounds that he had moved Oscar Reijlander's *Two Ways of Life* to a poor position in the Arts and Manufactures Exhibition in Edinburgh, when in fact he had a high opinion of it and had hung it in a good position. This situation is discussed in Sara Stevenson, 'David Octavius Hill without Robert Adamson,' *The Photographic Collector*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1981): pp. 14-24.

⁵². James Ross, 'A Few Extracts from an Old Photographer's Ledger,' *The British Journal of Photography* (14 February 1873): p.75.

poetry in the pencil of the Sun ... The pencil [i.e. brush] of the artist must be called in, as it has already been, to give perfection and colour to the Photograph.⁵³

The artists Brewster refers to here were those who painted on top of the calotypes to give them colour, who included Henry Collen, one of Talbot's licencees, and the Rev. Calvert Jones. Hill, who respected the calotype's integrity, did not do this. The Society approached Hill as its potential second speaker, presumably because he would provide an alternative view:

What is wanted is not so much a written paper, as if [illegible] for publication, as a plain & practical explanation of the important points to be kept in view in the selection & arrangement of subjects for the Camera, the management of light & shade, the adaptation of the tone of the print to the nature of the picture &c &c. On all of these matters there is an excessive amount of ignorance among the majority of Photographers, & nothing is more likely to advance the Art, as an Art, than a little sound knowledge regarding them.⁵⁴

Hill was unwell at the time but avoided the invitation at a later date, despite the Secretary's warm invitation. However, he exhibited the calotypes in the first and second exhibitions of the new society, with a characteristically modest disclaimer:

I would not have obtruded these long ago [illegible] works upon the Society had they not, in addition to such pictorial & manipulative merit as may be accorded to them ['they possess' crossed out], appeared to you to possess a historical interest, in the early efforts of that wonderful art which has since become so great a fact in the worlds history.⁵⁵

The new audience was eminently enthusiastic, and reviews of the exhibitions contained passages which must have been galling to the technologically advanced photographers. One review, probably by John Brown, makes the opposition directly to Ross and Thomson and indirectly to David Brewster, whose pursuit of naturalism had caused him to develop stereoscopic photography:

First in order of time, they remain first in the order of merit, magnificent beyond comparison in breadth, depth, reality, and pictorial effect, to anything since produced in what are now esteemed the more perfect developments of photographers ... we prefer the artistic arrangements and broad realities of Mr D. O. Hill's portraits and figures to the stereoscopic sugar dolls or the agonising attitudes of recent and more "perfect" photographers. Next to Mr

⁵³. 'Paper read by Sir David Brewster, at the first monthly meeting of the Photographic Society of Scotland, held April 8th, 1856,' *Photographic Notes*, vol. 1 no. 1 (1856): p. 8.

⁵⁴. Kinnear to Hill, 12 April 1856, SRO.

⁵⁵. Draft letter Hill to Kinnear, 14 December 1856, RSA.

Hill's examples, we place the "Lady Reclining," exhibited in the Arts Manufactures Exhibition by Ross and Thomson. The arrangement of the figure is admirable, and the breadth of light and clearness of shadow shows the more perfect state of the art; but the head – that in which Mr Hill's portraits come out – is in this lady dimmed by the superior beauty of the dress.⁵⁶

Ross and Thomson had withdrawn their photographs from the Society's exhibition and still were singled out for adverse comparison. The dispute within the Society was not fought on simple issues. Ironically, James Ross's position echoed the earlier fight between the painters of the Academy and the Royal Institution. He objected to the fact that the Society's Council was composed of gentleman amateurs and painters; professional photographers had no voice in the selection and hang of the exhibitions.

Within this dispute, Hill was promoted as the artist who directed photography. He may well have been actively encouraged by the Society or by John Brown to try the brief alliance with Alexander MacGlashon, whose results were exhibited in the Society's 1862 exhibition as *Contributions towards the further development of Fine Art in Photography*.⁵⁷ The award of a medal to Hill for the photograph called *Horae Subsecivae*, a group portrait of John Brown and his cousin, John Taylor Brown, drew down on Hill lavish praise from Brown himself: 'Did you ever see anything out of Giorgione more subtle and to the life?' and equal invective from the photographer, John Traill Taylor: 'We are at some loss to understand what is meant by a placard attached to some portrait groups photographed by Mr McGlashon ... to the effect that they are "contributions towards *fine art* in photography by D. O. Hill."'⁵⁸ It is no coincidence that the Edinburgh Photographic Society was formed in 1862 by professional photographers disgruntled by the approach of the original society.

The fight within the Photographic Society of Scotland was probably inevitable. The sudden rush of commercial photographers from the mid 1850s, filled with optimism and incompetence, made photography a business. The making of money took precedence, and the interested artists were swamped by naïve claims to instant

⁵⁶. Anon (presumed to be John Brown), review of the Photographic Society of Scotland's exhibition, *The Edinburgh News* (26 December 1857). See also David Brewster, *The Stereoscope*, London 1856.

⁵⁷. The exhibition set of these photographs is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum, New York.

⁵⁸. John Brown, 'Mr Hill's Calotypes,' *The Scotsman* (10 February 1862). Taylor is quoted in a notice of the International Exhibition, *The British Journal of Photography* (15 May 1862), p. 129. *Horae Subsecivae* (leisure hours) is the title of John Brown's published essays.

artistry. Within this hostile field, the opposition between Hill and Brewster was set in a public arena and elicited exaggerated feeling and aggression.

However, it may be that one of the critical problems here was not just that Brewster thought Hill was subverting photography but that, in some sense, he *was* subverting photography. Robert Adamson was initially Brewster's protégé; his partnership with Hill closed off that relationship. They used photography as a means of expression. It could be argued that the seductive expressiveness of their calotypes redirected the art. Without Hill's contribution, it is possible that the technological or transparent character of photography could have been more efficiently established and its eccentricity concealed rather than triumphantly revealed.

Chapter nine

The Aesthetic Character and Practice of the Calotype

Process

The first two published methods of photography were radically different in character and may be regarded as establishing an immediate debate on the nature of the medium. The daguerreotype was a fragile, jewel-like picture made in grains of silver on a polished surface and encased in a frame or box. Its intimacy was enhanced by its physical character as a hand-held mirror. The difficulty of seeing the picture and the way the viewer and the viewed may be seen alternately in the mirror made it an extraordinarily personal object. The calotype was a multiple: a negative/positive process. The support of both negative and positive was unsurfaced drawing paper, so the photographic chemicals sank into the fibres, blurring the image.

By a nice historical irony, the popular art, with its magical cleverness of detail, was the daguerreotype: the unique, private image. In its first incarnation as the calotype, the repeatable, public image proved the critically demanding work. In practice, the distinctions were far from absolute. The same descriptive vocabulary was occasionally used for both. For example, both the daguerreotype and the calotype were compared to the mezzotint.¹ Hugh Miller saw the calotype in terms of a mirror:

Instead of the cold metallic surface, on which the Daguerreotype raises its slight film of ghostly white, we have here the usual paper ground of an ordinary water-colour drawing, with the figure standing out in a deep rich brown, somewhat resembling sepia. The likenesses strike at once; they are not mere approximations to correctness, - they are correctness itself, - features which the features themselves have painted, with all that truth of outline, and of light and shadow, with which they throw their reflections on a mirror.²

However, the opposition between the two processes is notable and was exaggerated by the rhetoric of advertisement and admiration. The detail of daguerreotypes invited the magnifying glass. The painter and daguerreotypist, Samuel Morse employed 'a powerful lens, which magnified fifty times' to read a distant street sign.³ The daguerreotype assumed the authority of machine-made accuracy, while the blur of the calotype was credited with a kind of natural innocence. Partly, this was a

¹. See an account of the daguerreotype published in the *Gazette de France* in 1839, quoted in Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, *L. J. M. Daguerre. The History of the Diorama and the Daguerreotype*, New York 1968, p. 85. See also Beaumont Newhall, *The Daguerreotype in America*, 3rd revised ed., New York 1976, pp. 15-6.

². Hugh Miller, 'The Two Prints,' *The Witness* (24 June 1843).

³. Quoted in Gernsheim (as in n. 1), p. 89.

result of the daguerreotype achieving a technical perfection before the photogenic drawing, which was improved and renamed the calotype in 1842. The scientist, James David Forbes, who was one of the first to examine the two processes in 1839, was sent examples of Talbot's work. Talbot wrote, somewhat nervously, that he only objected to Brewster's showing the specimens he had sent up to St Andrews, because he had sent the only ones available: 'so far from being the *ne plus ultra* of photogenic drawing they were literally the *ne minus ultra*.' Forbes then travelled to Paris and was enchanted by the daguerreotype:

I was pleased beyond my most sanguine expectations; in short it baffles belief:- in promptitude & minuteness one can *conceive* it even if they cannot *believe* it upon report, but in beauty, and the perfect representation of nature it must be seen to be understood ... As to Messrs. Talbot & Co. they had better shut up shop at once.⁴

The opposition between the processes was set up at the beginning – not least because one was French and the other English. The Napoleonic Wars were still a living memory. Hill, despite his initial willingness to consider the daguerreotype (see Chapter eight), saw the two processes in severe opposition by 1845. He said of his plan to execute an album of English worthies: 'a truly noble work honorable to England ... would earn more solid applause than the livid pictures of Daguerre.'⁵

The opposition was re-presented at the end of the century, but by then the poles were the artistic nature of Hill and Adamson's calotypes and the indiscriminate nature of the clear albumen and gelatine processes:

When we examine a fine copy of such of the Calotypes as the portraits of Professor Munro, of Etty, or of the Rev. Brewster Craig, we can well believe that this, which is one of the very earliest of photographic processes, possesses certain artistic qualities that have not been surpassed by all the refinements of modern methods.⁶

'A clear idea is ... a little idea.' Breadth and the imagination

When Hill differentiated between the calotype and the daguerreotype, he talked of inequality and imperfection:

⁴. Talbot to Forbes, 27 February 1839, and Forbes to his sister, 20 May 1839, quoted and discussed by Graham Smith, 'James David Forbes and the Early History of Photography,' *Shadow and Substance. Essays on the History of Photography in Honor of Heinz K. Henisch*, ed. Kathleen Collins, Michigan 1990, pp. 9-11.

⁵. Hill to Roberts, 14 March 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

⁶. John Miller Gray, 'The Early History of Photography,' Andrew Elliot, *Calotypes by D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson*. Edinburgh, 1928, p. 6.

The rough surface & unequal texture throughout of the paper is the main cause of the calotype failing in details before the process [or ‘precision’] of Daguerrotypy - & this is the very life of it. They look like the imperfect work of a man - and not the much diminished perfect work of god.⁷

Mary Warner Marien says of this: ‘Whereas the calotype process’s uneven appearance implicitly negated the complaint that photography was a mechanical art, it also in Hill’s phrasing, suggested that photography was an inherently lesser art.’⁸ She combines this with Elizabeth Rigby’s critique of photography, written from the perspective of 1857: ‘if the photograph in its early and imperfect scientific state was more consonant to our feeling for art, it is because … it was more true to our experience of nature.’ Marien reads this as meaning that Rigby was then constructing an idea of Hill and Adamson’s work as naïve.⁹ But the two ideas do not mesh. As Marien herself points out, the early practice of photography required so much knowledge that it could not have been naïve. Moreover, Elizabeth Rigby, who was much involved in the calotype work, would have known this.

The torque on the argument comes from a misunderstanding of Hill’s vocabulary. He is expressing a form of distinguishing admiration – human life, as we experience it is inherently imperfect. His comment is sparked off by Bicknell’s innocence, in picking up a magnifying glass to examine the pictures as though they were daguerreotypes, the familiar source of miniature wonders. Hill is trying to convey that his own pleasure in the calotype depends on its breadth – and its two characters, of liveliness and of an ambitious or conscious modesty. In bringing the calotype to an aesthetic standard, Hill was aware that he was not improving its accessibility. He wrote to David Roberts: ‘the very excellence of the art exhibited in the Calotype is a bar to its popularity with the unlearned public.’¹⁰ In so saying, Hill was admiring the calotype as an expressive medium which belonged within a difficult philosophical and aesthetic interest in obscurity or lack of finish.

The understanding of nature, in the Romantic proposal, comes not from clamorous detail but from a simplification of divine complication: man’s rough attempt may come closer to the mark of the ideal because it leaves the imagination free. Hill was

⁷. Hill to Henry Bicknell, 17 January 1849, George Eastman House Collection manuscript AC H645 acc 830.

⁸. Mary Warner Marien, *Photography and its Critics: A Cultural History, 1839-1900*, Cambridge 1997, p. 97.

⁹. *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

¹⁰. Hill to Roberts, 12 March 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

not making a comparison between the calotype as an apparently hand-worked art and the daguerreotype as an apparently machine-made art. He was rejecting the misleading blandness, characteristic of the tailor's fashions, which overlays the structure and the strength of nature. In commenting on George Combe's essay on painting and phrenology, Hill suggested a significant change in the text: 'by damning Prick-the-louse [derogatory term for a tailor] "with a spot" - and putting in his place a stalwart, blackbrowed smith.'¹¹ Elizabeth Rigby's contemporary admiration of the calotype (quoted in full below), is undiluted by her later disillusionment with photography. She planted it in an attack on modern German painting as a natural model, in opposition to paintings which displayed the same virtuoso but indiscriminate precision as the daguerreotype and the tailor's work. She refers to the depiction of Tasso in Carl Sohn's *The Two Leonoras*:

We see the hairs on his beard, the pattern on his vest, the fur of his doublet, the clocks of his stockings, the oranges above his head, the plants at his feet; but we see nothing of Tasso's own expression, or if we do, it is only that of a man who is naturally mortified at finding his clothes running away with all the attention due to himself.¹²

Elizabeth Rigby makes the same opposition in discussing William Newton's views of photography and his preference for the 'whole subject being a little *out of focus*, thereby giving a greater breadth of effect.' She wrote, 'As soon as could an accountant admit the morality of a *false* balance, or a seamstress the neatness of a puckered seam, as your merely scientific photographer admit the possible beauty of "a slight burr."'¹³

Hill's preference for the calotype follows the religious idea that truth has a certain confusion and that mystery is approached through imperfect understanding. This may be expressed from the Bible, in *The Epistle to the Corinthians*:

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am also known.¹⁴

¹¹. Hill to Combe, 27 August 1844, NLS Ms 7272 fo. 54. Lady Eastlake, 'Photography' (1857), republished in *Photography: Essays and Images. Illustrated Readings in the History of Photography*, London 1981, p. 91.

¹². Elizabeth Rigby, review of books on modern German painting, *Quarterly Review*, vol. 78 (March 1846): p. 333.

¹³. Elizabeth Rigby, Lady Eastlake, 'Photography' (1857), republished in *Photography: Essays and Images. Illustrated Readings in the History of Photography*, London 1981, p. 91.

¹⁴. I Corinthians, 13. 11.

The calotype was not a clear imitation of divine creation but a broad, human attempt – a dark window to the world. The best man could do was not meant to be a trivialising copy of the work of God. The relation between naturalism and a divine obscurity was made in 1843 and repeated in 1844, when the Academy exhibited David Wilkie's painting, *Pitlessie Fair*. The picture was praised because it presented: 'No invention, no creation by rule, but the breathing world of Fife seen as through a glass darkly.'¹⁵

Breadth or even inexactitude allowed the imagination to work, while clearly depicted vision could interfere with that imaginative process - overlaying understanding with bald fact. Edmund Burke had expressed the problem of approaching greatness, in these terms:

to see an object distinctly, and to perceive its bounds, is one and the same thing. A clear idea is therefore another name for a little idea.¹⁶

In the Sublime proposal, confusion itself aimed at the effect of grandeur, through limitation and drama: monochrome and emotional doubt. Horace provided a model for this in his praise of the beginning of the *Odyssey*:

It isn't a flash and then smoke that he plans to give us,
But light out of the smoke, so that after that
He may draw from his stores striking and wonderful tales.¹⁷

Hugh Miller introduced his friend, the hopeful painter William Ross, to a real demonstration of this:

I taught him, too, to light fires after nightfall in the caves, that we might watch the effects of the strong lights and deep shadows in scenes so wild; and I still vividly remember the delight he experienced, when, after kindling up in the day-time a strong blaze at the mouth of the Doocot Cave, which filled the recess within with smoke, we forced our way inwards through the cloud, to mark the appearance of the sea and the opposite land, seen through a medium so dense, and saw, on turning round, the landscape strangely enwrapped "in the dun hues of earthquake and eclipse."¹⁸

Hill's teacher, Adam Anderson, inscribed on the walls of the splendid gas works he designed for the city of Perth the punning inscription: 'non fumam [sic] ex fulgore sed ex fumo dare lucum' (roughly speaking, 'not smoke from flame but light from

¹⁵. The painting was exhibited in the RSA with a long quotation from the *Quarterly Review* (September 1843) in the catalogue.

¹⁶. In giving a preference to the obscurity of poetry over the clarity of painting. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, with an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste*, London 1823, p. 83.

¹⁷. 'The Art of Poetry,' *The Collected Works of Horace*, trans. Lord Dunsany and Michael Oakley, London 1961, p. 292.

smoke/fumes').¹⁹ This extends the idea of obscurity as a positive source of enlightenment, which might lead to a readiness to think beyond light and dark as opposites into a sense of one as potentially productive of the other; the thinking necessary to an appreciation of the photographic negative. It was not an easy appreciation; for many people the appearance of the photographic negative was disconcerting. Samuel Morse, for example, had experimented with the idea of photography before the announcement of the daguerreotype, but had abandoned his trials on achieving the negative image: 'Finding that light produced dark and dark light, I presumed the production of a true image to be impractical, and gave up the attempt.'²⁰

Between the Picturesque and the Romantic, there are further sites for consideration of the calotype. Both ideas were generalised and used to define whole areas of practice – often contradictory. The lesser ambition of the picturesque, with its occasional dislocation from the ideal, was expressed by the Rev William Gilpin, in reference to such characters as roughness and irregularity. John Brown's appreciation of the calotype was written in these terms:

True it is, that of imagination and true ideality they can have none, - the sun has none to give; but the painter can by his arrangements make them picturesque. The meaning of which is, that the spectator may, if it is in him, make pictures out of them; and in this sense they are invaluable to the artist as suggestive, and as a fine discipline for the eye. They have all the modesty and all the infinite variety of nature, and, to a man with a shaping spirit, are the very stuff from which to body forth his own thoughts.²¹

Elizabeth Rigby disliked the German painters because they had divorced the Romantic idea from the concept of the wild and fantastic in the chivalric romances of the Middle Ages. Far from leaving the mind free to speculate or dream, they filled it with detail. In her terms, the calotypes, 'broad and true,' left the mind able to attempt that dream. In the 1830s, James Nasmyth defined his own taste for the Gothic: 'I am your mere goth who can see no beauty but in a noble and yet true representation of nature in her best moods either quiet or excited.'²² When writing of the calotypes, he said: 'it is nature reduced to an artistical standard and abounding in the most noble

¹⁸. Hugh Miller, *My Schools and Schoolmasters*, Edinburgh 1852, pp. 171-2.

¹⁹. Kenneth J. Cameron, *The Schoolmaster Engineer*, Dundee 1988, p. 22.

²⁰. Quoted in Beaumont Newhall, *The Daguerreotype in America*, 3rd revised ed., New York 1976, p. 16.

²¹. John Brown, review of the RSA exhibition, *The Witness* (22 April 1846).

²². Nasmyth to Hill, 5 August 1835, ROE.

suggestion.²³ Such verbal echoes underlay and exaggerated the rhetorical opposition of the daguerreotype and the calotype and made the latter particularly attractive to many of the artists of the day.

Resemblance: painting and graphics

In the examination of Hill and Adamson's calotypes, much of the criticism connects with art practice. The importance of breadth in painting is expressed by Joshua Reynolds in his *Discourses*, when discussing Titian:

The excellence of portrait painting, and we may add, even the likeness, the character, and countenance ... depend more upon the general effect produced by the painter, than on the exact expression of the peculiarities, or minute discrimination of the parts.²⁴

Another painter Reynolds admired for his generality was Rembrandt. He wrote: 'Rembrandt's manner is absolute unity.'²⁵ Whilst not seeing him as an 'elevated' painter, Reynolds approved of his breadth of manner:

This effect is produced by melting and losing the shadows in a ground still darker than those shadows; whereas that relief [i.e. the illusion of three dimensions generated by exaggerated distinction] is produced by opposing and separating the ground from the figure, either by light, or shadow, or colour.²⁶

The reference to Rembrandt, in the early discussions of photography, occasionally relied on an uncritical and sometimes unsympathetic idea of Rembrandt's work. The logic of the comparison was simply his strong, broadly-massed use of light and dark, and those calotypes which employ an exaggerated density of light and shadow would emphasise the reference. Rembrandt was also associated with the kind of direct naturalism which photography might be regarded as inheriting. It was Rembrandt's naturalism which Clarkson Stanfield enthusiastically rejected when Hill sent him a set of the Newhaven photographs. He wrote: 'I sat up till nearly three o'clock looking over them. They are indeed most wonderful, and I would rather have a set of them than the finest Rembrandts I ever saw.'²⁷ Presumably, Stanfield felt that Hill and

²³. Nasmyth to Hill, 30 April 1845, ROE.

²⁴. Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy*, intro. Roger Fry, London, 1905, p. 308.

²⁵. Ibid., p. 230.

²⁶. Ibid., p. 247.

²⁷. Quoted in John M. Gray, 'The Early History of Photography' in Andrew Elliot, *Calotypes by D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson*, Edinburgh 1928, p. 6.

Adamson's view of the fishermen and women assorted better with an elevated concept of working life than did Rembrandt's.

People were most familiar with Rembrandt's work through his etchings. Hill had tried etching and would have known the blurring of the acid edge, which in Rembrandt's hands was used to such astonishing effect in achieving animation and intimacy. While the movement suggested in line could not be transferred directly to the calotype, the sense of blurring – the equivalent of the burr of etching – was partly inherent and was sometimes deliberately enhanced by Hill (see below). The relation of the calotype to graphic processes is capable of extensive reference and clearly underlies the satisfaction Hill felt in the results. The experience of printing, in itself, is a practical component in the understanding and appreciation of the negative image. It may reasonably be proposed that Hill's direct experience of the reprographic processes enabled him to visualise the positive in the reversal of the negative, without having to learn a new visual language.²⁸ His first venture as an artist was his set of lithographs of Perthshire scenery (see Chapter two), and he sustained an interest in the process. The new art of lithography was potentially a direct creative process like the etching, because the artist could draw freehand on the stone. The print resembled chalk drawing and had something of the same character and arbitrary interference in handling that was to be found later in the calotype. Hill's taste for this character in printmaking was affirmed in 1856, when he defended Robert Macpherson's photolithographs against James Ross's opinion that 'smooth stone would ... be better adapted for fine subjects.' He said: 'There could be no greater roughness than that seen in a fine chalk drawing, which was far from objectionable.'²⁹

There is a further point in the making of lithographs, which may have had some significance to the partnership. While etching might be drawn and completed by the artist, the lithograph generally required distinct professional assistance in the printing:

He [the artist] may supervise, but if he wants the full range of tone in his drawing to be brought out he needs expert aid. This fact distinguishes lithography from etching ... And fundamentally affects the whole history of the medium. It is perhaps as appropriate to write a history of lithography in

²⁸. Larry Schaaf proposes that Talbot was able to cope with the concept, in contradistinction to Samuel Morse, because he was 'not shackled by a past body of artistic endeavors and was able to accept immediately a whole new type of visual representation.' He may possibly have been familiar with the idea through his mother's practice of lithography. See Larry J. Schaaf, *The Photographic Art of William Henry Fox Talbot*, Princeton 2000, pp. 12 and 15.

²⁹. At a meeting of the Photographic Society of Scotland in December 1856, reported in *Photographic Notes*, vol. 1 (1857); p. 8.

terms of the major lithographic printing establishments as in terms of the artists.³⁰

This would have given Hill a respect for such distinct expertise, which extended and enhanced his own work, in contrast to the engraved book illustrations from his paintings which were translations with a separate and often reductive existence. Lithographic practice may therefore have provided Hill with a working model for the calotype partnership.

There are two further associations between photography and lithography, which are worth noting. One of the first descriptions of lithography includes a passage, which is remarkably like an account of the direct printing out of the calotype in sunshine:

The first state of a drawing is like the dead coloring of a painting. The subsequent touches on the drawing bring it up to life like the second and third paintings of a picture, which improve the lights, strengthen the shadows, and make out local character. Indeed, it is a good plan to imagine that you are at first drawing with so little light that the contours of the masses can only be defined: then suppose a little more light, which exhibits them more in detail; and lastly, that sufficient quantity of light which makes every thing properly obvious.³¹

The facility of this new medium enabled a freer manner within the laborious tradition of printmaking. It was exploited for commercial purposes, and drew the same accusations of crude populism subsequently attached to photography. There is a useful example of this, published in March 1839, where the attack on the lithograph leads to a favourable discussion of photography and finishes in praise of engraving:

[Engraving's] illegitimate sister, Lithography, sets up her claim, and by means of cheap publications, calls in the masses, who naturally prefer the inferior article; and here commences the democracy of art ... Great, certainly, are the powers of lithography, but it affords a fearful facility of setting forth abundant mediocrity, and engendering bad taste, and ultimately disgust.³²

The resemblance between the calotype, drawing and printmaking is commented on by critics of great and lesser knowledge. John Miller Gray's article on the early

³⁰. Antony Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking. An introduction to the history and techniques*, 2nd ed., London 1996, p. 102.

³¹. Henry Banks, *Lithography; or the Art of Making Drawings on Stone*, Bath 1813, facsimile reprint, London 1976, p. 22. This was the first independent work on lithography published in English. It was used in the article on lithography in the *Edinburgh Encyclopaedia*, ed. David Brewster, vol. 13, 1830, pp. 44-7.

³². Anon, 'New Discovery - Engraving, and Burnet's Cartoons,' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol. 45 (March 1839): p. 383.

history of photography culminates in a discussion of this resemblance, centring on colour:

Like the *Liber Studiorum* plates of Turner, the Calotypes were printed in varying shades of sepia-brown, ranging from a cool to a rich ruddy tone, and sometimes passing into the unpleasant "foxy" redness, which is sufficiently well known to the collector of the *Liber* ... the best prints are those of a rich brown, delicate and rosy in the light parts, and with a pleasant warmth carried through even the deepest shadows.³³

Hugh Miller, after his contact with the first work of the partnership, spoke of it in terms of drawing:

The connoisseur unacquainted with the results of the recent discovery, would decide, if shown a set of photographic impressions, that he had before him the carefully finished drawings in sepia of some great master.

The stronger lights, as in sketches done in this colour, present merely the white ground of the paper; a tinge of soft warm brown indicates the lights of lower tone; a deeper and still deeper tinge succeeds, shading by scarce perceptible degrees through all the various gradations, until the darker shades concentrate into an opaque and dingy umber, that almost rivals black in its intensity.³⁴

The accomplished amateur watercolourist, John Harden, encountered Hill and Adamson's work in November 1843, and wrote with immense enthusiasm to his daughter, describing the calotypes as:

faithfully given & in a sepia like drawing style of the most perfect truth - lovely & veritable ... the pictures produced are as Rembrandt's but improved so like his style & the oldest & finest masters that doubtless a great progress in Portrait painting & effect must be the consequence.³⁵

Harden was used to sketching in monochrome - using the reduced palette of black, brown and white. He acquired and copied two of the Newhaven calotypes in watercolour and his transcription is notably successful - this was neither inevitable nor easy, partly because the apparent monochrome of the calotype is a chemical reaction of some subtlety.³⁶

The calotype's generality gave it an affinity with the preparatory sketch for painting, and Hill began by using it for this purpose. In the earliest photographs taken for the Disruption Picture, the backgrounds and the furniture are arbitrary and the

³³. Gray (as in n. 6), p. 6.

³⁴. Hugh Miller, 'The Calotype,' *The Witness* (12 July 1843).

³⁵. Quoted in Daphne Foskett, *John Harden of Brathay Hall 1772-1847*, Kendal 1974, p. 52.

³⁶. One of Harden's sketches is illustrated in Sara Stevenson, *Hill and Adamson's 'Fishermen and Women of the Firth of Forth.'* Edinburgh 1992, p. 42.

supports may be visible (Fig. 26). The later calotypes are sketches in a different sense. They are both exploratory and finished; they complete the thought which prompted them. The importance of this idea may be illustrated in an analogy with current practice in drawing. The Sketching Society, founded in 1808 in London, was set up to encourage the art. The members attended for two-hour drawing sessions and generally drew on white paper, using sepia ink, burnt sienna, India ink and lamp black. The connection with the calotype is stronger than the physical resemblance. These sketches were consciously designed within a time limit to achieve immediacy and coherence. J. Hogarth, who published photolithographic reproductions of the Society's work in 1858, commented on their 'unity of thought and vigour of execution which is often wanting in the more finished production.'³⁷ The rapid sketch was admired by John Ruskin, in the same terms, as, 'the invaluable blotted five minute works which record the unity of some single and magnificent impressions.'³⁸ Such drawings expressed the idea of temporal containment or capture, which became the particular province of photography.

The camera's aesthetic

It is of particular importance that we have, in D. O. Hill, an artist who lets us see what the camera may have been to aesthetic vision prior to 1839. Whilst retrospective analysis of the previous centuries of portrait and figure painting, from a study of Hill and Adamson's calotypes, is a historical anachronism, the idea deserves a little consideration. The resemblance between their portraits and the portraits of Raeburn or Reynolds cannot be explained too easily. Hill did not imitate the pose or composition of their paintings; but, nevertheless, a calotype like *Samuel Aitken* (Fig. 74) has the look of a Raeburn. The great excitement of the artists who approved of their calotypes was expressed in terms of past painters and sculptors. Hill reported: '[William] Etty saw in them revivals of Rembrandt, Titian and Spagnoletto.'³⁹ Benjamin Robert

³⁷. Quoted in Pieter van der Merwe, *The Spectacular Career of Clarkson Stanfield 1793-1867*, exhibition catalogue, Tyne and Wear County Museums 1979, p. 101.

³⁸. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 1, *The Works of John Ruskin*, vol. 3, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, London 1903, p. 223. Ruskin was lamenting the lack of such sketches in David Roberts's views in the Holy Land (see Chapter seven).

³⁹. Hill to Roberts, 26 February 1845, NLS microfilm 381. Etty's reference to Spagnoletto may derive from Count Algarotti's admiration of his use of the camera: 'Everyone knows of what service it has been to Spagnoletto of Bologna, some of whose pictures have a grand and most wonderful effect.' Quoted by Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography*, London 1968, p. 4.

Haydon wrote: 'I am convinced that Calotype is the greatest thing for Art, since the Elgin Marbles.'⁴⁰

Hugh Miller and Elizabeth Rigby both discuss the photographs in relation to painting. They comment not simply on the resemblance but declare that the calotypes proved the truth of earlier painters. Elizabeth Rigby used the calotypes to conjure up a roll call of Netherlandish, Spanish and British painters in opposition to the German painters of her review. It reads:

One standard, however, there does exist, and one from which there is no appeal, for it rests upon demonstration, and not upon opinion. This is to be found in that wonderful source recently discovered - the only sure test for those artists who, professing to reflect Nature in their works, can by Nature herself only be judged. We mean the beautiful and wonderful Calotype drawings - so precious in every real artist's sight, not only for their own matchless truth of Nature, but as the triumphant proof of all to be most revered as truth in art. Every painter, high or low, to whom Nature has ever revealed herself, here finds his justification. Let Mr Hill apply the Calotype instrument to a simple manly head in a commanding position, it creates a Sir Joshua, - give it an old face wrinkled with age, it returns us a Rembrandt, - summon three or four barelegged urchins, we see Murillo's beggar boys, - place before it a group of Newhaven fishermen, we have Teniers' Dutch Boors, or Ostade's Village Alehouse, - or against a crumbling brick wall, and Peter Le Hooghe lies mezzotinted before us. Take it to tangled sylvan landscapes, it presents us with a Hobbema, a Gainsborough, or even, what we had not sufficiently prized before, a Constable - give it fretted spires and leafy banks, distant towns and glittering streams, playful shadows and struggling lights, sunny storms and watery beams - and give it lastly, the very motes dancing in the air before them all - and the detractors of Turner lick the dust - the loftiest eulogy of Mr. Ruskin is justified. Every truth that art and genius has yet succeeded in seizing here finds its prototype. Every painter, high or low, to whom Nature has ever revealed herself, here finds his justification.⁴¹

This resemblance excited both painters and sophisticated critics. The calotypes 'proved the truth' of earlier work; they endorsed the perceptions of great artists of the past. Hugh Miller wrote:

one cannot avoid being struck by the silent but impressive eulogium which nature pronounces, through their agency, on the works of the more eminent masters ... there is an eye of fresh observation required - that ability of continuous attention to surrounding phenomena which only superior men

⁴⁰. Haydon to Hill, 13 April 1846, NLS Acc 11782. Haydon said of the Elgin marbles, 'I felt ... that they would overturn the false beau-ideal, where nature was nothing, and would establish the true beau-ideal, of which nature alone is the basis ... I knew that they would at last rouse the art of Europe from its slumber in the darkness.' *The Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter*, ed. and compiled by Tom Taylor, London 1853, p. 85.

⁴¹. Rigby (as in n. 12): p. 338.

possess; and doubtless to this eye of fresh observation, this ability of continuous attention, the masters owed much of their truth and their power.⁴²

Miller was particularly struck with a resemblance between the calotype portraits and mezzotints after Reynolds:

We have a folio volume of engravings from his pictures before us; and when, placing side by side with the prints the sketches in brown, we remark the striking similarity of style that prevails between them, we feel more strongly than at perhaps any former period, that the friend of Johnson and of Burke must have been a consummate master of his art.⁴³

He also commented on a similar resemblance to works by Raeburn:

There is the same broad freedom of touch; no nice miniature stipplings, as if laid in by the point of a needle - no sharp-edged strokes; all, is solid, massy, broad; more distinct at a distance than when viewed near at hand. The arrangement of the lights and shadows seems rather the result of happy haste, in which half the effect was produced by design, half by accident, than of great labour and care; and yet how exquisitely true the general aspect! Every stroke tells, and serves, as in the portraits of Raeburn, to do more than relieve the features; it serves also to indicate the prevailing mood and predominant power to the mind.⁴⁴

Haydon made a note of painters whose work he admired as models of breadth, in his diary in 1846:

The artists of the world are divided into Touchers and Polishers. The Touchers - Michaelangelo, Raffaele in his cartoons, Titian, Bartolomeo, Giorgione, Tintoretto, Veronese, Rubens, Velasquez, David Teniers, Rembrandt, Reynolds, Wilson, Wilkie, Gainsborough, Vandyke, - are the great men who had discovered the optical principles of imitating nature to convey thought.⁴⁵

This divides the world of painting into the experts in surface polish and the artists who could express thought through a greater generality of treatment. For Haydon, the immediacy of the 'touch,' or rough sketch, connected to optical principles. His practical awareness of the lens derived from his own short-sightedness; he wore three pairs of glasses when painting, achieving four different focal lengths to his vision. He also used a mirror, to check on the progress of a painting for 'faults in balance and drawing.'⁴⁶ He was, therefore, aware of the intriguing shifts in focus and appearance

⁴². Miller (as in n. 34).

⁴³. Miller (as in n. 34).

⁴⁴. Miller (as in n. 34).

⁴⁵. Journal entry, 29 January 1846, quoted in Haydon (as in n. 40), vol. 3, p. 300. Haydon was in Edinburgh from 20 February to 13 March 1846, lecturing on Fuseli and Wilkie. Hill may have given him a group of the calotypes on this occasion.

⁴⁶. Eric George, *The Life and Death of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter, 1786-1846*,

that this assistance would give him. Such a practice may well have given him an interest in the camera image.

The fascinating and contentious subject of the camera's use, before the invention of photography, has been argued at length.⁴⁷ The art historical disputes it has generated are evidence of the difficulty of confirming even its straightforward practical application. This derives partly from an anxiety to protect the authority of the artist and the inspirational character of art. But it is presumably also, and far more interestingly, because the response of the painters is not obvious.

Leonardo da Vinci, in his notes on optics, made the connection between the camera and painting. He wrote that the pictures made by light in a dark room, 'will actually seem painted on the paper.'⁴⁸ The painters needed to attain a vocabulary of nature, an intelligible currency, without descending into mannerism. The camera was a tool in the pursuit of this knowledge, which was to grow in usefulness when eighteenth-century improvements in lens making enabled smaller, portable models.

Joshua Reynolds expressed a low opinion of the camera image, in discussing landscapes by Titian and Rubens:

If we suppose a view of nature represented with all the truth of the *camera obscura*, and the same scene represented by a great artist, how little and mean will the one appear in comparison of the other, where no superiority is supposed from the choice of subject.⁴⁹

Influenced by this, John Hammond has summed up Reynolds's interest in the camera, by saying: 'It is unlikely that Reynolds would have used one for a painting.' However, Reynolds owned a camera obscura.⁵⁰ There is an anecdote, which suggests that Reynolds was ready to work with a mediated view of his sitters. The Duchess of Rutland told Francis Grant of her experience:

I found a large canvas at one end of the room, and at the other a large looking-glass, and Sir Joshua placed me beside the canvas, so that we were both opposite the glass. I was surprised to see him go up to the glass and attentively look at my face in it. Then, with his back still towards me, he began carefully

Oxford 1967, p. 54.

⁴⁷. For a positive view, see Heinrich Schwartz, *Art and Photography: Forerunners and Influences*, ed. William E. Parker, Rochester 1985; Peter Galassi, *Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography*, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Modern Art, New York 1981.

⁴⁸. Edward MacCurdy, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, vol. 1, London 1938, p. 243.

⁴⁹. Reynolds (as in n. 24), p. 360.

⁵⁰. John H. Hammond, *The Camera Obscura: A Chronicle*, Bristol 1981, p. 47. Reynolds's camera, which is in the Science Museum, London, is illustrated on p. 48.

mixing some paint on his palette; and, after several trials, he turned round, rushed up to the canvas and began to paint at a great rate.⁵¹

The distance of the mirror from the subject suggests that Reynolds was seeing a surprisingly small image. He liked to work ‘at the greatest possible distance’ from the subject.⁵² This, like the camera image, gave him a significantly reduced view. It also agrees with his advice to ‘look at the object ... with your eyelids half closed, which gives breadth to the object, and subdues all the little unimportant parts.’⁵³ His eyelashes would act as a blurring filter, reducing clarity and colour range, and the muscular contraction would change the length of the eye’s focus. Presumably, Reynolds was long-sighted, but this means that he, like Haydon, was happy to see in different ways. Between his half-closed eyes and Haydon’s glasses, there is an interest in optical variation, which recognised that individual vision could be assisted and changed. Such exploratory interest would have encompassed the camera image as a matter of course.

Extensive use of the camera, before the invention of photography, may be proposed especially in relation to the later eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century concentration on nature. Presumably, sophisticated painters would have used it for observation rather than for copying. The difficulty of identifying this indirect and thoughtful use of the camera may well militate against the argument. The resistance to the idea is very reasonable, partly because the identification of paintings made with the camera depends on appearance, and even on this ground there are reasonable doubts. The familiar dispute over Canaletto’s painting is fuelled by the apparent ease of judging his perspective, which is drawn from a planned city on level islands. However, a painter standing in St Mark’s Square in Venice stands in a grand architectural demonstration of perspective; a place where the aid of a camera should be unnecessary. It may indeed be that the British obsession with optical equipment, caricatured by Carl Johan Lindstrom in the late 1820s (Fig. 75), was driven by the opposite conditions of the eccentric British landscape, exacerbated by local weather conditions.⁵⁴

⁵¹. F. M. Redgrave, *Richard Redgrave: A Memoir Compiled from his Diary*, London 1891, p. 295-6.

⁵². Richard Wendorf, *Sir Joshua Reynolds, The Painter in Society*, London 1996, p. 236.

⁵³. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 117.

⁵⁴. Four of Lindstrom’s caricatures, of French, German, Italian and British methods of painting, are illustrated in Philip Conisbee, Sarah Faunce and Jeremy Strick, *In the Light of Italy: Corot and Early Open-Air Painting*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Art, Washington 1996, pp. 18-19.

It is comparatively easy to comprehend the use of the camera as a method of capturing architecture and the formalities of linear perspective. It is more difficult to examine the trickier and more subjective areas of light and atmosphere. This subtler use of the camera in painting may be defined in the terms Martin Kemp uses for his analysis of Vermeer's painting: 'His exquisitely refined grading of simple and compound shadows in response to different kinds of direct and diffuse illumination is obviously the result of many hours of purposeful looking.'⁵⁵

Part of the difficulty we have, as critics of either paintings or photographs in understanding the artists' use of the camera, is that the image was not static – shadows, like people, move. In 1569, Daniele Barbaro described his improved camera, as offering the delight of 'clouds, the rippling of water, birds flying.'⁵⁶ There was more to be seen passing in front of the lens, than could be readily transcribed. The camera's glowing, moving image possessed a startling charm; even after viewing a dramatic reality, an audience could be seduced by the camera translation. In 1818 the geologist, Charles Lyell, described a visit to the Castle of Lauffen, from which visitors had a magnificent view of the Fall of the Rhine, which Lyell noted in one sentence. When they had seen the reality, they were shown a camera version:

Afterwards, they darkened the room, and threw a beautiful landscape of the Fall on a white piece of canvas suspended from the ceiling. It was a complete picture, with the addition of motion. The water tumbling over, the clouds of foam, and the agitation of the water in the large basin below appeared beautiful on this flat surface.⁵⁷

Aids like the camera concentrated the mind: 'in the camera obscura, the visual faculty is brought wholly to bear upon the object before it.'⁵⁸ Its use called attention to the virtues and fascination of the incidental, which might correct the gloss of

⁵⁵. Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art: Optical themes from Brunelleschi to Seurat*, New Haven and London 1990, p.193.

⁵⁶. Daniele Barbaro, *La Pratica della Perspettiva*, quoted in *ibid*, p. 190.

⁵⁷. Journal entry, 20 July 1818, quoted in K. M. Lyell, *Life, Letters and Journals of Sir Charles Lyell*, vol. 1, London 1881, pp. 78-9. Secondary methods of viewing dramatic reality may also have been designed for people too feeble to cope with the terrors of the Sublime. D. G. Goyder, on viewing the Falls of Clyde in the 1820s, reported: 'They were the first falls I had ever beheld, except as delineated in books, but I was awe-stricken by them, and began to turn dizzy, but my friend suddenly pushed me into a little room, where there were mirrors so arranged as to present all the grandeur of the scene without feeling any danger. I was told this room had been constructed at considerable expense in order to enable the nervous and timid to behold the magnificence of the falls without danger, several tragical occurrences having taken place previously.' *My Battle for Life. The Autobiography of a Phrenologist*, London 1857, p. 189.

⁵⁸. Count Francesco Algarotti, *Essay on Painting* (1764), quoted in Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography*, London 1968, p. 4

mannerism, imitation and familiar assumption. Peter Galassi has identified a particular movement in oil painting as ‘pre-photographic.’⁵⁹ The paintings, which are generally small sketches, may be defined as a search for nature in terms of controlled accident. One simple way of achieving this lay in the examination of an arbitrarily framed area of sight, the equivalent of a camera’s framing but often just a view from a window. Thomas Jones’s Italian sketches, taken from rooftops and windows in the 1780s, are a formidable case of the originality this might offer. In Lawrence Gowing’s critique: ‘They are gentle and precise and they illustrate nothing. They simply *are*.’⁶⁰ Similarly, the camera could help to simplify visual experience. Moreover, if the reductive or focussing devices did no more, they would presumably have had the advantage of offering the painters a kind of unified vision – a comprehensible and common reduction, which could be looked at and discussed for what it was. That Charles Lyell should find a camera image thrown on canvas beautiful is not just a testament to the authority of canvas, it is a comment on the contemporary manner of understanding beauty.

In general, discussions of the relation between nature and art, which may have led to intelligent photography, have concentrated on landscape painting. Examining a person through the pre-photographic camera is not such a familiar idea. This is presumably partly because the realism of the portrait, despite the strain of idealism required, was a more comfortable proposal. However much the painters might grumble against ‘mere face-painting,’ the relation with the customer was comparatively structured; ideality was limited by the need for recognition. Portraiture was often a personal rather than a public performance. Reynolds owned a camera. Raeburn’s familiarity with the camera image is likely. He was both a friend and neighbour of Alexander Nasmyth who is known, from annotated drawings, to have made use of the camera in his youth and old age – significantly, when he was young he used it to sketch classical sculpture, in the 1820s he used it to sketch evening clouds.⁶¹ Raeburn is known to have tried Francis Chantrey’s camera lucida, in 1819.⁶²

⁵⁹. Galassi (as in n. 47). For further examples, see Conisbee (as in n. 54).

⁶⁰. Lawrence Gowing, *The Originality of Thomas Jones*, London 1985, p. 52.

⁶¹. See A. D. Morrison-Low and A. D. C. Simpson, ‘A New Dimension: A Context for Photography before 1860,’ *Light from the Dark Room*, exhibition catalogue, National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh 1994, pp. 15-28. In 1835, Maria Short opened a Popular Observatory on Calton Hill, with equipment including ‘the Great Telescope,’ a camera obscura and a camera lucida. The list of patrons includes James Skene and Alexander Nasmyth, as well as the photographic inventor, Mungo Ponton. See Veronica Wallace, ‘Maria Obscura,’ *Edinburgh Review*, vol. 88 (1992):

Such familiarity is also suggested in a comment by the landscape painter, Joseph Farington, in 1801:

Some of Mr. Raeburn's portraits have an uncommonly true appearance of Nature and are painted with much firmness, - but there is great inequality in his works. - That which strikes the eye is a kind of Camera Obscura effect, and from those pictures which seem to be his best, I shd. conclude He has looked very much at Nature, reflected in the Camera.⁶³

Farington owned and used a camera, so this is an informed comment. Raeburn's paintings are often notable for their specific use of light, angled from a particular direction and suggesting a particular time of day, even of year. However, in common with the generality of painters, Raeburn had a north-facing studio. His house in York Place in Edinburgh incorporated a tall room with a window so large that it is cut into the ceiling. He increased the light further by angling the stone surround of the window, and controlled it with a set of shutters, which could block it out and give it a positive direction. By adding what he had observed of sunlight to what he could control of north light, Raeburn achieved the appearance of portraits painted in the rapid shift of the sun. There are no sketches which show Raeburn observing sunlight or its colours, so it may be that he observed without making physical notes: it may also be that he observed such effects through a camera.

The implications of such a study are not simple, but it may be proposed that a way of seeing optically, whether through glasses, mirrors or cameras, was familiar and interesting for many artists from the Renaissance to the contemporaries of D. O. Hill. Its use may not be easy to identify, because the resemblance was designedly natural and the artists' visual knowledge would have enabled them to correct the camera's obvious distortions.⁶⁴ However, the ready acceptance of the aesthetic of Hill and Adamson's calotypes amongst artists and critics and Hill's almost immediate mastery of the calotype suggests that the camera may well have been a common component of sophisticated thinking and practice in art.

pp. 101-9.

⁶². His drawing is illustrated in Morrison-Low and Simpson (as in n. 61), p. 25.

⁶³. 23 September 1801, *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, ed. Kenneth Garlick and Angus MacIntyre, vol. 5, New Haven and London, 1979, p. 1631.

⁶⁴. This view has recently been championed by David Hockney. See Lawrence Weschler, 'The Looking Glass,' *The New Yorker* (31 January 2000): pp. 65-75.

The Hill and Adamson partnership: practical control of the calotype

In London, early in 1845, David Roberts showed the calotypes to the influential Graphic Society and to the guests of the Marquis of Northampton. The response from these two critical centres of influence was enthusiastic. Hill immediately devised an ambitious plan to move into the English field and take an album of notable English portraits. He wrote of this plan to Roberts:

You ask, "Can it be kept secret." I can only say that Adamson says the manipulation is very liable to go wrong in the hands of most people - that tho' several have now and then produced a good specimen - they find it difficult to succeed often - and the arrangement of the picture is as much an effort of the artist as if he was in reality going to paint it ... in the common acceptation of the word it cannot be called secret - tho Adamson thinks he knows some things others do not.

My connection with the art has been purely that of an artist. I know not the process though it is done under my nose continually and I believe I never will. Until I took it up the best things I saw – were, though chemically fine – artistically nothing.⁶⁵

The proposal Hill is making here is ambitious. Adamson's enthusiasm is expressed obliquely; the letter was rendered nearly unreadable by Adamson damping the letter and putting it through the press to make a copy, 'which made such a mess of the original, that my always illegible hand, was nearly if not wholly obliterated. I fear in truth that it would defy your intelligence to make out.'⁶⁶ It is a measure of their mutual enthusiasm that Hill posted this important letter in such a condition. Hill is establishing Robert Adamson's authority against hypothetical competition. Under these circumstances, Adamson's professional reticence is an advantage, but neither man made it clear just what he was doing, and we can so far only assemble a few ideas of their technical or practical sophistication.

Hill refers to Adamson's steady industry. Robert and John Adamson had cracked the problem of the fickle reaction of the chemicals and paper so that Adamson's success rate was impressively consistent. He understood the difficult chemistry of the process and knew how to control it. This should not be underestimated as an achievement. Robert Hunt published an article in 1855, when Prince Albert had set up a committee to investigate the problem of photographic fading, in which he singled out Adamson's work for praise. In his opinion a properly prepared photograph would not fade. Hunt had exposed photographs:

⁶⁵. Hill to Roberts, 12 March 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

to the full influence of sunshine, and under the effects, at one period, of the humid and saline atmosphere of Plymouth and Falmouth, and subsequently to that of the metropolis, a similar set being preserved in portfolios. In some examples the pictures rapidly disappeared, in others they resisted all the influences of light and moisture for years ... Some of Mr. Talbot's, of Mr. Owen's earliest works, of Hill and Adamson's pictures made in 1844, and a few others, however, now before me, have endured full exposure for many years, without any change in their original degrees of intensity.⁶⁷

The paper used for the calotypes was also a concern of controlled and technical interest. Almost without exception, they used Whatman Turkey Mill, the watercolour paper favoured by Turner: a strong, consistent and well-made paper, with a heavy gelatine size for smoothness, combined with a slight nap or tooth, to give the small amount of friction which would facilitate the adhesion of ink, paint and photographic chemicals.⁶⁸ It was excellent paper and it had character.

When the Adamsons sent their first successful album of photographs to Talbot, in November 1842, the pictures were all small. They then acquired either one adaptable or two new cameras for Robert Adamson's calotype business in Edinburgh.⁶⁹ This enabled them to take larger sizes of picture, roughly five by four inches and eight by six and a half. Between the initial contract of partnership in June 1843 and spring 1844, Hill and Adamson probably acquired a new portrait lens. This, which survives, has been defined as an 'unsymmetrical doublet lens, 17 inch focal length, maximum aperture f/10.'⁷⁰ Their equipment may all have come from the Edinburgh optician, Thomas Davidson.⁷¹ David Brewster had recommended his cameras to Talbot and possibly also to Calvert Jones, who wrote, in May 1842, of a camera 'by Davidson of

⁶⁶. Hill to Roberts, 14 March 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

⁶⁷. Robert Hunt, 'On the Fading of Photographic Pictures,' *The Art Journal*, new series, vol. 1 (1855): p. 210.

⁶⁸. Peter Bower, *Turner's Papers. A Study of the Manufacture, Selection and Use of his Drawing Papers 1787-1820*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, London 1990, pp. 64 and 43.

⁶⁹. On 12 June 1843, Thomas Davidson delivered a talk to the Royal Scottish Society of Arts on a compound achromatic camera. 'A number of very beautiful specimens of Daguerreotype and of Calotype, taken by Major Playfair and by Mr Adamson, by means of this Camera, both portrait and landscape, were exhibited.' Report in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* (19 June 1843).

⁷⁰. Hill may have bought this lens, which was owned by his wife after his death. It passed to J. T. Cochrane and J. Craig Annan and is now in the collection of the Royal Photographic Society, see Katherine Michaelson, *A Centenary Exhibition of the Work of David Octavius Hill 1802-1870 and Robert Adamson 1821-1848*, exhibition catalogue, Scottish Arts Council, Edinburgh 1970, no. 295.

⁷¹. See Thomas Davidson, *The art of Daguerreotyping, with the improvements of the process and apparatus*, Edinburgh 1841; John Nichol, 'Reminiscences of Thomas Davidson, a Weaver Lad,' *British Journal of Photography*, vol. 26 (1879): p. 391 and 'Martyr of Science,' *Sir David Brewster 1781-1868*, ed. A. D. Morrison-Low and J. R. R. Christie Edinburgh 1984, pp. 94-5.

Edinburgh whose modifications are certainly improvements on Daguerre's system.⁷² Jones mentioned Davidson again in 1845, as supplying: 'capital lenses ... which arrange themselves for all sizes of paper.'⁷³ Davidson gave an account of two projects involving his equipment in a letter, headed 'The Solar Camera,' to the *Photographic Journal* in 1859:

It is now more than sixteen years since I assisted Messrs. Adamson & Hill, photographers, Edinburgh, in taking a few copies of magnified representations of minute objects by an achromatic solar microscope, which I had made for Mr. Octavius David Hill, Calton Stairs, Edinburgh ... The objects I adopted were transverse sections of wood, about 3/8" in diameter. The enlarged copies were, so far as I recollect, about 18" in diameter. The last time I saw the aforesaid magnified impressions, they were framed & hanging in James Bryson's shop, Princes Street, Edinburgh; & as regards patents, Mr Hill & Mr Adamson had arranged to lodge a *Caveat*, but the premature & lamented death of the latter prevented it.⁷⁴

If Davidson's recollection is correct, this was done at the beginning of the partnership. From his reference to Hill, as the one he made this microscope for, it may be that he is looking at old account books.⁷⁵ Taking photographs through a solar microscope was not a new idea; Talbot had done it before he perfected the calotype and it was demonstrated in Edinburgh by 'Mr Dunn of the Museum' in March 1839.⁷⁶ Davidson's letter was prompted by a discussion in the journal about 'Woodward's Solar Camera,' which was able to make enlarged portraits. Davidson comments, 'it is by no means entitled to a patent,' presumably because Hill and Adamson were working with a similar idea. The question of enlargement was also addressed in the second part of Davidson's letter:

Messrs Adamson and Hill ... had also a camera, about two feet square, fitted up for taking portraits as large as life; but the imperfections in it, & difficulty of preparing paper so large, were against it. I also made a speculum of 24" diameter & 30" focus, for the aforesaid, for taking smaller portraits, or to reflect light on the object; but that was never much used.

⁷². Jones to Talbot, 29 May 1841, FTM, LA 41-34.

⁷³. Jones to Talbot, 1 October 1845, FTM, LA 45-133. I am indebted to Michael Gray for these references.

⁷⁴. Letter to the Editor, *Photographic Journal*, vol. 6, no. 103 (1859): p. 264.

⁷⁵. From the way he begins by referring to 'Adamson & Hill,' it may be assumed that having known Adamson first he would not, as later writers did, have assigned actions or authority to Hill, which properly belonged to Adamson.

⁷⁶. Report of a paper by Andrew Fyfe, given on 27 March, 1839, *Proceedings of the Royal Scottish Society of Arts*, vol. 1 (1841): appendix, p. 33.

The purpose of the mirror was two-fold. It had only one surface rather than the two surfaces of the lens and was therefore less subject to imperfection, and the direct bounce of light should have taken faster exposures. The idea proved practical on a small scale with the Wolcott camera, patented in America. Thomas Davidson had described a mirror camera he had made, at a meeting of the Royal Scottish Society of Arts on 11 January 1841.⁷⁷ There is, however, some doubt whether this mirror could have been used to take such large photographs. The distinctive character of the photographs made with a mirror was explained by Joseph Lewis of Dublin, who employed a camera of this kind to take daguerreotypes:

The reflector was very quick compared with achromatic lenses (I should say at least three times quicker in exposure), and the portraits so obtained were far more plucky, had less of the objectionable metallic reflection, and consequently were more pleasing in appearance.⁷⁸

The potential speed of the mirror probably indicates a search for more rapid and accurate imagery. Probably the crucial technical development was achieving a faster exposure time: the few seconds, which would have justified both the risk of calotyping whole groups of restless children and the attempts at simulated action.

Hill sent pictures, measuring up to sixteen by fourteen inches, taken with the big camera, to the new Photographic Society of Scotland in 1856. He wrote that they were made:

when there were no other calotypes in existence a half of the same size. Considering the size - the period & that they were from an Edinburgh made camera - they may also possess an interest to a Scottish photographic society as enabling them to claim for Scotland an honorable priority in certain phases of the art.⁷⁹

Hill and Adamson were intending to enlarge the scale of the photographs so that they could compete with the grand engravings, currently being published by Alexander Hill. This would appear to be a parallel ambition, to produce photographs for splendid albums or to be hung on walls alongside paintings, as they did in Rock House (Fig. 76).

⁷⁷. NLS Acc 534/107.

⁷⁸. Joseph Lewis, 'Practical Notes and Suggestions on Various Processes,' *The Process Year Book*, ed. W. Gamble, vol. 3 (1897): p. 100. His mirror, made about 1846 by Messrs Chadburn of Liverpool, was ten inches in diameter, with a five inch focus. In the 1890s, the word 'plucky' meant strong. I am indebted to Michael Gray for this reference.

⁷⁹. Hill to Kinnear, 14 December 1856, RSA.

How far Hill and Adamson directed and altered the physical nature and appearance of the calotypes by technical means is difficult to assess, partly because the partnership was so brief, being largely confined to the lighter months of the three-year period from mid 1843 to 1846. Rapid development in their thinking may be proposed at the very beginning of the association, because there is a perceptible difference in depth of field and strength, both of detail and impact, between the first groups made for the Disruption Picture and later work. The initial idea of making studies for the painting was expanded to include finished results: portraits which would stand in their own right and would be sold singly or as a separate series.⁸⁰ The obvious distinction of these lies in the increased care in the construction and composition of the calotypes to avoid obtrusive detail and backgrounds.

We may assume that Hill's move into Rock House and the announcement of the six volumes of calotypes, in the spring of 1844, implies a new contract and a new drive to the partnership. According to Hill's will, he insured his life at this same time, which may have provided the financial backing for such a contract.

Hill's meticulous practical concern for the calotypes is reflected in his letter to John Scott of the London print publishers and dealers, Colnaghi, who were asked to assist in compiling and promoting the calotype albums. After detailing the binding, mounting, paper, lettering and layout of the album's title page, he apologised:

Pray excuse all this minuteness on a subject you may consider very unworthy of it - although 'tis one on which I feel somewhat warmly. I would like they should appear in their best attire in taking up their residence with you.⁸¹

The Hill and Adamson partnership: aesthetic practice

The calotype was a process severely subject to practical constraint. This means that Hill and Adamson's practice worked with and against constraints in achieving an aesthetic. The strength of the portraits was admired by the twentieth-century sculptor, James Pittendrigh MacGillivray:

[Hill] designed right up to the limit as a sculptor would do in designing and modelling a bas relief. He left no space to let, and he never seems to have relied on cutting or trimming for adjustment. The result, as compared with much in ordinary photography, is an obvious largeness of quality in the picture - such an effect as has caused Mr. Annan to remark that Hill must have

⁸⁰. Advertised in *The Witness* (8 July 1843).

⁸¹. Hill to Scott, 25 October 1848, inserted in the John Scott album of calotypes, NLS.

possessed in a great measure the power of seeing grandly, and that his compositions are of the noble order.⁸²

This effect was achieved by ignoring the technological logic of the comparatively insensitive lenses of the period, which gave a clear focus only in the centre of the paper. Most early photographers put the sitter's head at that centre. Hill realised that by pushing the important components of the portrait towards the edge of the paper, he lost the focal point to the advantage of coherence. This kind of controlled interference may be regarded as characteristic of Hill and Adamson's practice. The painter, E. W. Dallas, worked at the Royal Institution alongside Hill, and later became a professional photographer. His model of photography clearly derives from Hill and Adamson's calotypes: 'those broad masses of arranged and contrasted light and shade which, under proper management, indicate character sufficiently, and leave the imagination to fill up deficiencies,' and he may have had some knowledge of their practice. He suggested a lens designed to be defective:

The perfection of a lens depends in part on the pure and homogenous nature of its material; if this be defective, the definition is affected to a greater or less extent; by using therefore a glass that is partially streaked, some of the sharpness of the image is destroyed, and the more delicate details are lost, but there may still be sufficient left for the purpose intended. It is of course to be understood that the working of the glass must be good, and also that, except the striae in it, the refractive power must be uniform. By taking advantage of this defect, a glass may be produced in which detail shall be obliterated to any extent, even to the entire destruction of the image, if that were required.⁸³

The apparent perversity of this is balanced by the qualifying terms: 'the working of the glass must be good.' It may be that Hill employed a much simpler method of achieving the same end. Mrs William Sharp reported: 'I have been told that when the artist wished to produce a particular blurred effect, he would during the exposure give his camera an almost imperceptible jerk.'⁸⁴

Manipulation of natural light is mentioned in Davidson's description of the concave mirror. Used as a light reflector it may have proved too precise and bright,

⁸². James Pittendrigh Macgillivray, 'The Art of Photography,' *The Photographic Journal*, vol. 70 (1930): p. 10.

⁸³. E. W. Dallas, letter to the Editor, *The Journal of the Photographic Society* (April 1853): p. 44. According to R. C. Hungerford, this was 'possibly the first proposal to use deliberately, a lens with optical faults ... it was not until 1893 that ... J. H. Bergheim who was both an artist and a photographer, asked T. R. Dallmeyer to design a lens which would give "a massing of tones."' 'The Soft-focus Lens - its origin and use,' *Royal Photographic Society Historical Group Quarterly*, no. 80 (Spring 1988): p. 8.

⁸⁴. Mrs William Sharp, 'D. O. Hill, R. S. A.' *Camera Work*, no. 28 (October 1909): p. 19.

acting as a kind of spotlight, but it could have been tried for the nude torso of George Bell, where the light on his shoulder has bleached out the detail (Fig. 50).

Occasionally, light is visibly reflected within the composition where it is appropriate, from primed canvas or open books. Presumably such devices were also used outside the visual frame. Hill's interest in the accidents of atmosphere, suggested in Elizabeth Rigby's note about the view from his garden (see Chapter seven), may indicate a conscious exploitation and appreciation of the naturally diffused light which fell on Rock House. Robert Louis Stevenson described the view from Calton Hill in 1879:

on one of those days of sunshine and east wind which are so common in our more than temperate summer. The breeze comes off the sea ... [bringing] with it a faint floating haze, a cunning decolouriser, although not thick enough to obscure outlines near at hand.⁸⁵

The sunlight falling on the garden from the south was filtered through the smoke rising from the crowded chimneys of the Old Town, which Hill specifically studied in his picture of *Edinburgh from the Castle* (see Chapter seven). Such pollution would have caused the light to bounce and spread, reducing its hard-edged clarity and harshness. It would necessarily have involved some consideration, since on still days it may have stopped work altogether. Robert Hunt refers to the problems of such pollution in London:

The conditions of the atmosphere most materially influence photographic effects: in the atmosphere of this metropolis it is not at all uncommon for a slight yellow haze to completely obstruct all chemical change.⁸⁶

Hill and Adamson had astonishing confidence in their practice. They were prodigal in their experiments and they introduced risks. The calotypes involved not just studied control but patience and adaptability, working from an appreciation of accident. Pictures, like those of the Gordon Highlanders taken in 1846 (Fig. 36), display a readiness to throw the focus and exaggerate the contrast. This suggests that control of shifts in focus and strength continued to be a subjective response to the character of the subject and that they were prepared to invent a truthful appearance. This may be illustrated by examples of landscape photography, which was dominated by two practical problems. Firstly, early photographic chemicals responded differently to different colours; they were slow to react to the green of trees and grass. Secondly, the

⁸⁵. Robert Louis Stevenson, *Edinburgh Picturesque Notes*, London 1954, p. 78.

⁸⁶. Robert Hunt, 'Photography, with some of its peculiar phenomena' *The Art Journal*, vol. 4 (1852): p. 101.

calotype could not effectively transcribe the delicacy of aerial perspective and atmosphere, without conscious construction (see Chapter seven). It is therefore surprising that Elizabeth Rigby praised the calotype for a lively transcription of sunlight. However, there was a graphic model, with the same restrictions of monochrome and with the light represented by the paper vehicle, in Turner's *Liber Studiorum* and in David Lucas's mezzotints after Constable.⁸⁷ These presented a comparatively arbitrary relationship between light and form, which might be used in the calotype to mitigate the strong opposition between leaves and light, as well as to explore distortions set up between the two. There are two calotypes in which these ideas were examined. The first is a large negative, taken in the grounds of Merchiston Castle, in which blur and structure were designed to work together (Fig. 77). The picture is roughly blocked out in opposed light and dark; the downward curve of the wall joins with the upward curve of the tree branch to suggest a circle in the trees above, which is balanced by the circle made within the doorway with the help of the light on the figures and the tail of light running along the path. The composition is unified and the blurring justified by a spatially ambiguous composition. *The Fairy Tree at Colinton* (Fig. 78) uses the same idea of constructing a picture with light. The tree, which may just be a dead branch with a few tendrils of ivy, is defined in an almost flat transcript of dark, thinly outlined in light. The background is merely a graded tonality splattered with spots of unreadable light, which could be a bounce from leaves or even from water. These are pictures which are not merely made with light but which have a central concern for light, largely independent of the tangible reality of the subject. Presumably, Hill's enthusiasm for the spontaneity and realism of the calotypes meant that he was prepared to lose ideas in technical failure; the large negative was not printed. Other unprinted negatives, like the extraordinary image of the boys standing on boulders taken for the *Fishermen and Women* series (Fig. 79), illustrate the point; the experiment was not repeated.

⁸⁷ It is presumably significant of a discussion between Hill and Elizabeth Rigby, that he first expressed interest in borrowing a painting by Constable for the Academy in 1847. 'Landscape – Barge passing a Lock of a Canal. Property of Charles Birch Esq at Harbourne Hall,' RSA catalogue, 1847, no. 81. Hill's familiarity with prints after both Turner and Constable can be assumed from his brother's print selling business. Alexander Hill promoted English as well as Scottish prints, which are mentioned in his obituary: 'many of the works of Lawrence, Wilkie, Landseer, and Leslie; and in landscape, of Turner, Constable, Collins, Stanfield and Roberts.' *The Edinburgh Evening Courant* (18 June 1866).

These pictures were designed to exploit accident. This interest is noted briefly in Hill's reference to the calotypes as, 'always giving out new lights of themselves,' a natural process that may happen through time. He seems to have taken an active interest in the idea, and may have deliberately assembled visual information with no certain result but with the aim of achieving natural understanding beyond calculated intention. As has been seen in earlier chapters, Hill had an interest in the calotype for its particular truthful nature, which was not, in Walter Benjamin's terms, 'wholly absorbed into art.' He was fascinated by 'the very life of it' and was concerned with its accidental character, but there is a caveat here. The concept of accident in photography has been critically misleading and there are important strands within this consideration. It may reasonably be supposed that Hill and Adamson, faced with the uncertainties of natural light, movement and chemistry, took a number of experimental photographs, without knowing clearly how they might look, and would have regarded the results as educational: something they could consider and build on. The intelligent connection between the photographer and the photograph is not severed by the act of photography. Moreover, photography is an inherently multiple art, where a sequence may reflect either in a linear fashion or in a more complex active and re-active group. Hill's use of this elaborate and elaborating idea is evident in the *Fishermen and Women of the Firth of Forth*, which attempts the illumination of a whole society. Calotypes, like *Elizabeth Johnstone Hall*, may stand well by themselves but will also gain and give in the company of other pictures. Individual pictures may change character and meaning in the context of other pictures. This extraordinary proposal may be a part of the supposedly casual or unconsidered role of photography – that the medium encourages both additional and speculative picture making and subsequent creative reflection between individual pictures.

The interest of accident may be tied to another and opposite idea: that of difficulty. John Adamson's criticism of the calotype process in 1857 bears an echo of Brewster's earlier complaint, but the emphasis is different:

The pictures produced by this process are very artistic and bold in effect, and give fine results for some kinds of landscape and architectural objects; and although excellent results may be obtained in portraiture – as, for example, those produced by the late Mr R. Adamson and Mr D. O. Hill of Edinburgh – yet the amount of light which is necessary to produce the required change is too great to render it very applicable for this purpose.⁸⁸

⁸⁸. John Adamson, 'Photography,' *Chambers's Information for the People*, ed. William and Robert

The concept of difficulty, which Hill briefly mentions in his letter to David Roberts, is important. As has been emphasised in Chapter two, art could only be achieved through struggle – skill and understanding would be honed against difficulty. Hill did not see photography as an easy performance. He nevertheless used it for large range exercises, such as the *Fishermen and Women* project – which complicated the work and compounded the risk of failure. Looked at in business terms, the calotype partnership probably was a failure. We can, however, only treat this as a matter of ironical importance in view of the manifest success of the individual calotypes.

Hill made his proposal for the album of a hundred calotypes, when he was reading Ruskin's *Modern Painters*. It may be assumed that he was also fired by Ruskin's declaration:

The teaching of nature is as varied and infinite as it is constant; and the duty of the painter is to watch for every one of her lessons ... to repeat himself, even in a single instance, is treachery to nature ... Both [the artist and the preacher] are commentators on infinity.⁸⁹

The calotypes are remarkable for their variation, often dependent on simple shifts in focus and composition. The portraits of Rev. William Govan (Fig. 27) and Mrs Rigby (Fig. 10) are both taken in profile against a counterchange of background light, but they are distinct. The portrait of Govan is solidly composed with a comparatively strong contrast of dark and light in the background. The picture of Mrs Rigby is far subtler, constructed with a kinder light and contrast against a background whose dark is broken up by the pattern of ivy. The two portraits reflect their personal role or character. The charm of *The Minnow Pool* group of children (Fig. 14) is generated by the unusual distance and lack of definition in the top third of the picture, which brings the eye down to the little group and makes the children small – a closer view might have made the group on its stone steps monumental. Hill wrote:

The subjects of these [four calotypes] possess to me more than ordinary interest. The three children fishing are grand nephews & a grand niece of mine. The very comely sprouts from a very comely vine.⁹⁰

They were members of his family and it is an affectionate portrayal. In a draft of a letter to Lady Ruthven, herself an expert on art, Hill briefly expressed the importance

Chambers, vol. 2, Edinburgh and London 1857, p. 779.

⁸⁹. Ruskin (as in n. 38), p. 157.

⁹⁰. Hill (as in n. 7).

of surrounding and background effects. He was consciously constructing with simple components:

I send impressions of some of the calotypes done the last day your Lp and Lord Ruthven called here ... yours especially indicates what could be done in this direction, with good sitters, good backgrounds & good sunshine. indeed with these appliances a wonderful little family gallery might be made in a few days & to such uses I doubt not the Calotype will come. The group of two young ladies were those you saw here & shows that the art can do something approaching the beautiful; the single portrait (a niece of mine) I send to show what might be done with backgrounds of flowers &c. The Harper, whose costume is made of a blanket and plaid shows how simply one might get up pictures of the old world. I think you will like the sleeping child, which is one of my own greatest favourites.⁹¹

The sophistication and variation made from that simplicity is impressive.

Backgrounds are used for framing, counterchange and relief. Drapery may distract and lead the eye. The careful arrangement even of the fall of material may be seen in the group with the Misses Farnie and the sleeping puppy (Fig. 80), which has been set down between the feathered patterns – a care all the more striking in an image which would have invited haste. One of the most impressive portraits, of the sculptor John Steell (Fig. 81), involves a reduction and loss of detail, which leaves his body as a dark, practically undefined shape, almost a silhouette. His right hand is sunk in his coat and only indicated by an edge of white cuff and wrist, which serves to mitigate the potential flatness of the body's shape. His head and other hand are supported on an off-centre and nearly featureless diagonal and the impact is strengthened by the elementary mottling of the background. The hand and one side of the face are strongly illuminated from the right, but the detail is filled in by a bounce of light from the left. This portrait is remarkable for its strength and simplification and could well serve as a model of Romantic practice in photography.

Looking at the calotypes taken by D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson, we are faced with a historical dilemma. The work has an excellence, which is highlighted because it stands at the beginning of photography and it is possible that even Hill did not immediately appreciate the skill that he and Adamson deployed in the work. His second letter to Roberts about the album continues enthusiastic, but expresses anxiety:

I have sunk some hundreds of pounds and a huge cantle of my time in these Calotype freaks. I think the art may be nobly applied - much money could be made of it as a means of cheap likeness making - but this my soul loathes; and

⁹¹. Draft letter, Hill to Ruthven, probably 1847, RSA.

if I do not succeed in doing something by it worthy of being mentioned by Artists with honor - I will very likely soon have done with it.⁹²

Hill was severely disappointed by the response of the Great Exhibition Jury in 1851 (see Chapter eight), and talked of: 'time and money spent, I hope not foolishly, in making the art respectable.'⁹³ It was possibly only in the 1850s and 60s that Hill could gain a clear idea, by comparison with later photography, of the status of his own work. In the prospectus for the Disruption Picture, fourteen years later, he is altogether more buoyant:

the Portraits made chiefly for the Picture, in 1843 by Mr Hill and his late friend, Mr Robert Adamson of St Andrews, by the then newly-discovered Photographic Process of Mr Fox Talbot, called the Calotype or Talbotype, - until then almost unknown or unapplied as a vehicle of artistic thought and expression, - were mainly the means of first raising the process to the rank of a Fine Art, or rather to that of one of its most magical and potent auxiliaries.⁹⁴

This was written at a period when most painters were denying the connection between their pictures and photography. It is important to realise what Hill was doing here. He has changed the vocabulary from 'art,' which was equivalent to our 'craft,' to 'Fine Art.' The qualification follows, but this was not a conversation, it was in print. Hill wrote it, and he meant it: the qualification was a mild sop to the many who would disagree with him. It is a most remarkable claim, especially in the context of his large and laborious painting, and suggests that Hill's affections were more tied to the photographs than to the picture.

Hill and Adamson were both reticent about the mechanics of their art and the technical and practical methods they used to achieve their notable results can still only be suggested rather than clearly defined. However, the reaction of later photographers – their whole-hearted admiration - may be regarded as a reflection of their calculated excellence, and the impact of their work is a matter of considerable significance to the subsequent history of photography.

'On the first floor...'

Hill's role in photography did not end with the partnership. The most impressive nineteenth-century work in Scotland, both amateur and professional had a respect for

⁹². Hill to Roberts, 14 March 1845, NLS microfilm 381.

⁹³. Hill to Roberts, 14 January 1852, NLS Acc 7723.

⁹⁴. Anon (presumed to be D. O. Hill), *The Disruption of the Church of Scotland: An Historical Picture*, Edinburgh 1866, p. 3.

Hill and Adamson's work, which was reinforced by Hill's continuing enthusiasm. It is by no means clear how many photographers Hill knew and influenced directly, but the probability is that his personal influence was considerable. Hill set up one further public association with a photographer, Alexander MacGlashon, around 1860. This may only have lasted a few days and only involved taking around twenty photographs. Although Hill succeeded in clearing the clutter of MacGlashon's normal studio practice and apparently carried him off to Rock House to work in the garden, the pictures do not achieve the coherence of the earlier work (Fig. 82). It seems unlikely that he and MacGlashon were able to rebuild the kind of professional sympathy that informed the calotype partnership, and Hill's largely unexplored relationship with other photographers is more significant.

He remarked, when setting up a photographic library in the Academy, 'I think I have influence enough with not a few of the Calotypists to get copies of their best,' and it is a tribute to Hill's grace that Ross and Thomson were amongst the contributors to that collection.⁹⁵ There is even a cheering possibility that Hill and Adamson eventually succeeded in winning over David Brewster. In 1873, W. E. Gladstone retailed a significant 'incident some years back. Sir D. Brewster asked me to sit for my photograph in a black frost & a half mist, in Edinburgh. I objected about the light. He said this is the best light. It is all diffused not concentrated.'⁹⁶ This idea was confirmed, in a letter to Antoine Claudet, in 1867: 'I do not think *sharp definition* at all necessary; on the contrary, I think it is an evil.'⁹⁷

After Robert Adamson's death, Hill maintained a connection with John Adamson, who photographed both Hill and Charlotte in the mid 1850s and in the 1860s (Fig. 83). It seems reasonable to hear Hill's concern in John Adamson's letter to the Photographic Society of Scotland, sent with his photographs for the exhibition:

I wish very much that the large heads should be exhibited to advantage as I entertain a hope that they may in some small degree help to turn the public taste from the small "carte de visite" pictures so fashionable at present and in which I think the photographic art has been progressing backwards - to portraits of a larger size - and a more ambitious aim in the direction of the painters field of operation.⁹⁸

⁹⁵. Hill to Roberts, 18 October 1850, NLS microfilm 381.

⁹⁶. *The Gladstone Diaries*, vol. 8, ed. H. C. G. Matthew, Oxford 1982, p. 370.

⁹⁷. Published in the *Photographic News*, 14 August 1868, p. 387, quoted by Mike Weaver, 'The Hard and Soft in British Photography,' *The Photographic Collector*, vol. 4, no. 2, Autumn 1983, p. 197.

⁹⁸. John Adamson to the Photographic Society of Scotland, 29 November 1861, SRO GD 356/12/71.

John Adamson's work developed a power and personality of its own, making him an individual and distinctive portrait photographer. He drew from his sitters a warm response, comparable to Hill and Adamson's portraits, and his strong sense of composition has a similar familiarity.⁹⁹

Whilst Thomas Rodger, encouraged by John Adamson and living in St Andrews, is the natural professional heir of Robert Adamson, Thomas Annan is a direct inheritor of the Hill/Adamson partnership through Hill. They may have met as early as the 1840s; the Annan family knew Robert Adamson, and were distressed by his death. It is possibly a significant coincidence that Thomas Annan took up a career as a lithographer in 1845, which could have been suggested by an acquaintance with Hill as well as Adamson, and that he became a photographer in 1855 a little ahead of the great popular boom in the art. We know from the record that Hill worked with Thomas Annan to reproduce the Disruption Picture as carbon prints in the 1860s and that he occupied the Rock House studio for a year in 1869, when Hill retired. His son, J. Craig Annan, recalled that he had 'an intense admiration and appreciation of Hill as a man and as an artist. They were intimate friends.'¹⁰⁰ J. Craig Annan, who met Hill when he was only six, could still remember: 'He gave me a pencil and a sheet of paper and arranged a model while he sat talking to my father.' At the end of the century he and his father printed from the negatives - making new work in the permanent media of carbon and photogravure, which was a translation rather than an imitation of the work.

Through the affectionate agency of the Annans, the enthusiasm for Hill and Adamson's work was transferred to the photographers of their time. J. Craig Annan's critical writing and his photogravure versions of the calotypes transmitted that enthusiasm to America, particularly through the agency of Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) and his publication, *Camera Work*, which published twenty-one of their pictures between 1905 and 1912. The calotypes proved of importance to the international Pictorialist movement and were generously received by the Modernists in turn. In America alone, such influential figures as Stieglitz, Paul Strand and Ansel Adams may be quoted as greeting the work with unequivocal admiration. Alfred Stieglitz wrote for *Camera Work*: 'Hill and Cameron are classics. What they did has

⁹⁹. See A. D. Morrison-Low, 'Dr John Adamson and Thomas Rodger: Amateur and Professional Photography in Nineteenth-century St Andrews.' *Photography 1900: The Edinburgh Symposium*. Edinburgh 1992, pp. 18-37.

not been equaled, in spite of gumming and manipulation and all the modern tricks. They were photographers.¹⁰¹ Paul Strand spoke of it as, ‘of simple grandeur and true human nobility.’¹⁰² He advised Beaumont Newhall, when he was creating his influential exhibition on the history of photography for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, on the use of the four floors of the exhibition:

The first floor should be all David Octavius Hill. The second floor should be Eugene Atget. Give the third floor completely to Alfred Stieglitz. And on the fourth floor you should have Strand.¹⁰³

While not accepting Strand’s advice, Beaumont Newhall, wrote of the calotypes’, ‘astounding modernity of feeling.’¹⁰⁴ Alvin Langdon Coburn, like the Annans, printed in carbon from Hill and Adamson’s work and paid conscious tribute to the calotypes in his photographs for Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Edinburgh, Picturesque Notes*. He identified the pleasure in the calotype work: ‘Gradually he [Hill] became interested in photography for its own sake, and made a number of landscapes and figure studies for the sheer joy of so doing.’¹⁰⁵ Ansel Adams was even more fluent:

Were the shade of David Octavius Hill, the great Scottish pioneer of photography, to visit our world and discuss the present aspects of the art and craft of the camera with ghostly objectivity, we could attend the oracle with reasonable devotion ... a jewel was formed in the matrix of the early nineteenth century, indigenous to its period and sincere in the purity of its presentation. David Octavius Hill succeeded both in making remarkable photographs and in demonstrating one of the basic principles of art: complete expression within the limitations of the medium.¹⁰⁶

The comments made by these leading authoritative practitioners emphasise the active impact that Hill and Adamson’s work had not just in its own time but in the twentieth century. Despite the exaggeration of Strand’s four-floor history of photography, they have a legitimate claim to have established the ground in the art of photography. In the sunny months of the years between 1843 and 1847, they generated ‘a magical and potent’ art. What they did affected what happened

¹⁰⁰. Quoted in Sara Stevenson, *Thomas Annan 1829-1887*, Edinburgh 1990, p. 8.

¹⁰¹. Quoted in Dorothy Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz, An American Seer*, New York, 1960, p.56.

¹⁰². Paul Strand, ‘A Picture Book for Elders,’ *The Saturday Review of Literature* (12 December 1931).

¹⁰³. Beaumont Newhall, *Focus: memoirs of a life in photography*, Boston 1993, p. 137.

¹⁰⁴. Quoted by Beaumont Newhall in ‘The Challenge of Photography to this Art Historian,’ *Perspectives in Photography: Essays in Honor of Beaumont Newhall*, ed. Peter Walch and Thomas F. Barrow, Albuquerque 1986, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵. Alvin Langdon Coburn, ‘The Old Masters of Photography,’ *Century Magazine*, vol. 90 (1915): p. 909.

¹⁰⁶. Ansel Adams, *Making a Photograph*, New York 1936, p. 13.

afterwards in photography. Their work helped to define what photography may be.
‘They were photographers.’

Conclusion

The criticism of the calotypes of David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson, made in the course of the twentieth century, has in significant cases distanced itself from the work. It has failed, as a result, to illuminate and has even occasionally obscured the work and its potential meaning. The amount and quality of contemporary literature which is available for study and which may elicit meaning in Hill's work is impressive. It provides not simply a context or narrative but an intelligent and a poetic way of understanding his interests in painting, in graphics and in photography. These texts, combined with Hill's correspondence may act as a balance to twentieth-century perspective.

Hill was resident for most of his life in the city of Edinburgh and was an important factor and a focal point within its society. In his private life we may examine and understand both his emotional sensitivity and the kinds of encouragement and constraint, which helped to direct his art. His humour as well as his moral concerns helped to balance and stabilise his life at a time of considerable social and economic distress. His affections and his social conscience were important to his understanding of his own family and circle and to his sympathetic admiration of the Scottish fishermen and women, which inspired what may be his most original and significant work. This was the planned *Fishermen and Women of the Firth of Forth*, which saw the effective invention of the photographic documentary essay, and was a project remarkable for its origins in a formal consideration of working society, which had no obvious precedent in the visual arts.

The society Hill lived in emphasised the personal responsibility of the individual within a framework of religious and phrenological determinism. The particular responsibility of artists to succeed was thought to be generated by a natural background of struggle and failure. Hill's own career and interests worked both from within these assumptions and contrary to them, to alleviate, by social and educational means, the stress of individual effort and isolation. Hill actively promoted the advance of art education and the organised support of the arts, through the Academy and the Institution for the Promotion of the Fine Arts. His professional career is remarkable for its extension of his sociable and co-operative private life, and for what may well be regarded as his sacrifice of personal advance to a higher ambition. The first is exemplified in his work for the Academy. The second may be seen in the laborious

attempt of the Disruption Picture to make a great religious and historical work, advancing the concept of responsibility and the heroism of the individual within a large and democratic social grouping, driven by moral and religious enthusiasm.

Scotland in the later eighteenth century and through to the mid nineteenth century was a centre of literature and literary production. As the son of a bookseller, Hill was surrounded by books, and his understanding and inclinations were strongly literary. The character of much of the writing he knew and admired, from the work of Walter Scott to the work of Hugh Miller, combines the factual with the poetic and relies on nature and familiar experience as a source of creative inspiration. The emotional and analogical impulse combined with anonymity in writing to introduce a strong vein of ambiguity, and the readiness to accept such confusion is also a part of Hill's exploratory aesthetic which admired and endorsed natural variation and duality.

The impact of Scottish literature, and especially the writing of Walter Scott, had taken Scottish history into the realm of fiction and made it powerfully affecting. Through the influence of James MacPherson, Robert Burns and Scott, international knowledge of Scotland had developed from the intellectual impact of the Enlightenment to Romantic sympathy. The idea of Scotland as a place of heightened reality, which was built on ideas of Highland and Jacobite character and romance, was widely attractive. That idea was extended by the enthusiasm of the Evangelists in their struggle to free the Church of Scotland from the political interests of the state. Hill's Disruption Picture may therefore be presented as a celebration of heroism and moral conviction which expected a world audience. The painting contains significant elements of the Romantic history of Scotland in the Highland figures of Hugh Miller and Sergeant Mackenzie who support the composition, and in the indication of the third figure, Mr Hately, the precentor concerned with the music. Hill, who was himself an accomplished singer, was aware of the significance to Scottish culture of the song, and addressed that concern both in his painting and in his photography.

One of the critical debates within the historic discussions of art, which was examined both for its interest in distinguishing and in connecting the arts of poetry and painting, was the concern of time. The painters' search for emotional focus in historic and figure painting may be exemplified in Scottish practice by David Wilkie's *Distraining for Rent*, where the actors in the drama have reached an emotional pivot of human tragedy. Hill's interest in the idea of layering and complimentary time, which may keep the narrative argument or discussion alive in the criticism of

painting, can again be seen in the model of his Disruption Painting and relates to examples of his photography, such as Thomas Chalmers's family group. The interest in the natural authority of the photograph as a direct transcript of reality was broadly adopted for its particular emotional poignancy by critics of photography. However, Hill was not looking at the calotypes for their poignancy as objects of humility or little worth, where the absence of artifice might be supposed to reveal simply the persons pictured in them; his concern was for the human liveliness – human mortality and its revelation, through art, of immortality.

Within the particular social and human emphasis of Hill's life, it has not been clear that his initial concern with the calotype process was the study of the figure. He was both a *genre* and a landscape painter, often combining the two. The traditional methods of study - the cast, anatomy and the infrequent life class – suppressed physical and facial liveliness and the sense of nature, which had been a concern in Scottish painting from the time of Allan Ramsay. Hill's interest followed the model of David Wilkie, a pupil of the surgeon Sir Charles Bell, for whom it was the act of emotion which made beauty. Bell's advice to study life as it was, in social interaction and in the streets, was crucial to Hill's use of the calotype. His knowledgeable study enabled him to effect the calculated social direction, which may be defined as persuading the sitters to reveal their true nature.

Hill's figures occupied the landscape of Scotland. He was a poetic painter, in a sense inherited from the classical tradition; his landscape was enlivened by the people of history and fiction. But his poets were British – principally Robert Burns and Scott – and he inherited their direct inspiration from the land. Hill was poetic in the interpretive sense and he followed Turner's lead in attempting landscape defined by atmosphere and light. Hill's Romantic, moral impulse is evident in the connections he makes through his figures and the choice of location. His particular emphasis on Greyfriars Churchyard which he used to express both his admiration of the seventeenth-century Covenanters and the nineteenth-century Evangelists, is revealed in his work on Burns and James Hogg as well as in the calotypes. His idea of the humanity of landscape is most poignantly shown in the memorial landscapes painted after his daughter's death, which are a truly personal expression of grief in absence.

Hill's sense of responsibility for the land, as for his fellow men, was also expressed in a practical manner in defence both of the social right to access to the land and the freedom to worship on the land. He understood the importance of planning for

the future. Hill was clearly sentimental and an antiquarian, but he also appreciated the advantages of his own times. He admired civil engineering and was ready to promote and celebrate its importance in the landscape.

All these considerations in Hill's life and actions, as a private man, as an administrator and promoter of the arts and as an ambitious artist, have an impact on his approach to the calotype partnership. These impulses and this knowledge lay behind his direct confidence and enthusiasm and help to explain both the control and the excitement of the photographic work. That much of this feeling and understanding were particular to Hill may be better understood by comparing the Scottish work with the opinions of Sir David Brewster and W. H. F. Talbot and Talbot's own work. The natural authority these two men, who were in effect the patrons of the Hill and Adamson partnership, should have held was abrogated not by Hill's authority but by his enthusiasm and the way he redirected not just the partnership but this form of photography. Principally, the distinction lay in Brewster's preference for an idea of photography as a measured and comparatively unmediated method of record and his need for accuracy, both of which he held to some degree in common with Talbot.

One of the basic principles of patronage, as a proposal of superior education and understanding in the encouragers and purchasers of fine art, was that of distance from the physical or technical knowledge of the pursuit – it was thought that an understanding of the artifice might be a hindrance to understanding the art. The very confusions natural to the art of photography – that it was the direct transcript of the sun with no manual interpretation – inverted the critical difficulty. Here the problem was rather to appreciate the grasp of nature through artifice; the ‘art that conceals art’ admired by J. Craig Annan. The effect and the concealed skill behind it has proved most evident to those photographers looking back to the work from their own working knowledge and experience. In the words of a painter, Joshua Reynolds: ‘Simplicity, being only a negative virtue, cannot be described or defined.’¹ The aesthetic of Hill and Adamson’s calotypes was based on a number of critical decisions and preferences, which may be related to the practice of painters and their use of camera technology in the later eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries. The actual practice of the Hill and Adamson partnership was demonstrably sophisticated in its

¹. Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy*, intro. Roger Fry, London 1905, p. 233.

use of technology and the understanding of constraints and advantages. Their approach respected and achieved nature, and its effectiveness may be judged by the lack of mannerism, the relaxed response of the sitters, which allows us to see and think of their subjects as individuals familiar to us, more than 150 years beyond their proper historical context. Hill had taken the art of association into the personal world of his own circle. He made that emotional, personal art public.

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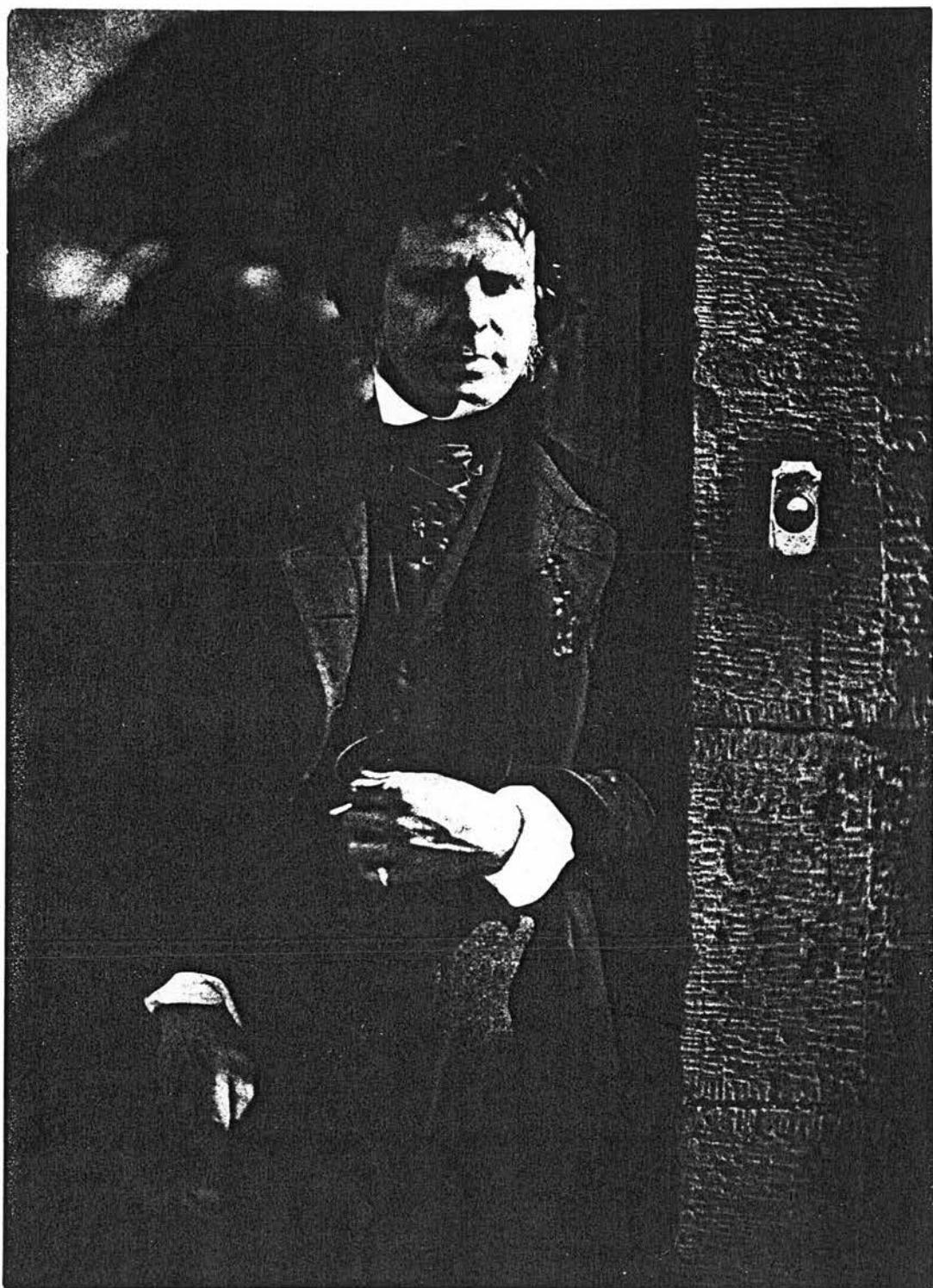
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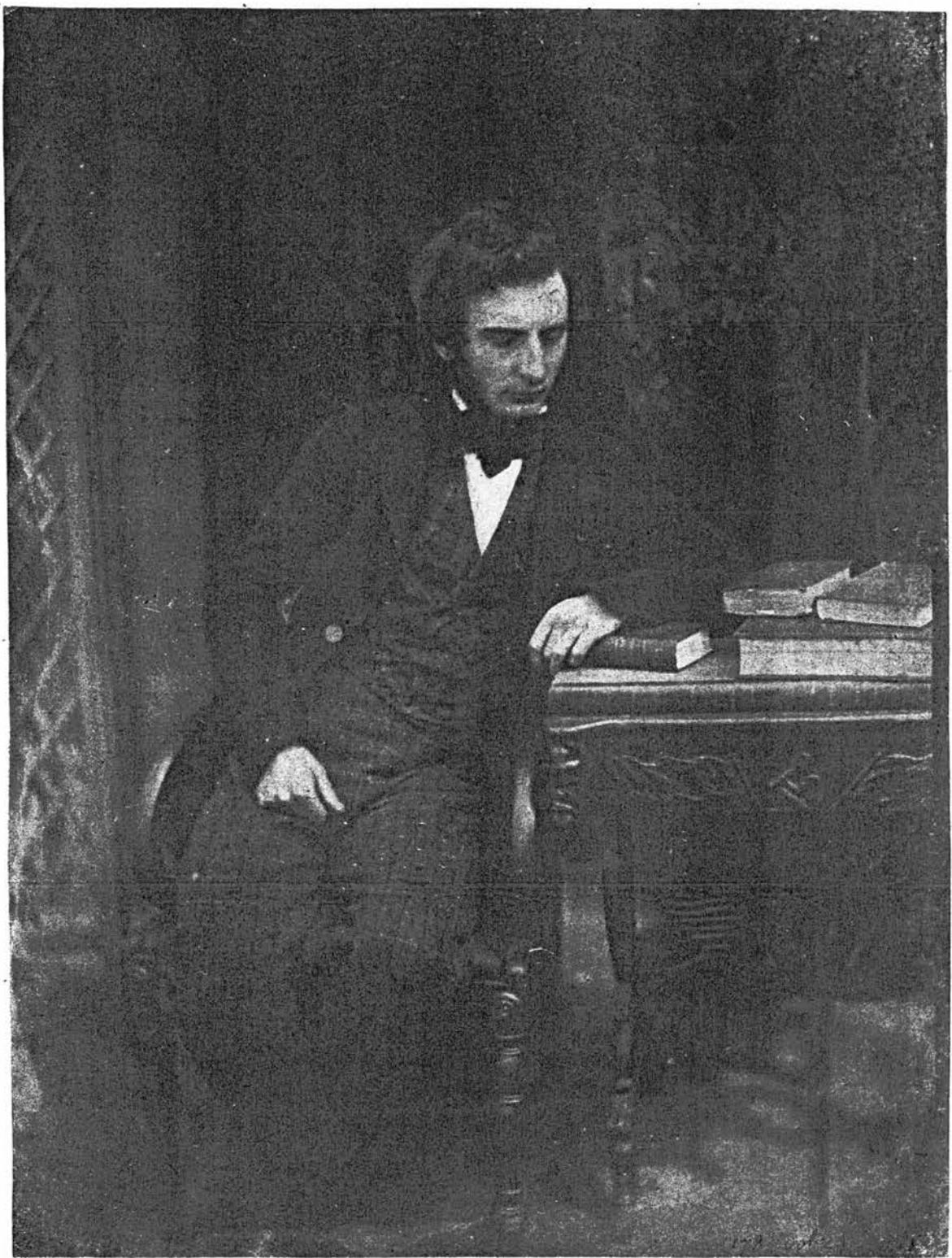


1. David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson

David Octavius Hill, c. 1843

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



2. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

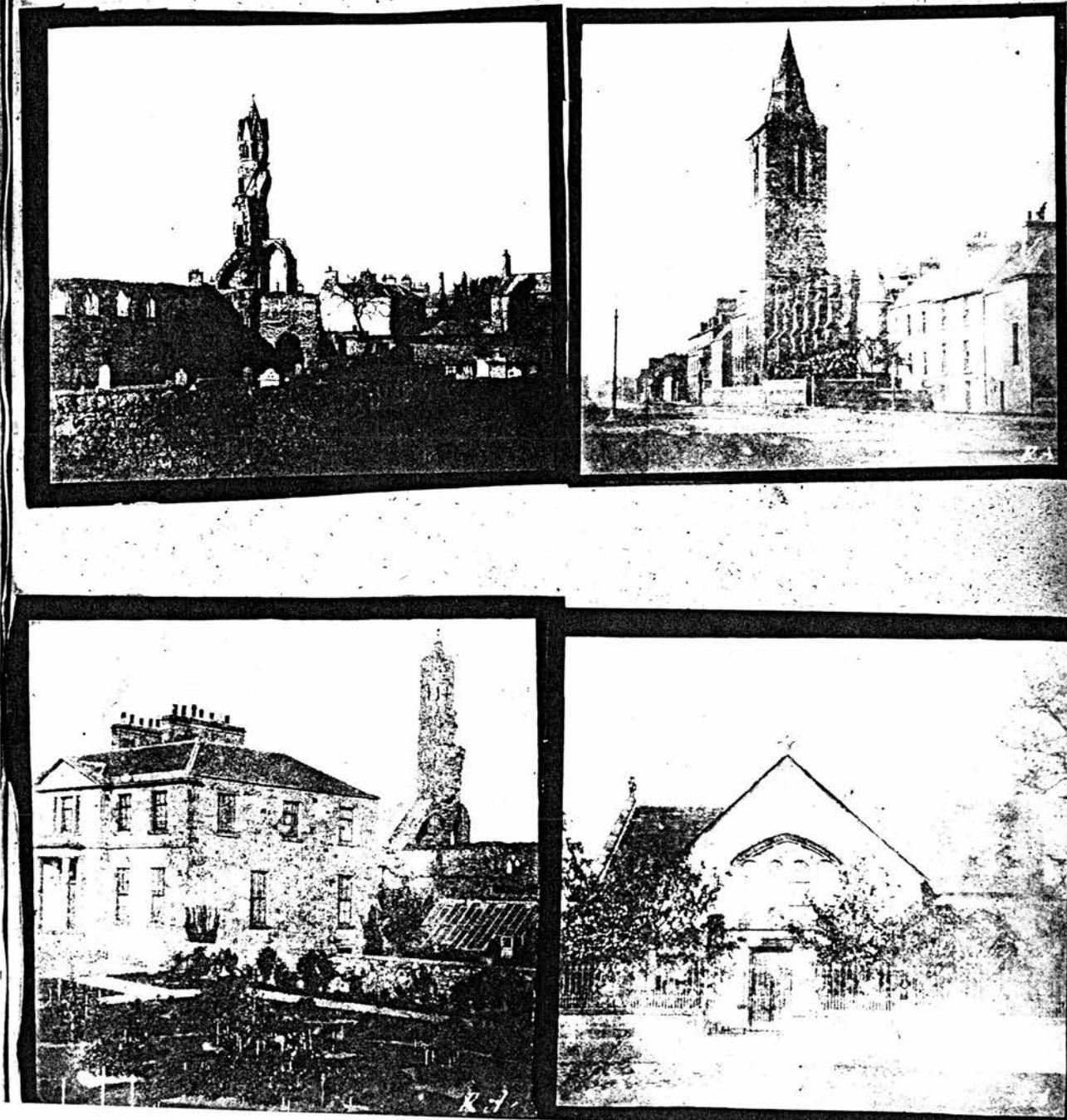
Robert Adamson, c. 1843

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



3. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson
Burnside, 1843-7
Calotype
Scottish National Photography Collection

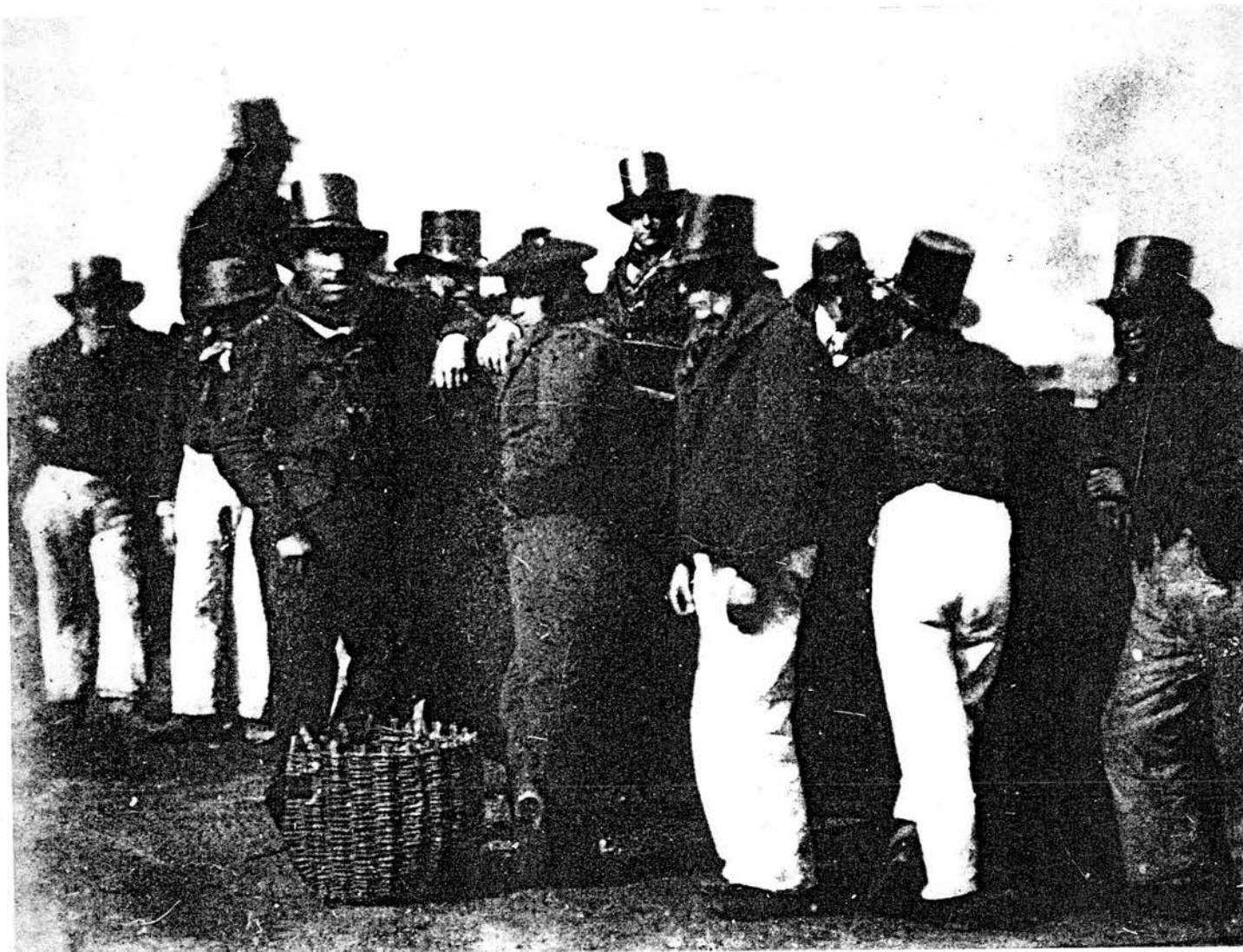


4. Robert Adamson

Views of St Andrews, 1842 or 3

Calotypes, three signed 'R A' in the negative

Royal Scottish Museum, John Adamson scrapbook



5. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Newhaven fishermen, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



6. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Elizabeth Johnstone Hall, 'A Newhaven Beauty,' 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

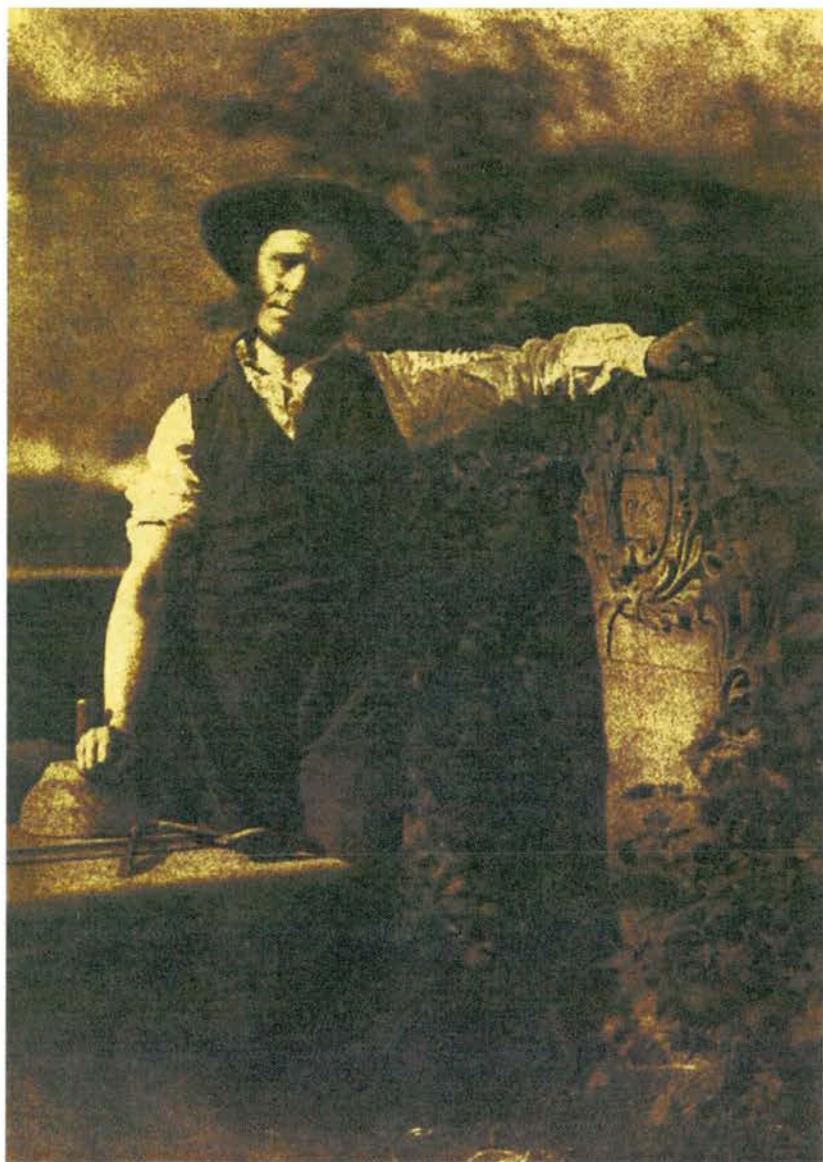


7. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Newhaven fishwives, 'The Letter,' 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



8. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Hugh Miller, 1843

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



9. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Hugh Miller, 1844

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



10. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Mrs Anne Rigby, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



11. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Jeanie Wilson, 'A Love Reverie,' 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

I am tempted to go to most
unresty places in four
opposite directions - a
winged Pegasus pulling at
each his separate limb.



as any man I shall as I think would
be my master. See tomorrow & he
will somewhere.

One man with kindred regards to
all dear friends takes me

Yours always
D O Hill

* a powerful magnet

12. David Octavius Hill

Self-portrait dragged four ways by winged horses and a fifth by a powerful magnet,
16 August 1852

Ink drawing in a letter to Noël Paton

National Library of Scotland



13. David Octavius Hill

A cat and a dog conversing in a library

Ink drawing

Whereabouts unknown, from a glass negative in the Glasgow University Library



14. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

At the Minnow Pool, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

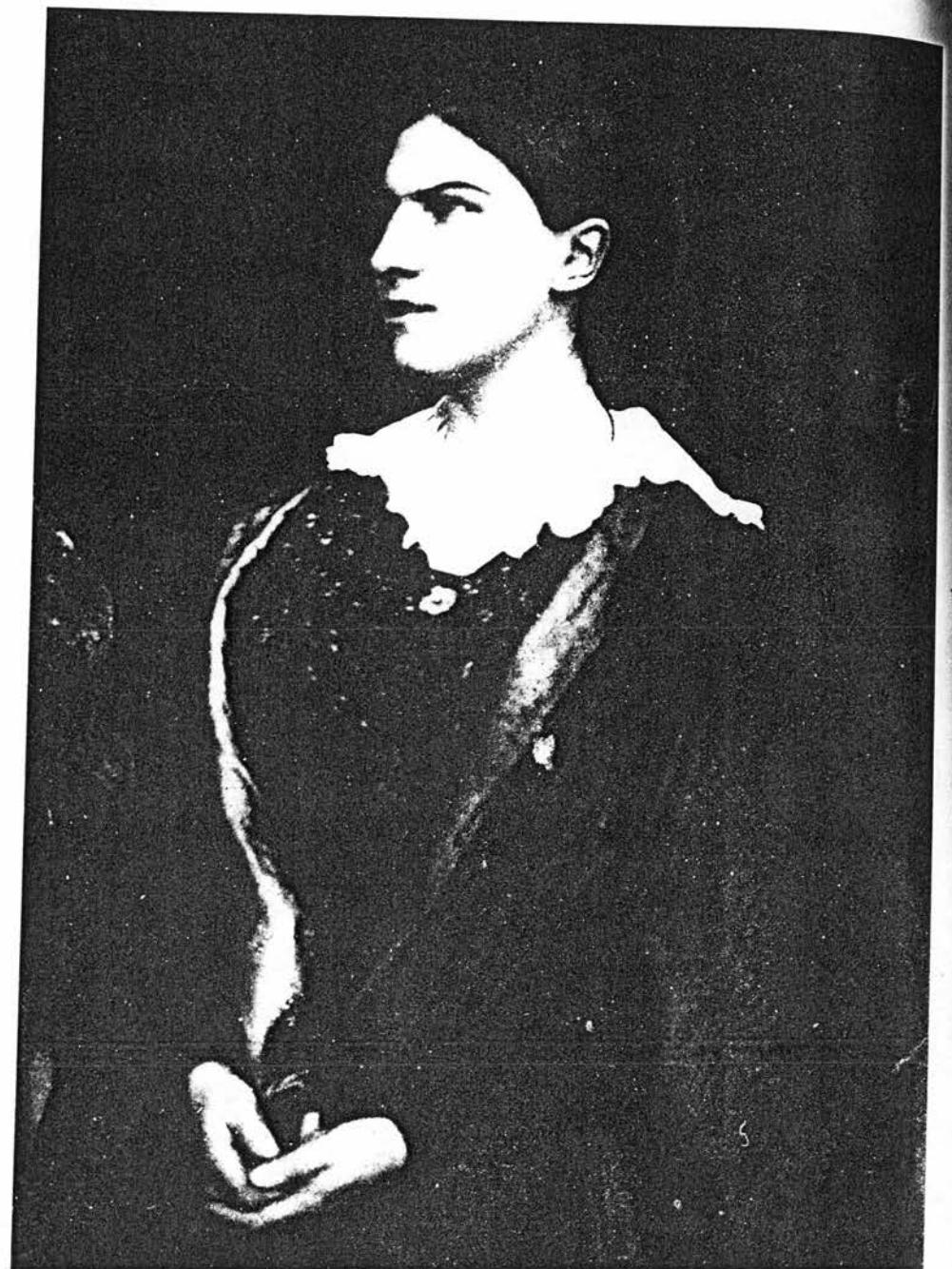


15. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

The Misses Binney and Monro, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



16. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Miss Kemp, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

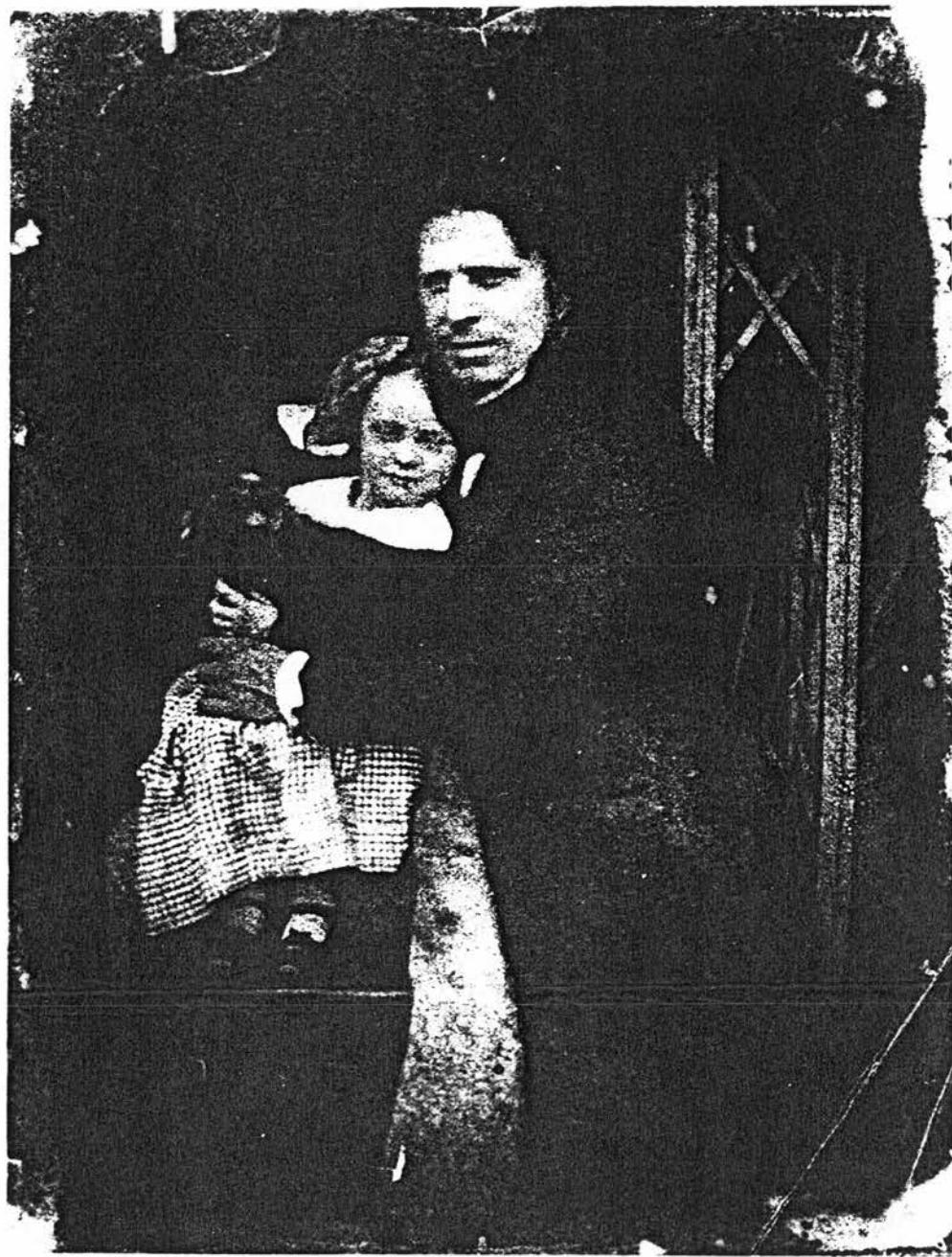


17. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Jane Macdonald, c. 1843

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



18. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

D. O. Hill with Charlotte, c. 1843

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

Who shall darling Sally?

Says Gardner Tom

From her, never far from port or starboard room
and I'll swear pretty surely

This is Gardner Tom
making himself at home.

Who is quite delighted?

Says mama
For her letter than than
and I'm quite delighted
This is mama
Bonnie - sit down.



whole give his consent!

Says uncle David
and I'll whistle over the lane o'
and I'll give my consent.

This is uncle David
whistling over the lane o'



Who shall it be?

We say that they

{ will go to him
he said we are in

But we think

She is likely to come

(yds.)
Because they are



all the folks in

Tell a laughing

about the wedding

Tom - The Clerk

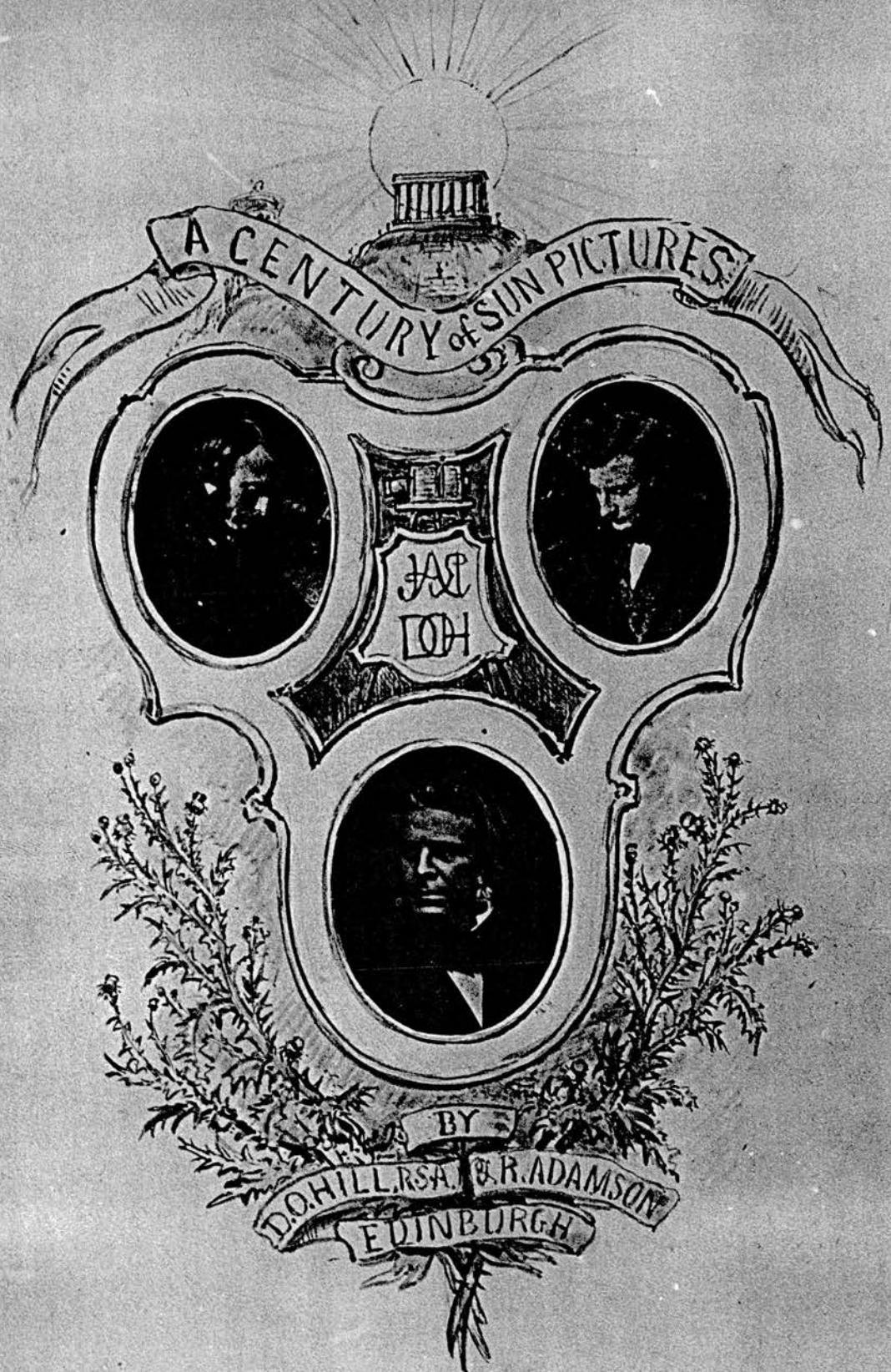
and now before you
leave & now I may
you & will send
the address in the
winter soon I am
in all the hours of
just another year

19. David Octavius Hill

D. O. Hill, with Sarah Watson and Tom Gardiner asking his consent, 19 November
1851

Ink drawing in a letter to Noël Paton

National Library of Scotland



20. David Octavius Hill

Title page to a calotype album, 1850s

Wash drawing and photographs

Museum Ludwig, Agfa Photohistorama



21. David Wilkie

Distressing for Rent, 1815

Oil on panel

National Gallery of Scotland



22. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

D. O. Hill and Dr George Bell in discussion, 1846

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



23. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

'Edinburgh Ale,' James Ballantine, George Bell and D. O. Hill, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



24. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

The Monks of Kennaquhair, William Borthwick Johnstone, William Leighton Leitch and David Scott, 1844-6

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

"UNTO THE UPRIGHT THERE ARISETH LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS"



The FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND SIGNING THE ACT OF SEPARATION AND DEED OF DEMISSION AT TANFIELD, EDINBURGH, MAY, 1843.

25. David Octavius Hill

The Signing of the Deed of Demission, 1843-66

Oil painting

Free Church of Scotland



26. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Rev. Dr Robert Smith Candlish, 1843

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

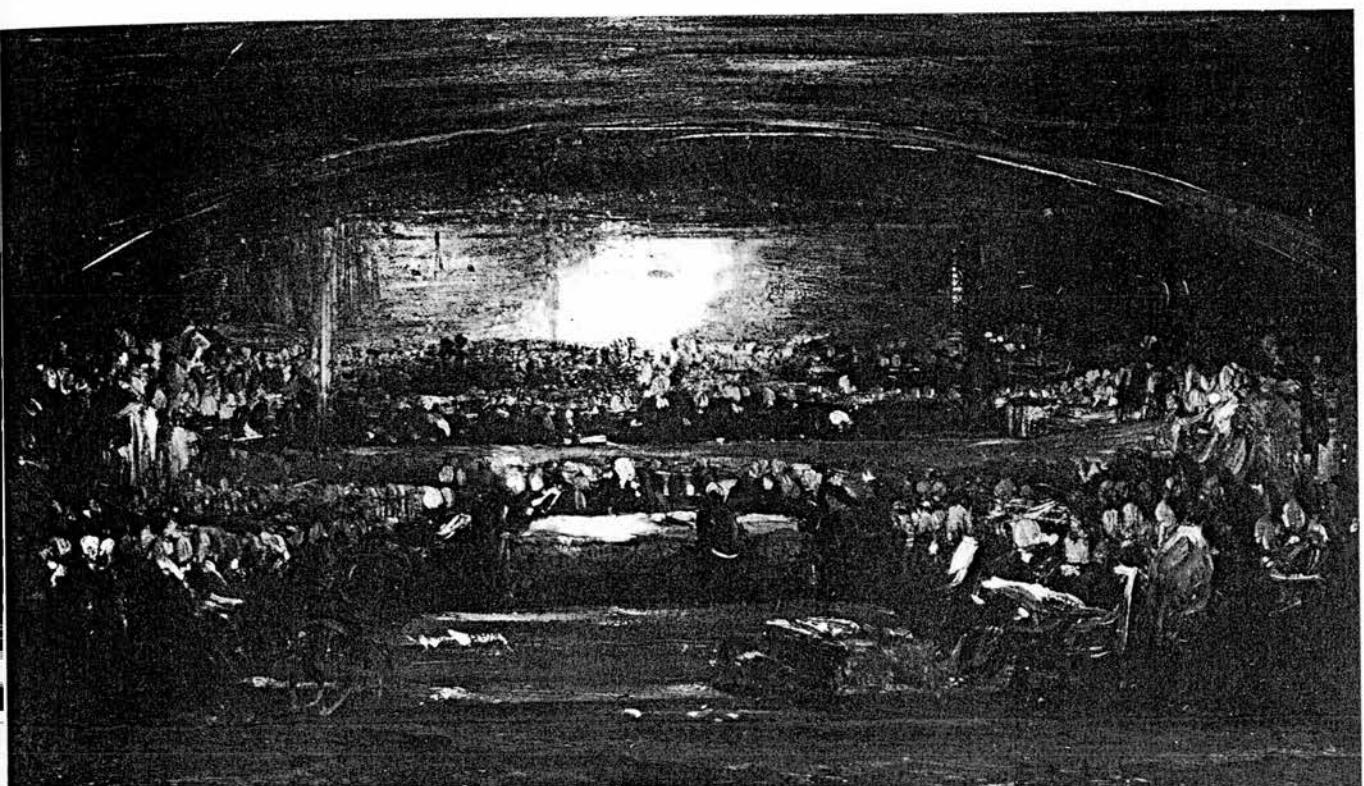


27. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Rev. William Govan, 1843-47

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



28. David Octavius Hill

Sketch for the Signing of the Deed of Demission, probably 1840s

Oil on panel

Free Church of Scotland



29. George Harvey

Rev. Dr Thomas Guthrie fishing on Lochlee, 1855

Oil on millboard

Scottish National Portrait Gallery

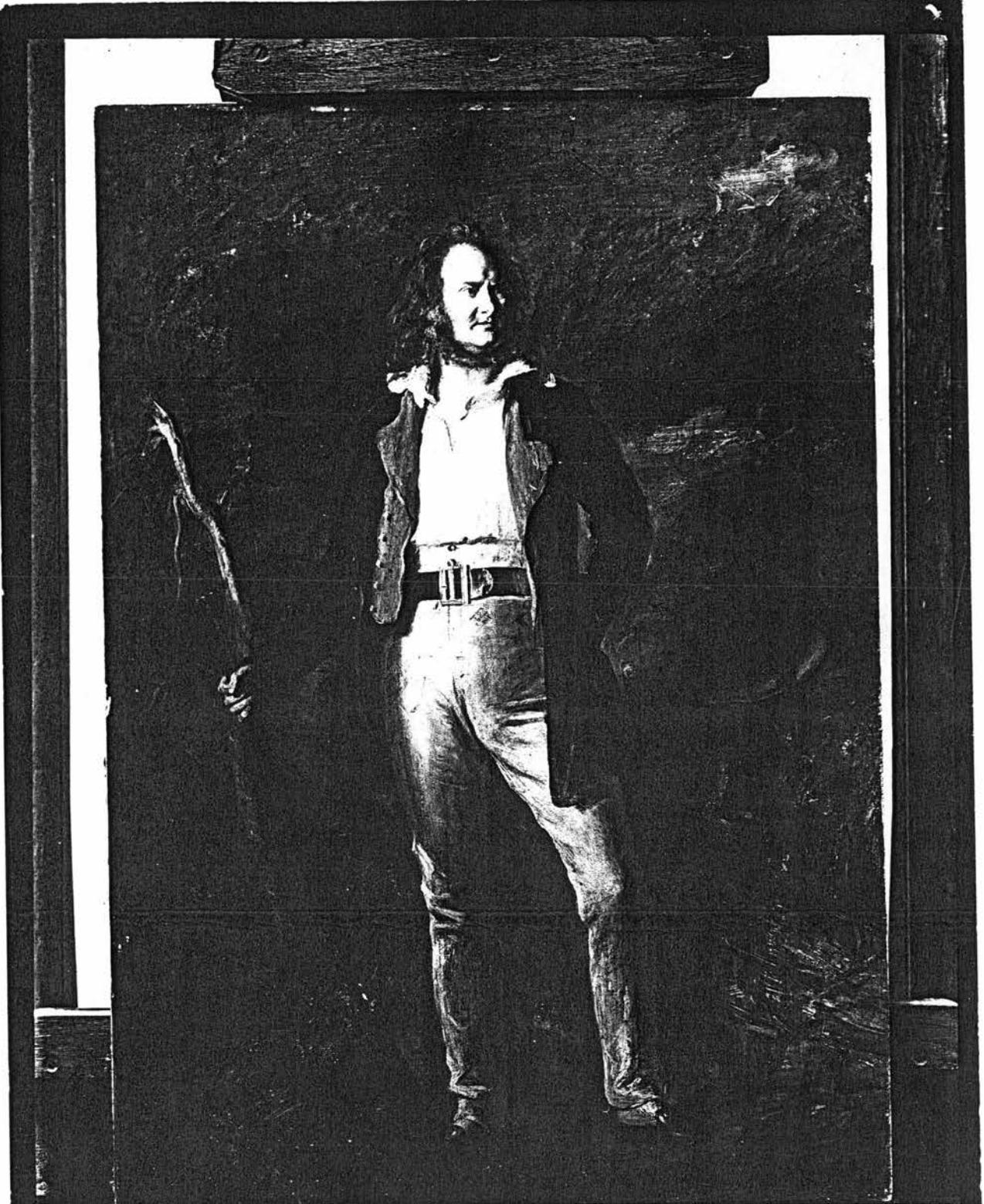


30. David Octavius Hill

The Poet's Dream at Lincluden

Engraving

From *The Land of Burns*, 1840

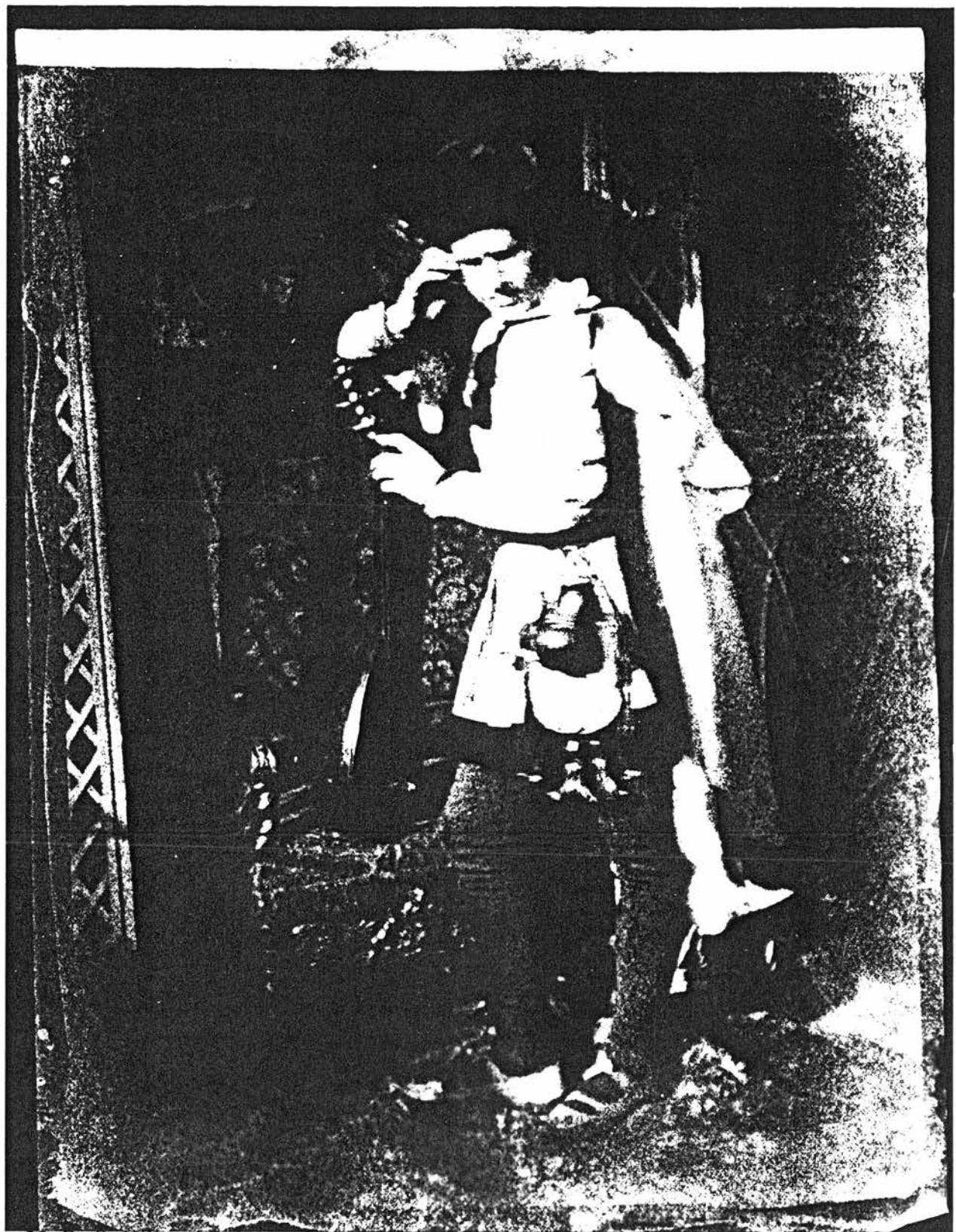


31. Thomas Duncan

'Christopher in his Sporting Jacket,' Professor John Wilson

Oil on millboard

Scottish National Portrait Gallery



32. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

'D. O. Hill in Tournament Dress,' 1843-7

Modern print from calotype negative

Scottish National Photography Collection



33. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Patrick Byrne with a fifteenth-century sallet, 1845

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



34. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

'Edie Ochiltree and Miss Wardour,' John Henning and Miss Cockburn, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



35. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson
Charles Sobieski Stuart, 1843-4
Calotype
Scottish National Photography Collection



36. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

The Gordon Highlanders at Edinburgh Castle, April 1846

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



37. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Rev. Peter Jones or Kahkewaquonaby, 1845

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

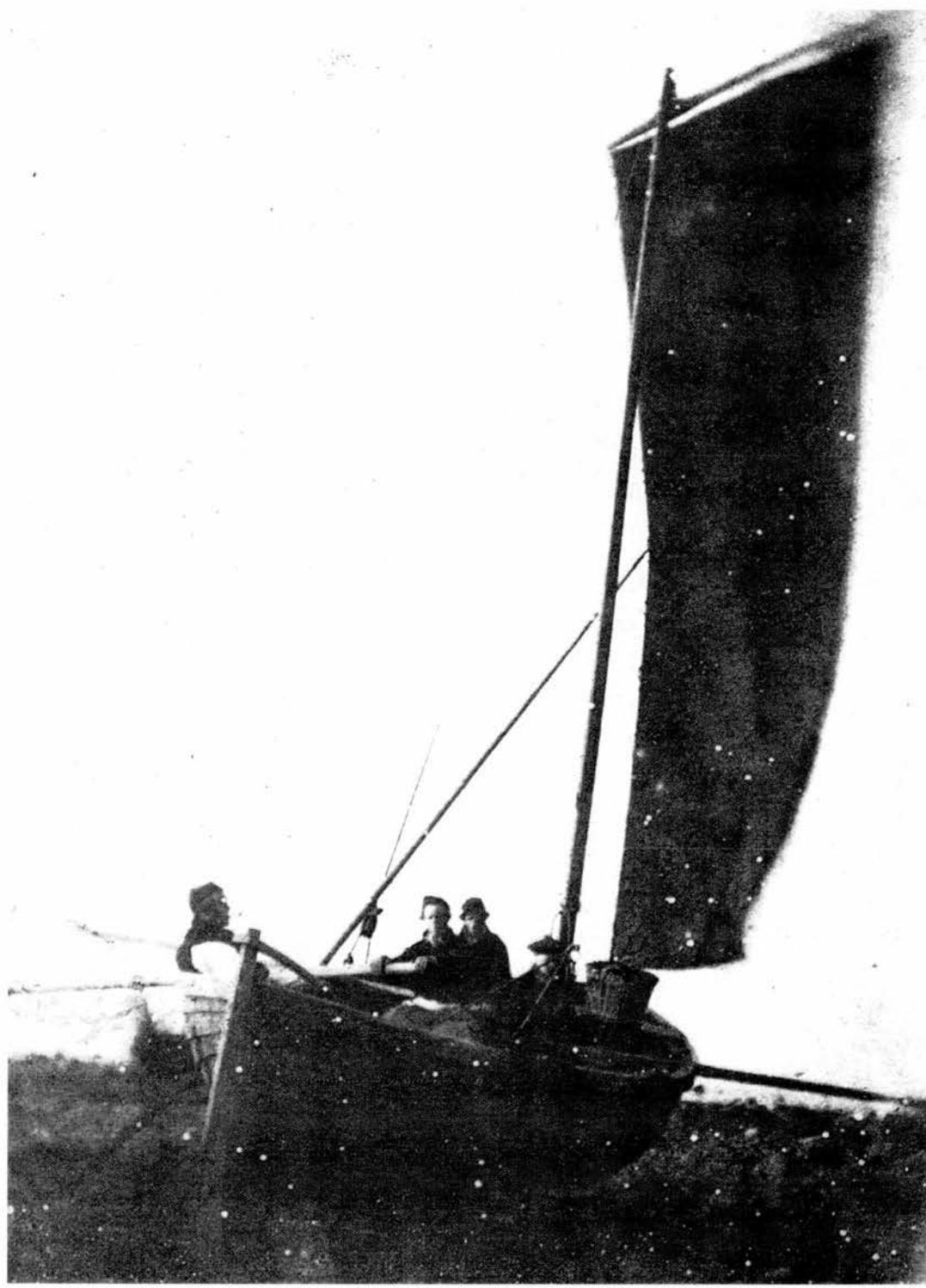


38. David Wilkie

Walter Scott and his family, 1817

Oil on panel

Scottish National Portrait Gallery



39. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Newhaven oyster boat, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



40. David Octavius Hill

The Signing of the Deed of Demission, detail with Robert Adamson, D. O. Hill and George Bell

Oil painting

Free Church of Scotland



41. John Adamson

Home from the Burn, c. 1860

Albumen print

Royal Scottish Museum, John Adamson album

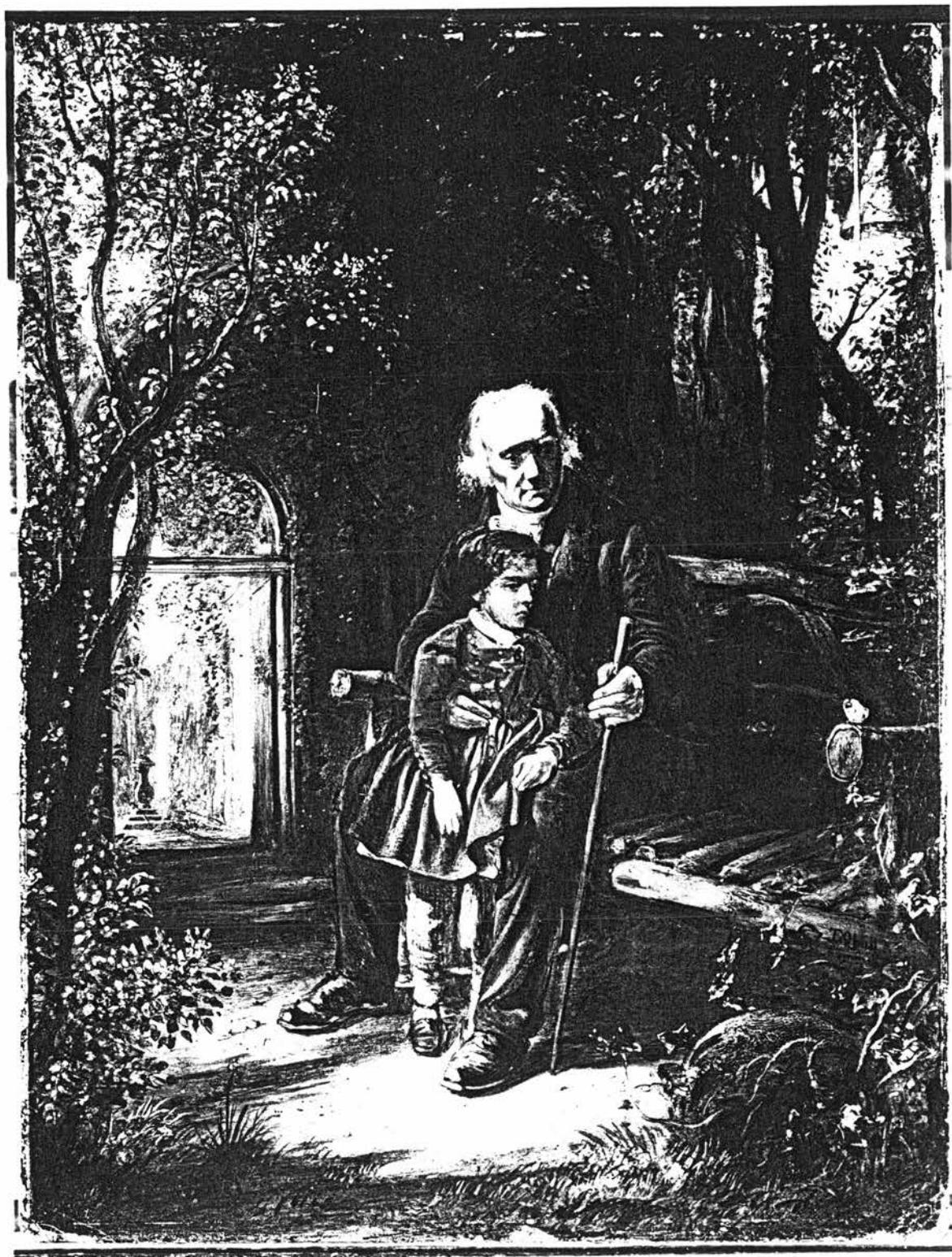


42. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Rev. Dr Thomas Chalmers and his family at Merchiston Castle, 1844

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



43. David Octavius Hill

Rev. Dr Thomas Chalmers and his grandson, 1848

Oil on millboard

Scottish National Portrait Gallery

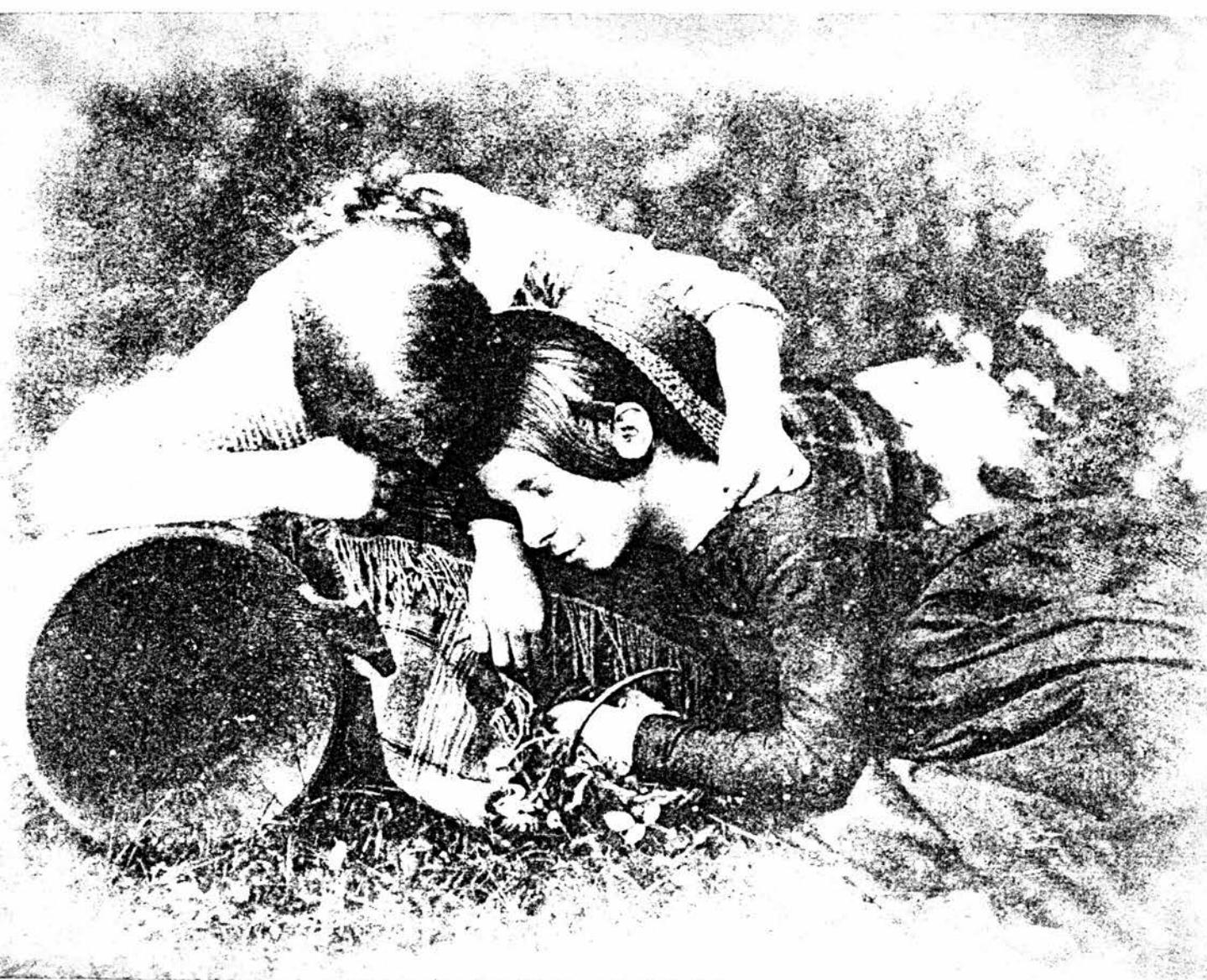


44. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Patricia Morris, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



45. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

'The Gowan,' Margaret and Mary MacCandlish, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

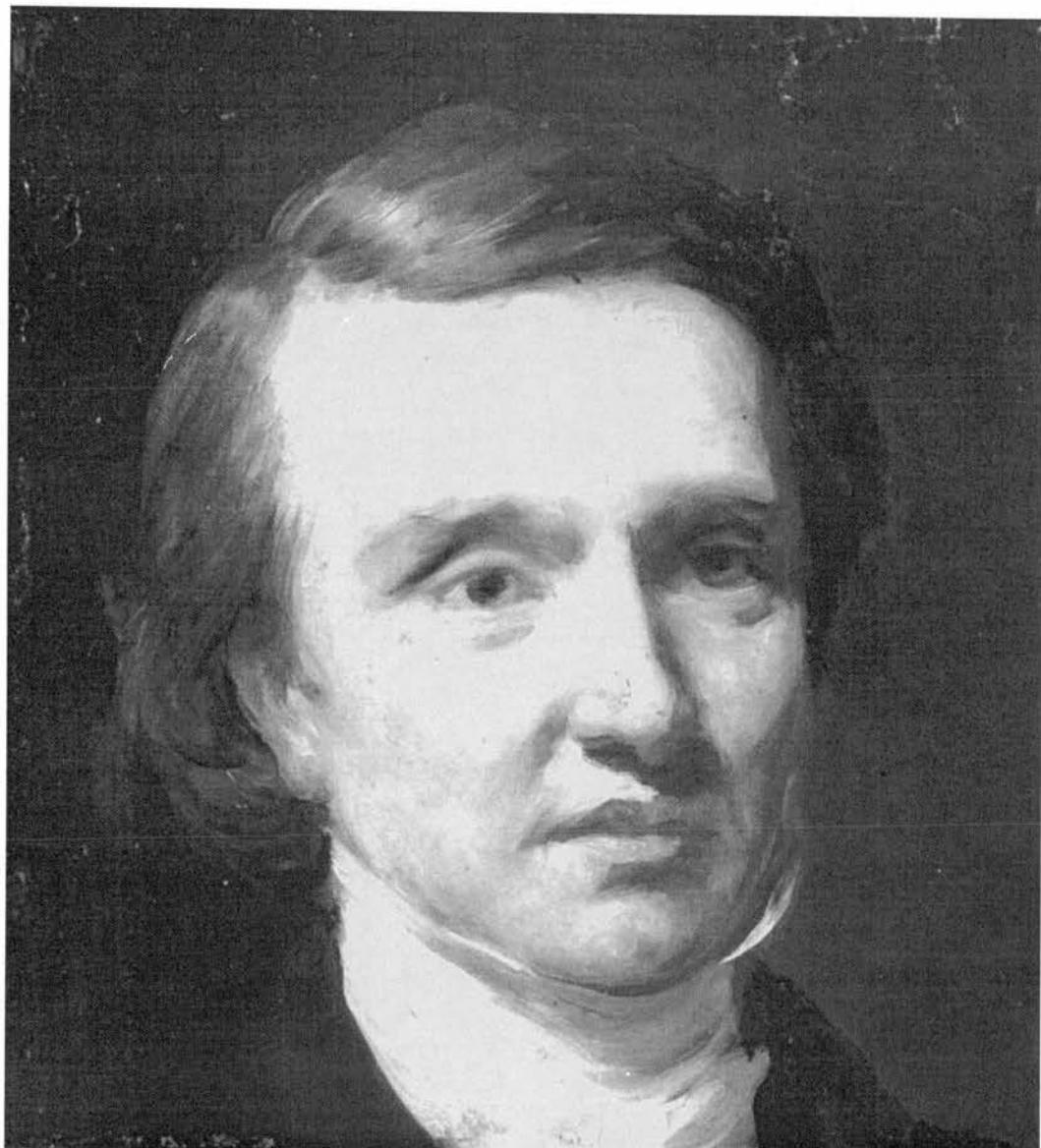


46. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Professor John Wilson, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



47. David Octavius Hill

Probably the Rev. William Bevan

Oil on millboard

Scottish National Portrait Gallery



Dr. R. Knox, Surgeon

48. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Dr Robert Knox, c. 1843

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

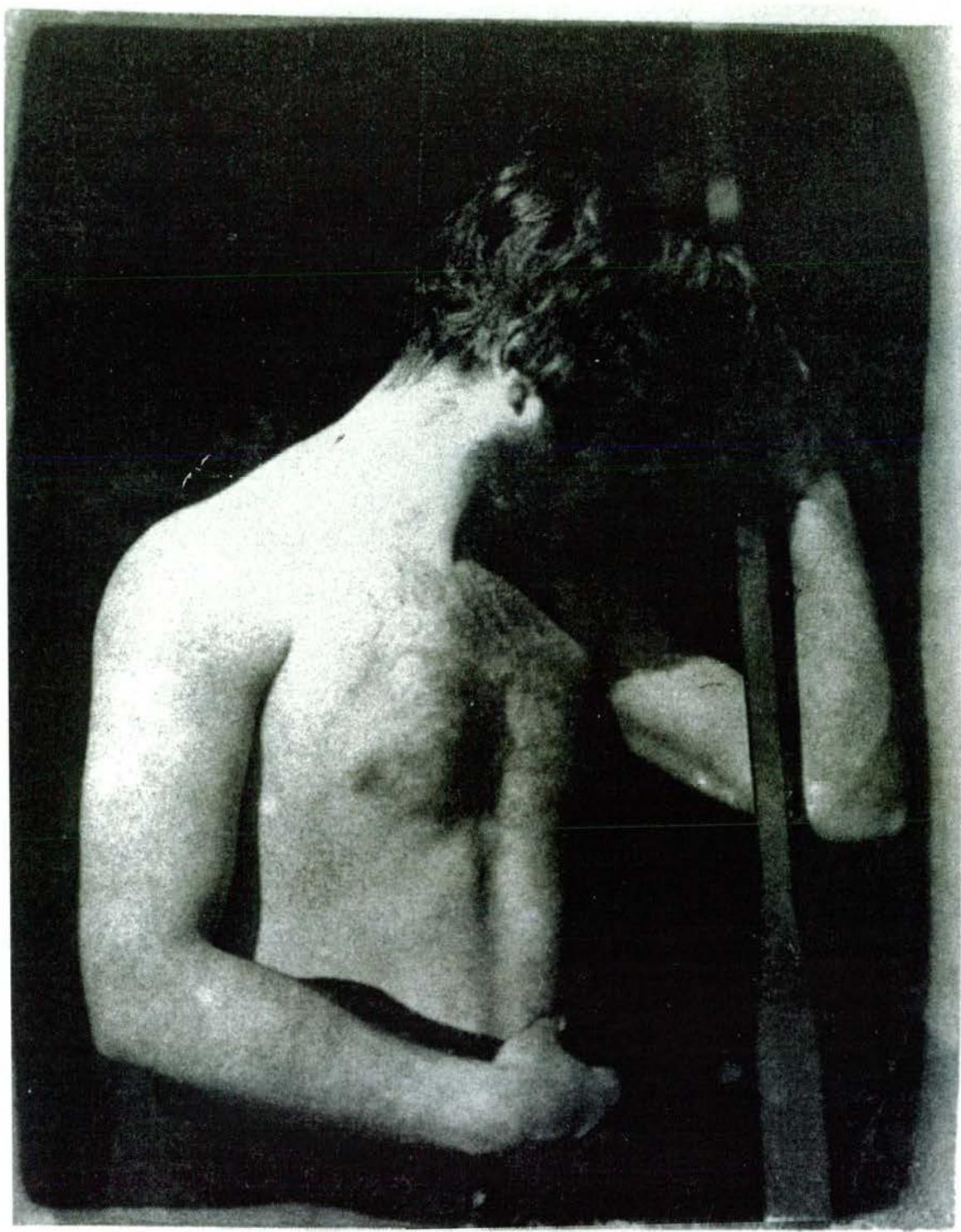


49. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

John Henning, Alexander Handyside Ritchie and D. O. Hill, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

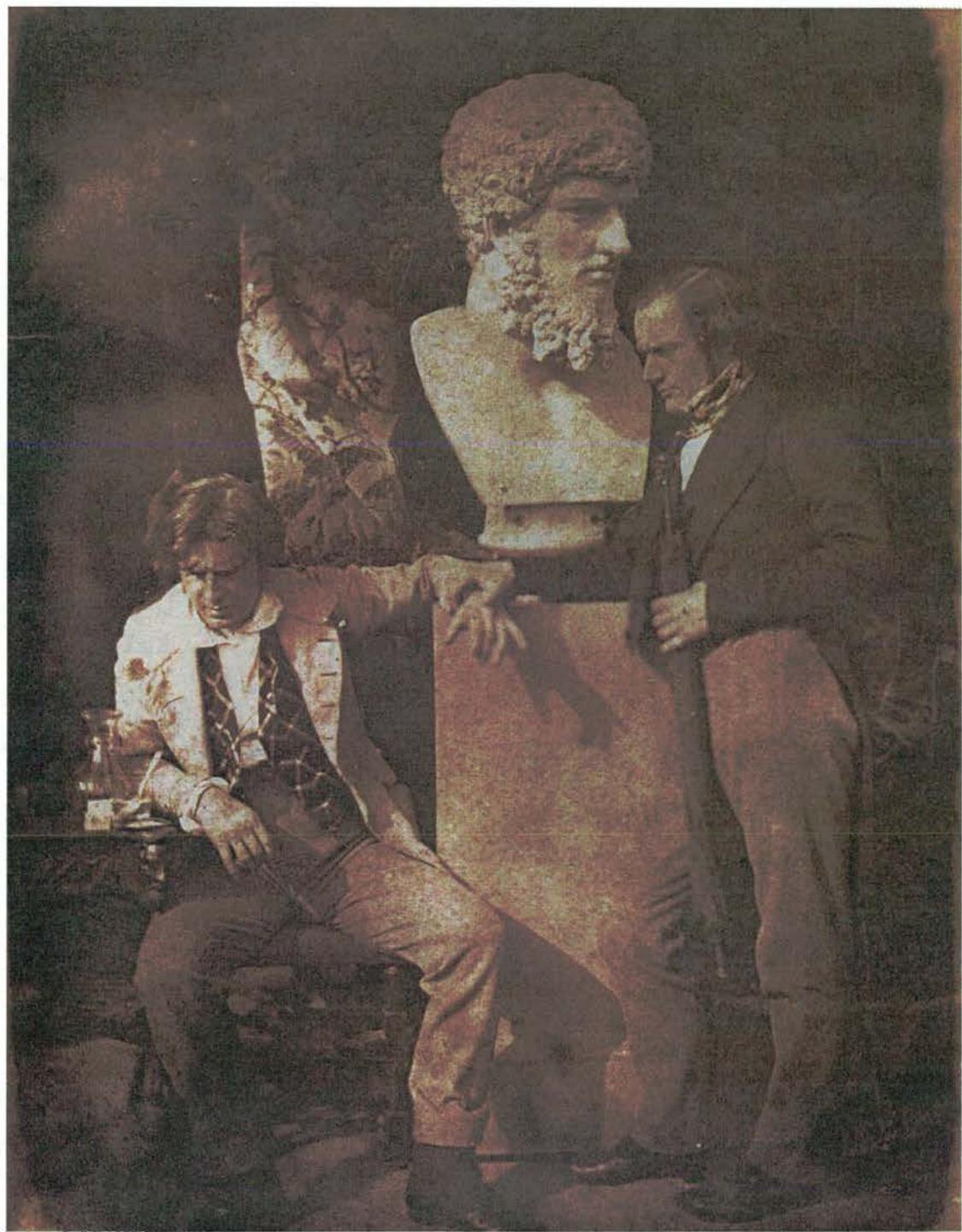


50. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Figure study, Dr George Bell, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

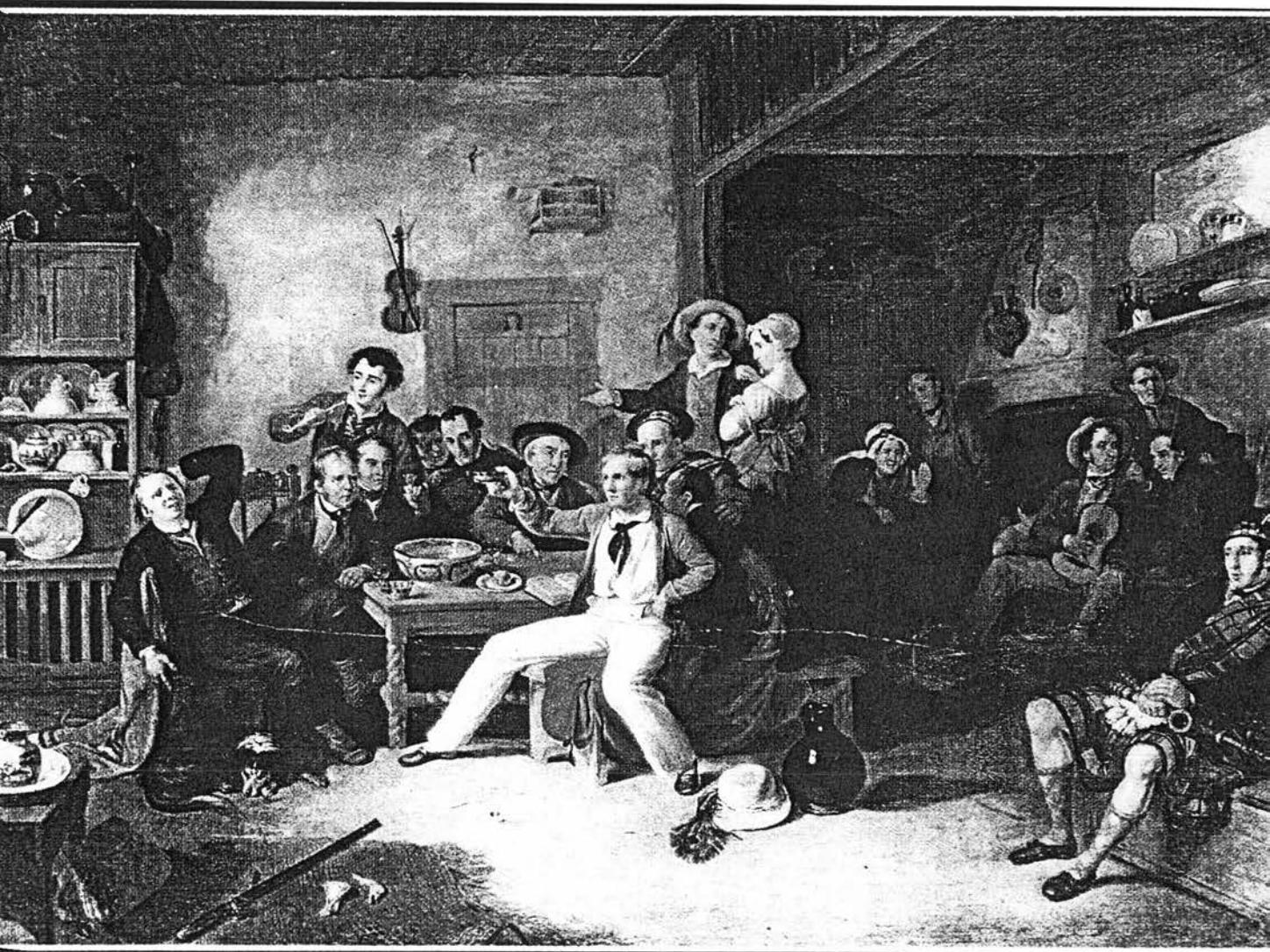


51. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

'The Morning After, "He, greatly daring, dined," D. O. Hill and Professor James Miller, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



52. Sir William Allan

The Ettrick Shepherd's House Heating, or The Celebration of the Birthday of James Hogg, 1823-5

Oil on panel

Scottish National Portrait Gallery

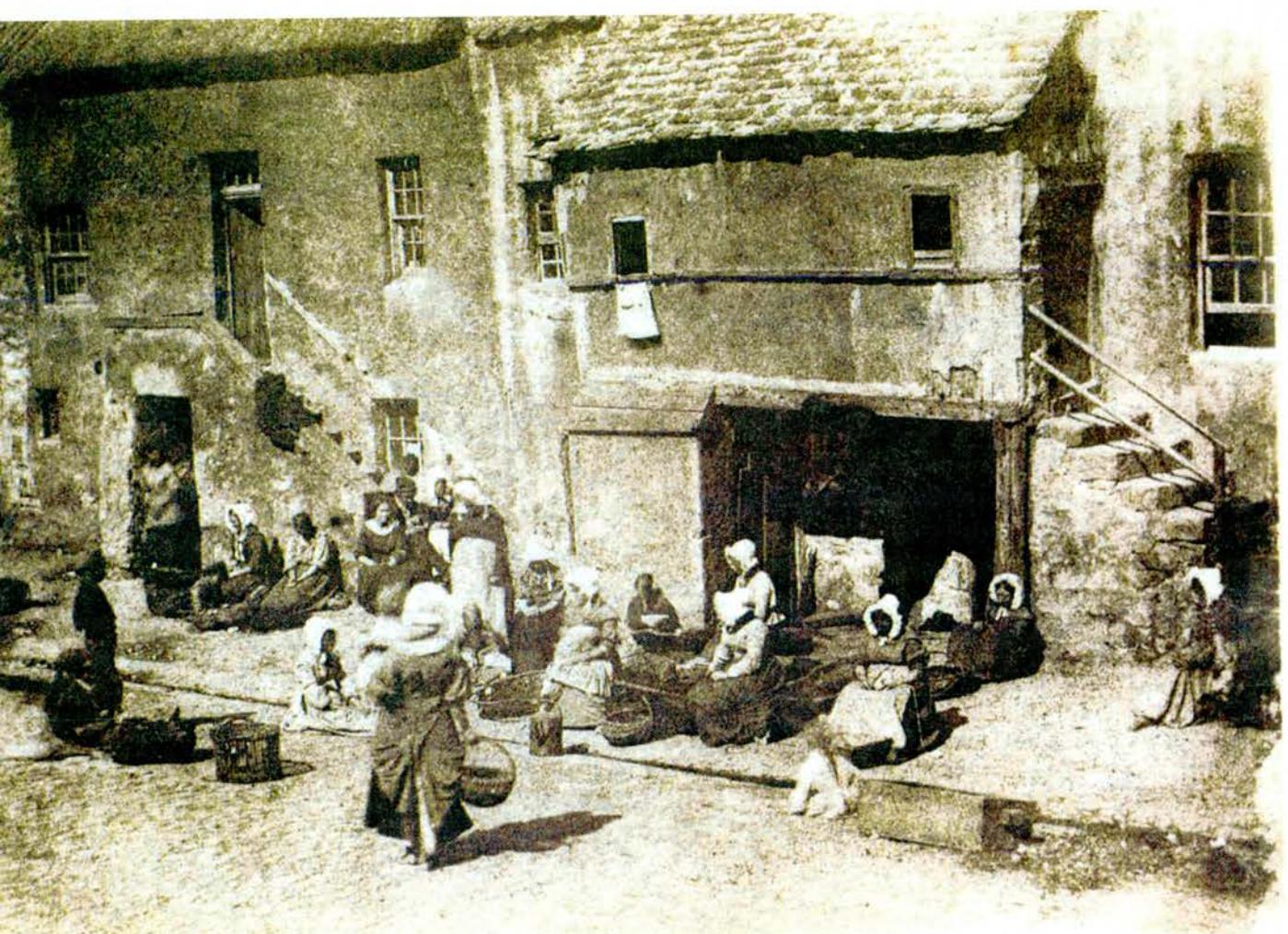


53. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Professor Alexander Campbell Fraser and his class, 1846

Modern print from a failed calotype negative

Glasgow University Library, Special Collections

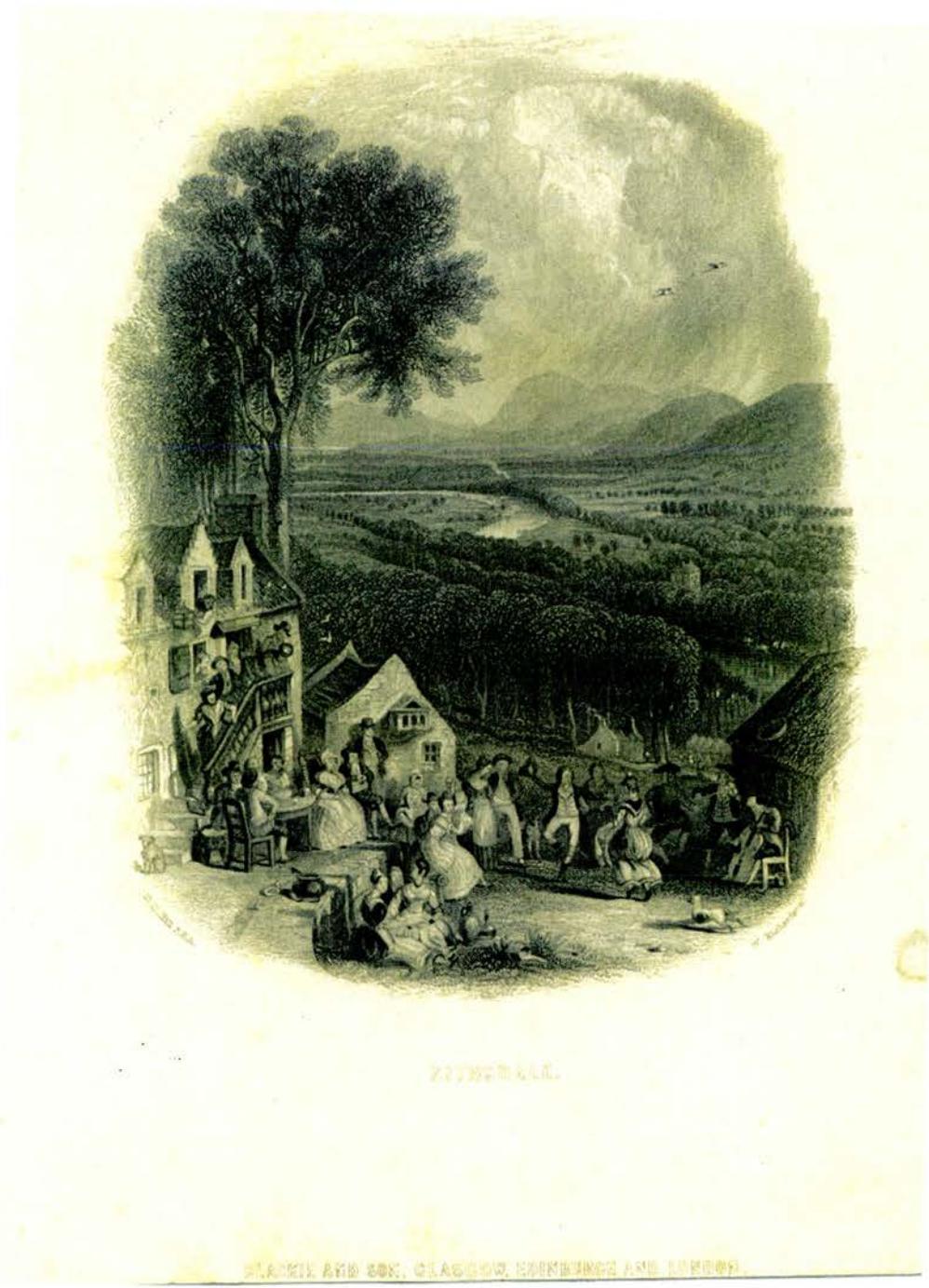


54. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Fisherrow, St Andrews, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

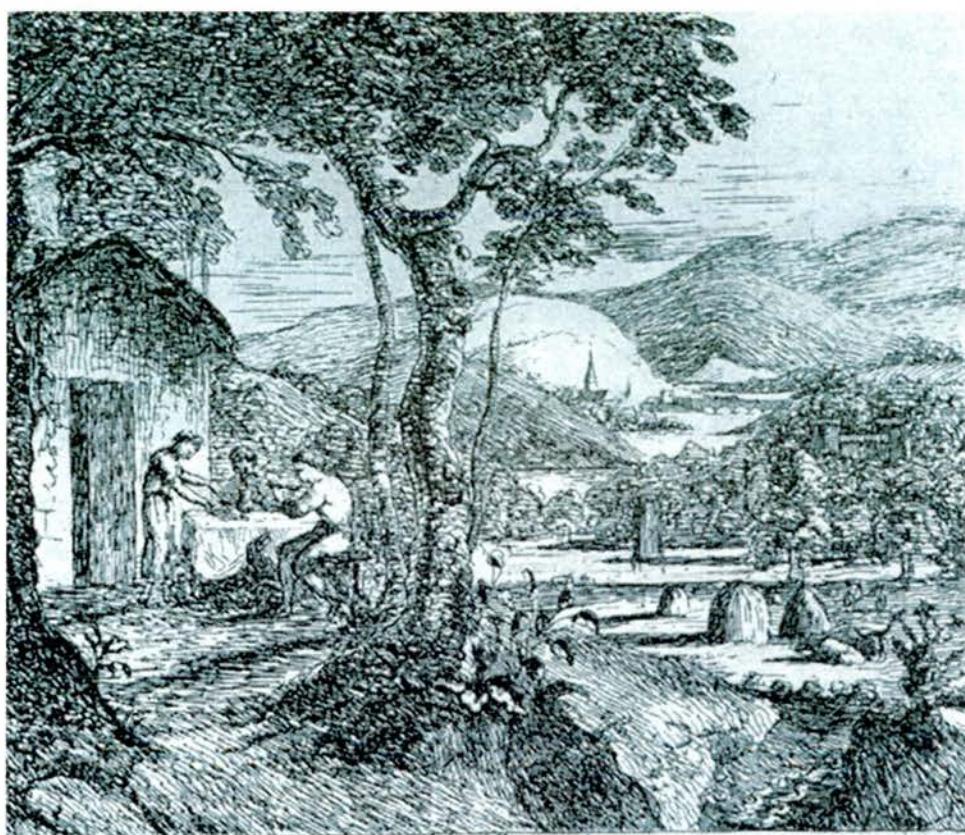


55. David Octavius Hill

Scottish merry-making: view of Nithsdale from the Dalswinton hills

Engraving after the painting of 1833

Published in *The Land of Burns*, 1840



Alexander Runciman c. 1800

56. Alexander Runciman

Landscape for Milton's 'L'Allegro'

Etching

National Gallery of Scotland

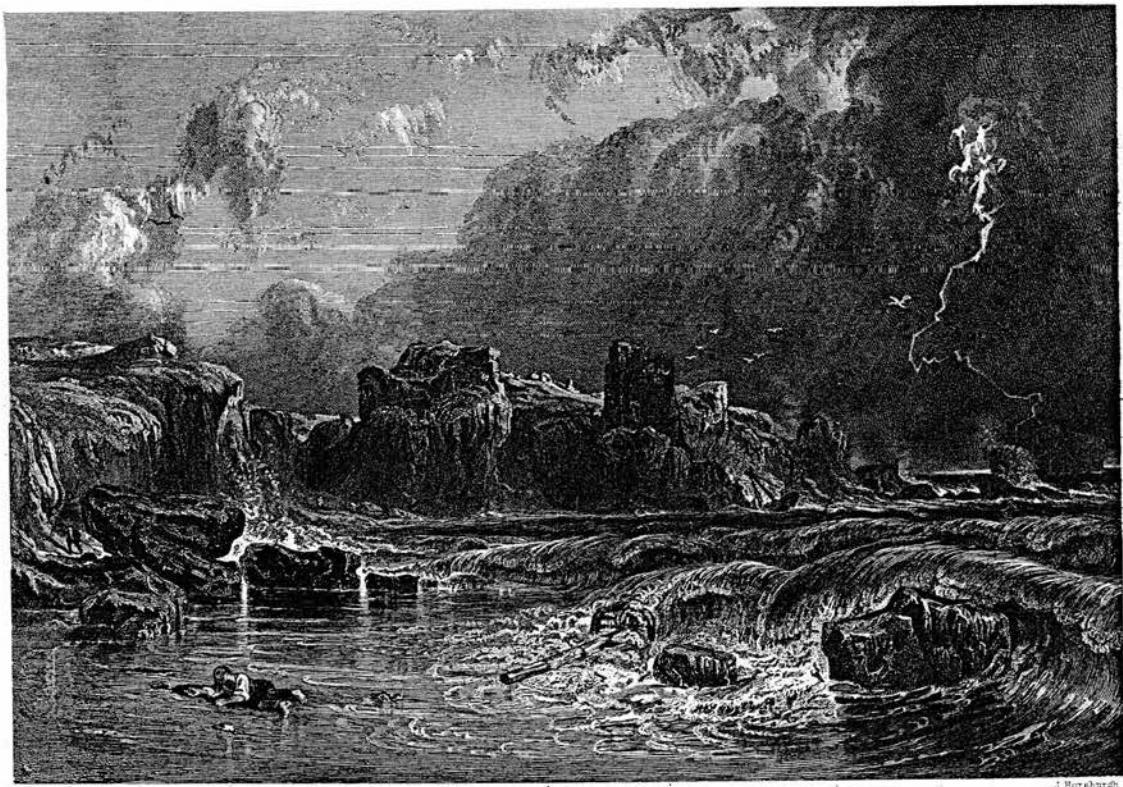


57. J. M. W. Turner

Edinburgh from Calton Hill, 1819

Watercolour

National Gallery of Scotland



D.O.Hill S.A.

J. Horbury

TURNBERRY CASTLE

Printed by W.D. & H. Fox, Edinburgh.

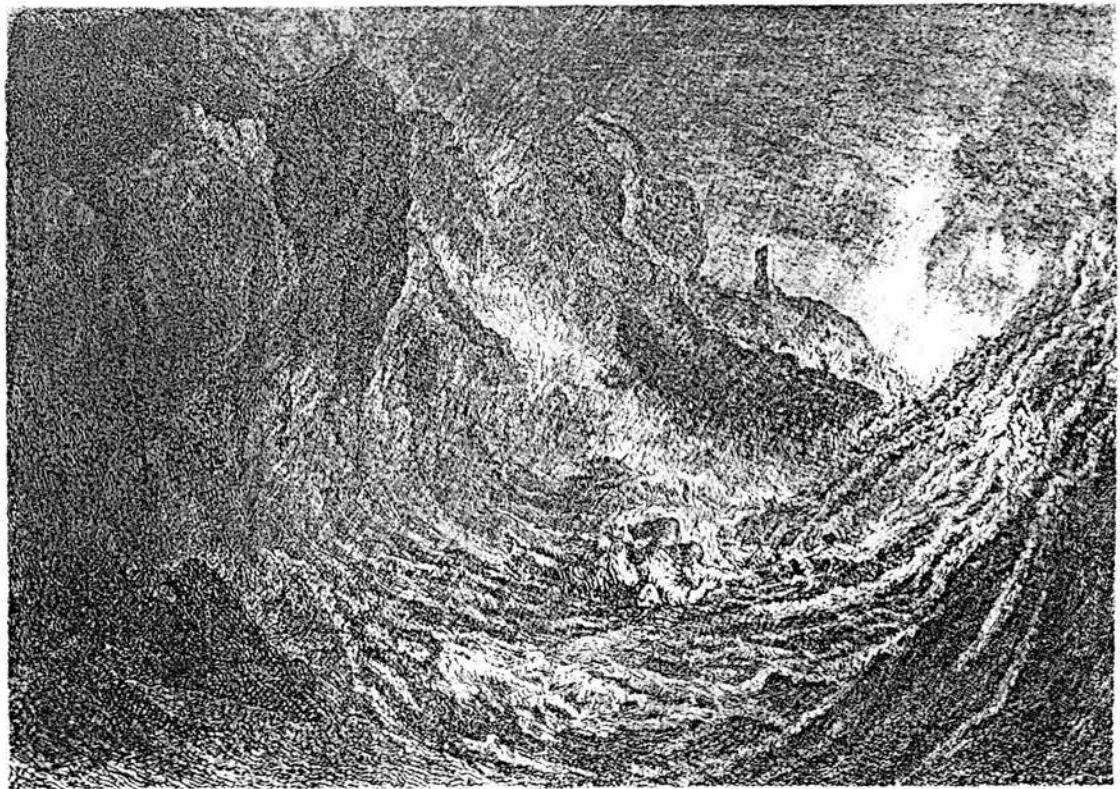
Published by Blackie & Son, Glasgow.

58. David Octavius Hill

Turnberry Castle

Engraving after a painting, c. 1835

From *The Land of Burns*, 1840

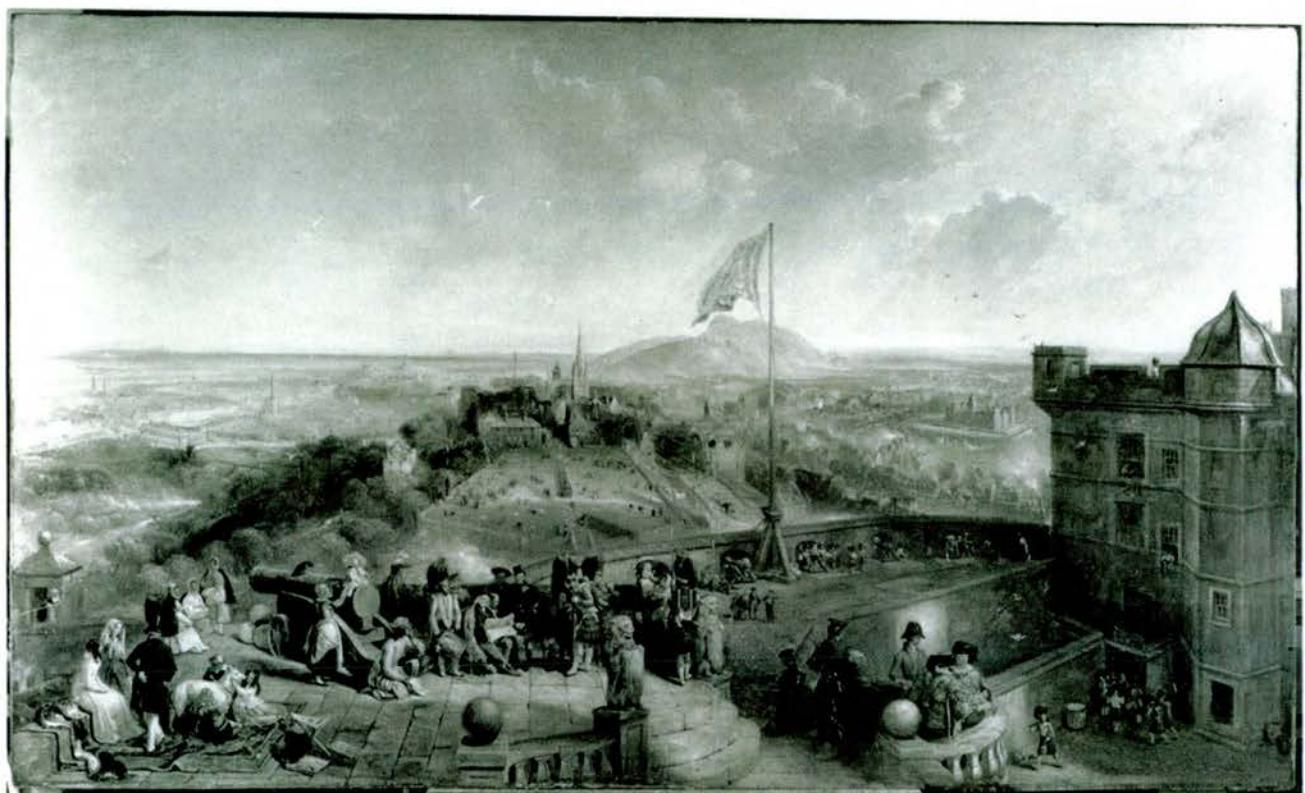


59. J. M. W. Turner

The Lost Sailor

Etching and aquatint

From the *Liber Studiorum*

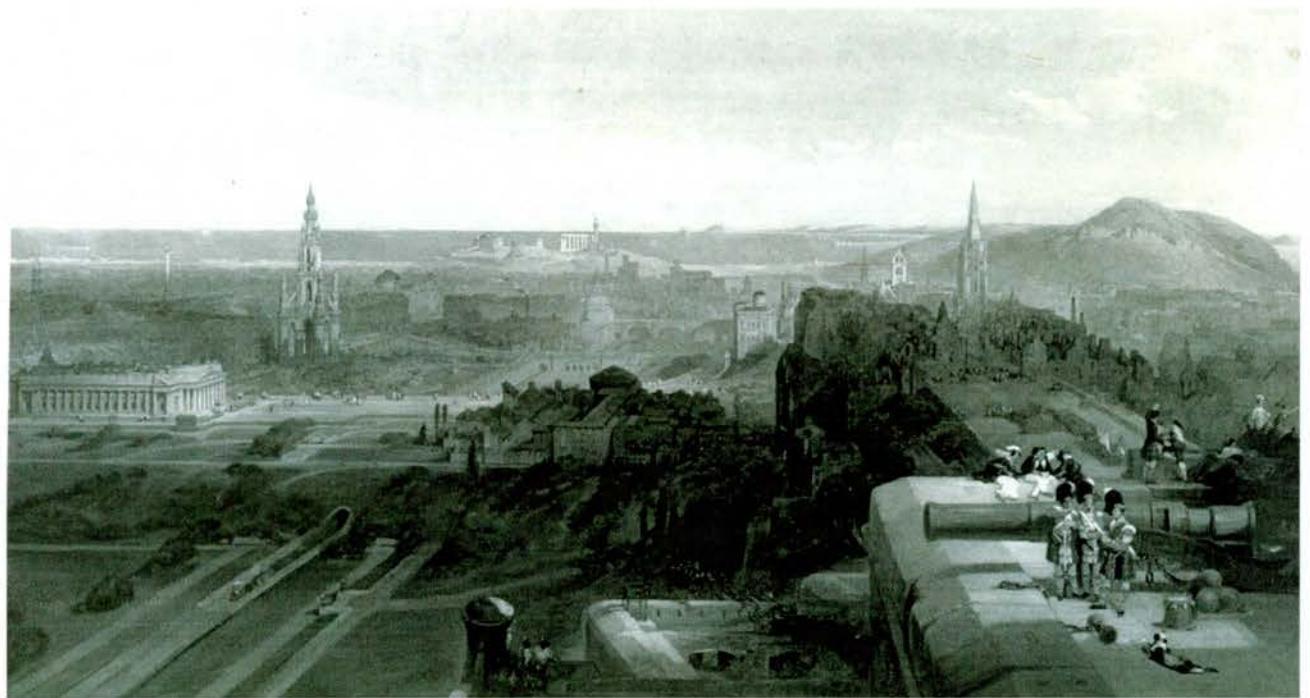


60. David Octavius Hill

Edinburgh from the Castle, 1847

Oil painting

National Gallery of Scotland



61. David Roberts

Edinburgh, 1847

Oil painting

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

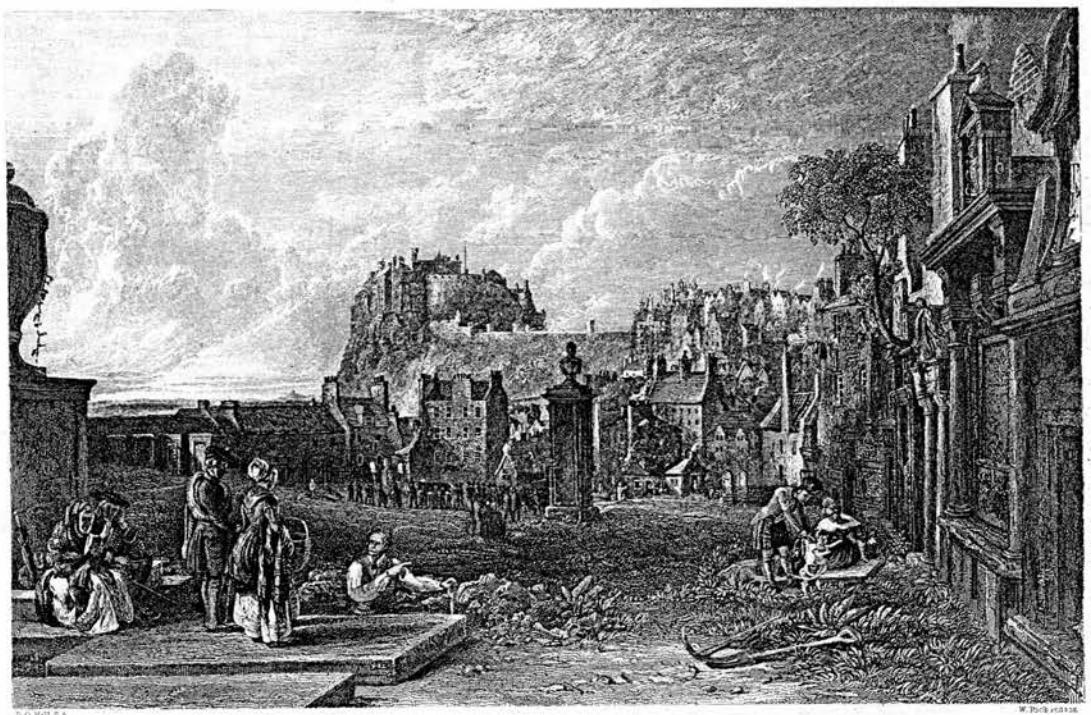


62. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Unknown group, 1843-7

Carbon print from calotype negative

Scottish National Photography Collection



EDINBURGH CASTLE

FROM THE GRAY FRIARS CHURCHYARD

63. David Octavius Hill

Edinburgh Castle from the Gray Friars Churchyard

Engraving after a painting

From *The Land of Burns*, 1840



64. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

The Nasmyth Tomb, Greyfriars's Churchyard, with Thomas Duncan and D. O. Hill,
1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

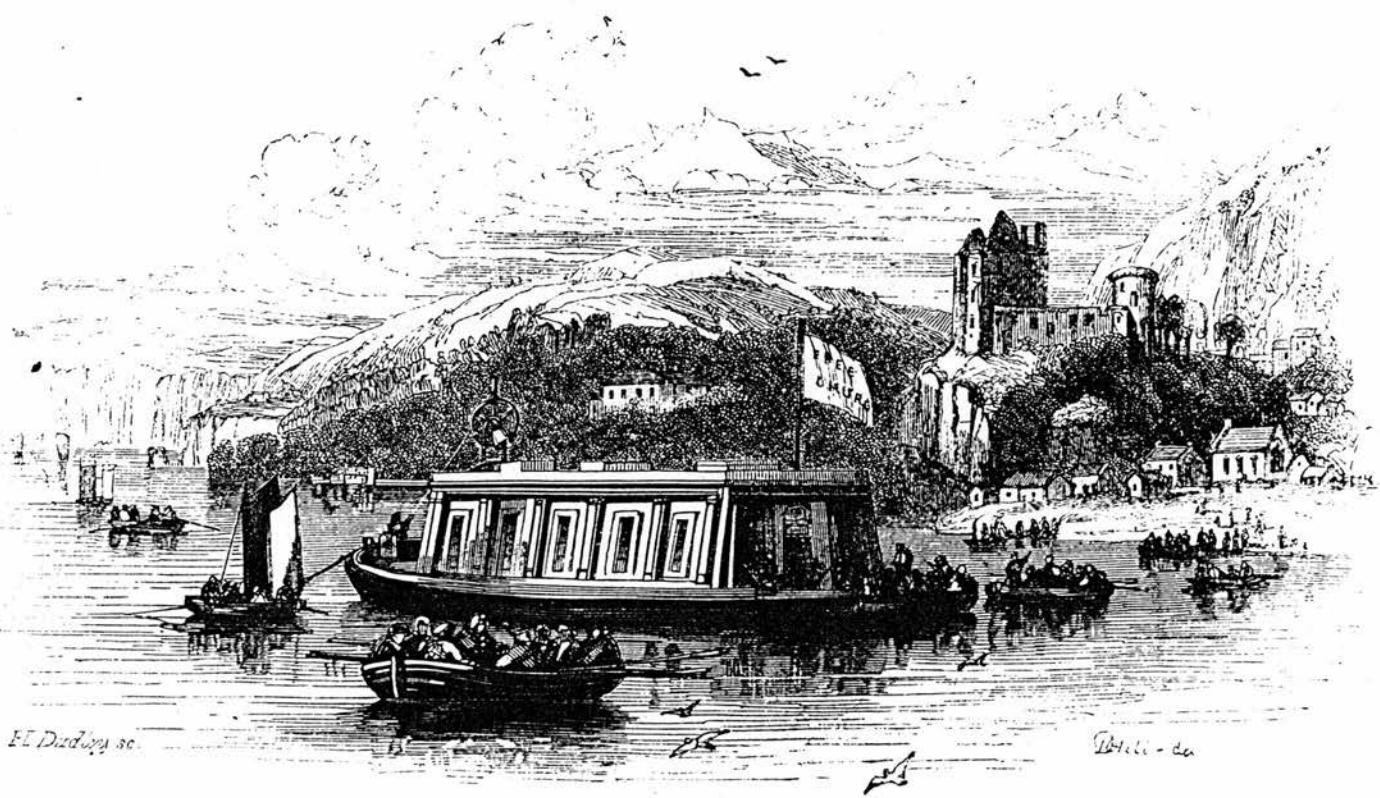


65. David Octavius Hill

'In Memoriam: The Calton,' 1862

Oil painting

Edinburgh City Art Centre



66. David Octavius Hill

Prospectus for a floating church, c. 1846

Engraving

National Library of Scotland

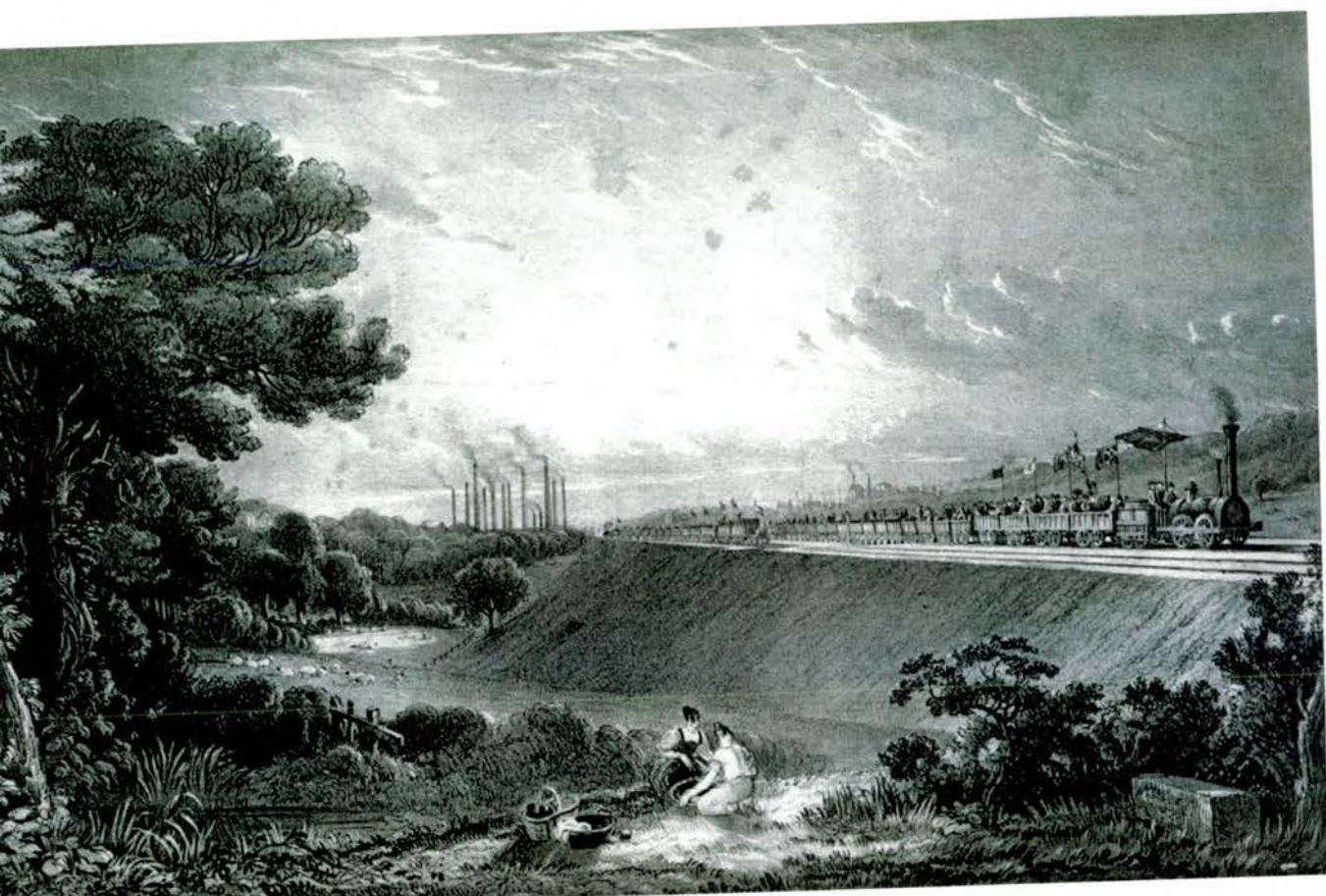


67. David Octavius Hill

Wanlockhead, 1846

Lithograph

From *Illustrations of the Principles of Toleration in Scotland (1846)*

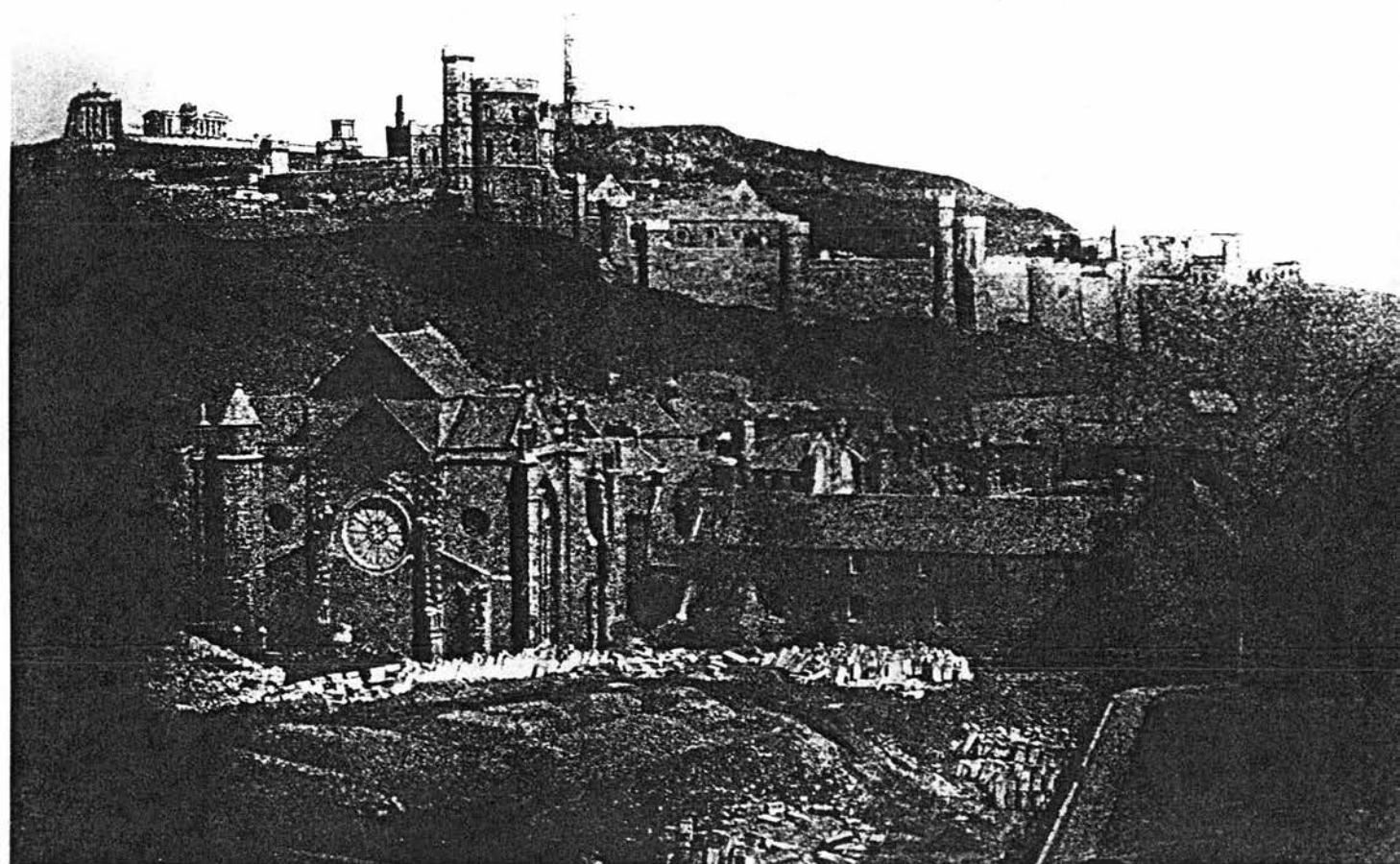


68. David Octavius Hill

The Glasgow and Garnkirk Railway

Lithograph

From *Views of the Glasgow and Garnkirk Railway*, 1832



69. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

The Trinity College Church, c. 1844

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

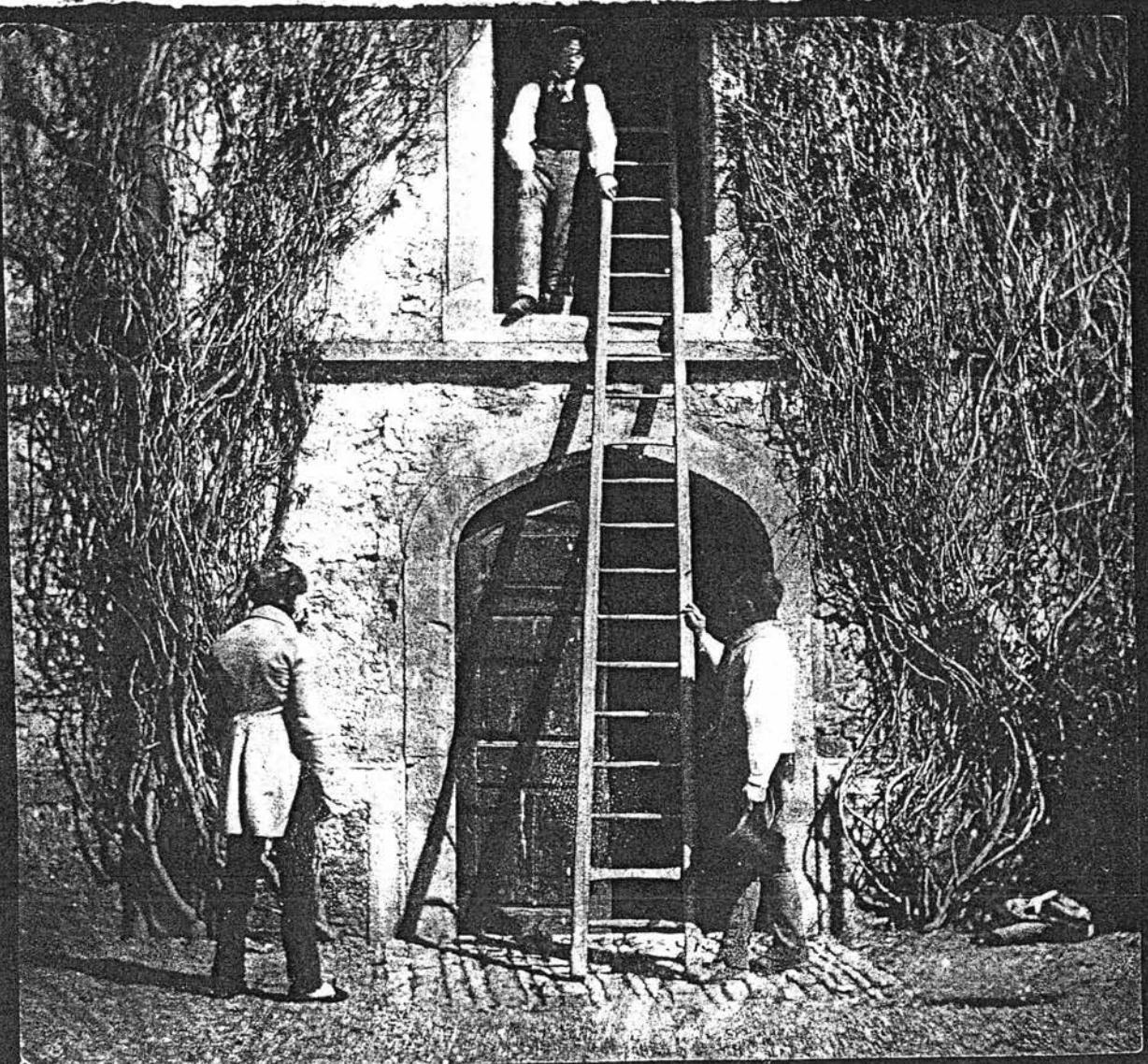


70. David Octavius Hill

St Mungo, St Rollox and St Giles

Lithograph

Tailpiece to *Views of the Glasgow and Garnkirk Railway*, 1832

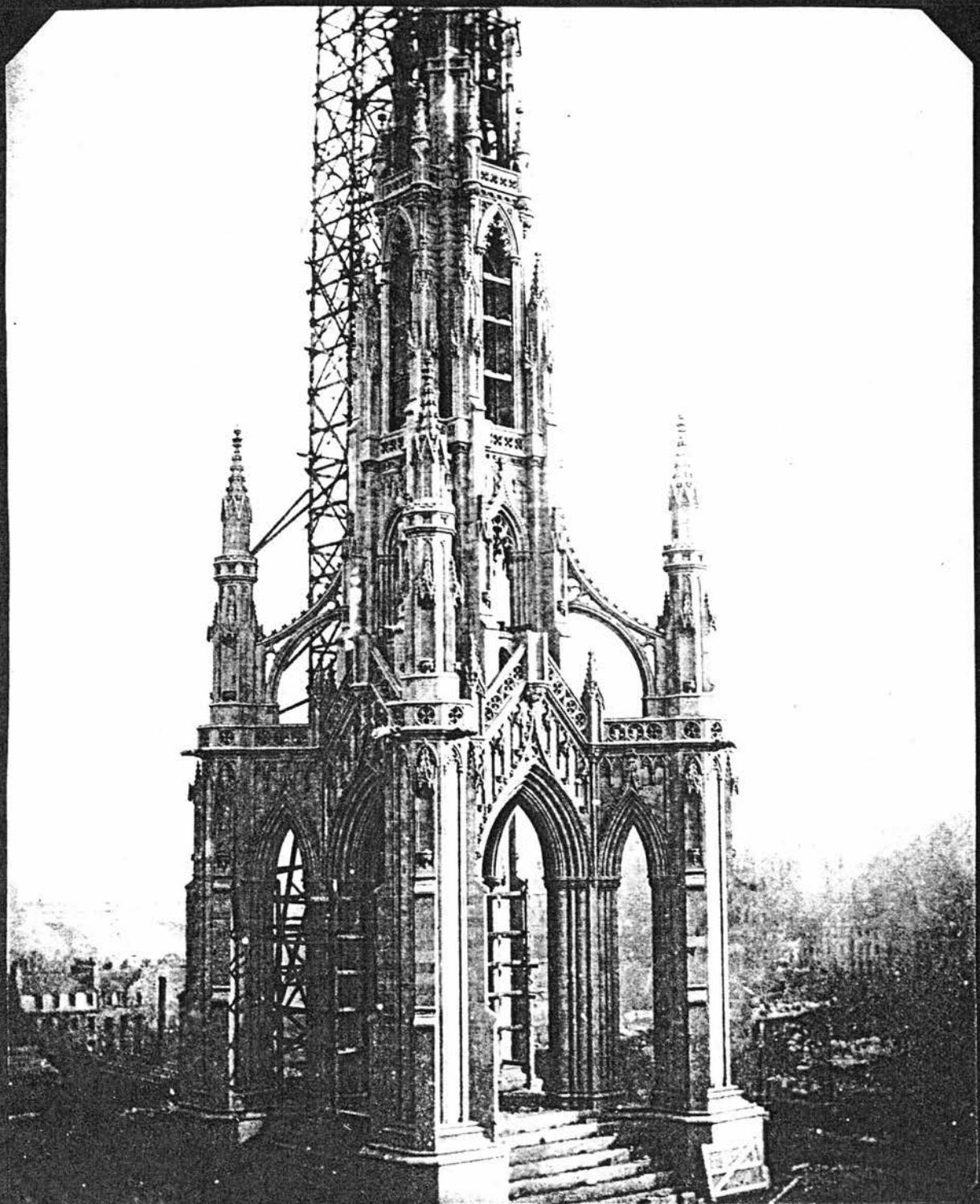


71. William Henry Fox Talbot

The Ladder

Calotype

Fox Talbot Museum



72. W. H. F. Talbot

The Scott Monument, 1844

Calotype

Fox Talbot Museum

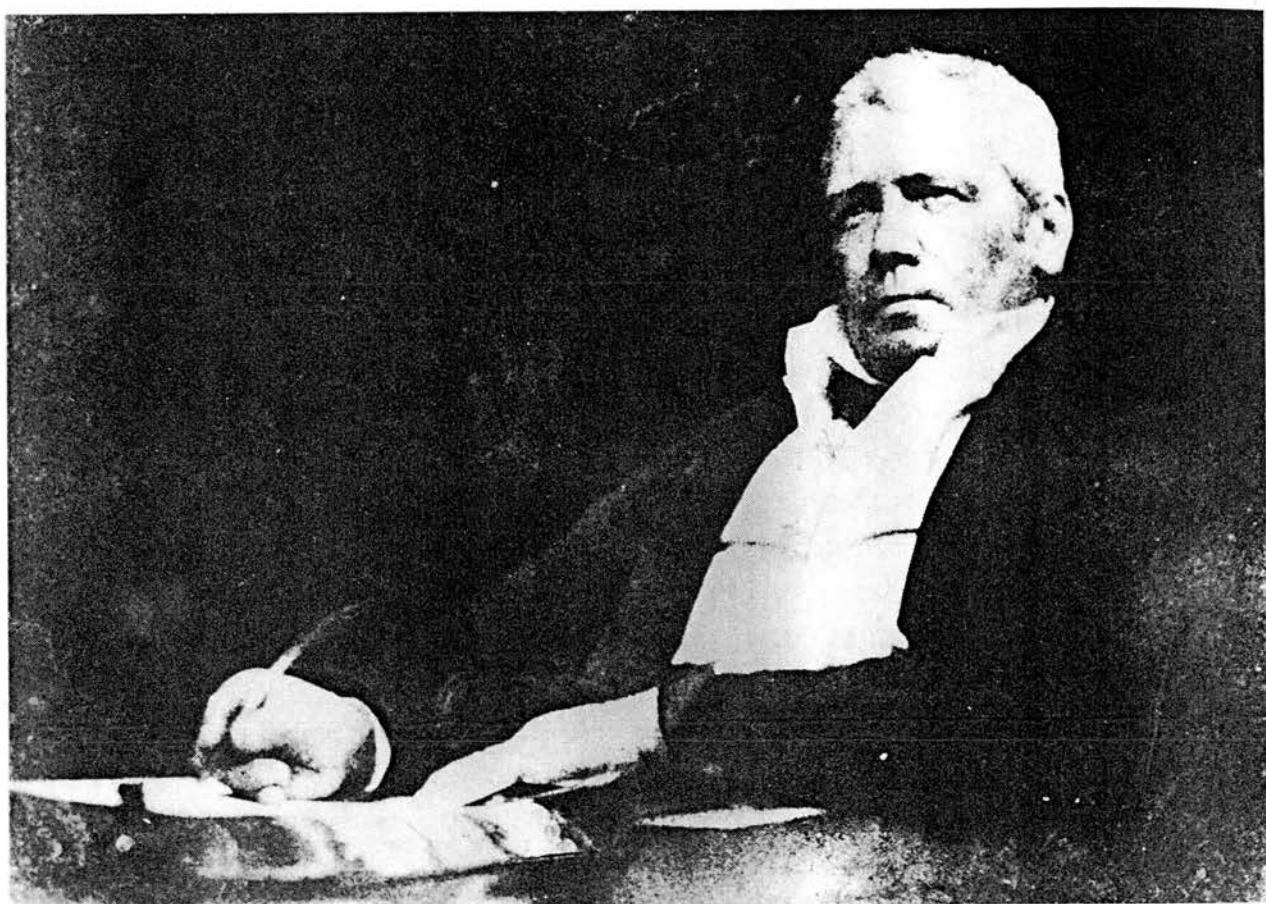


73. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

The Scott Monument, 1844

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

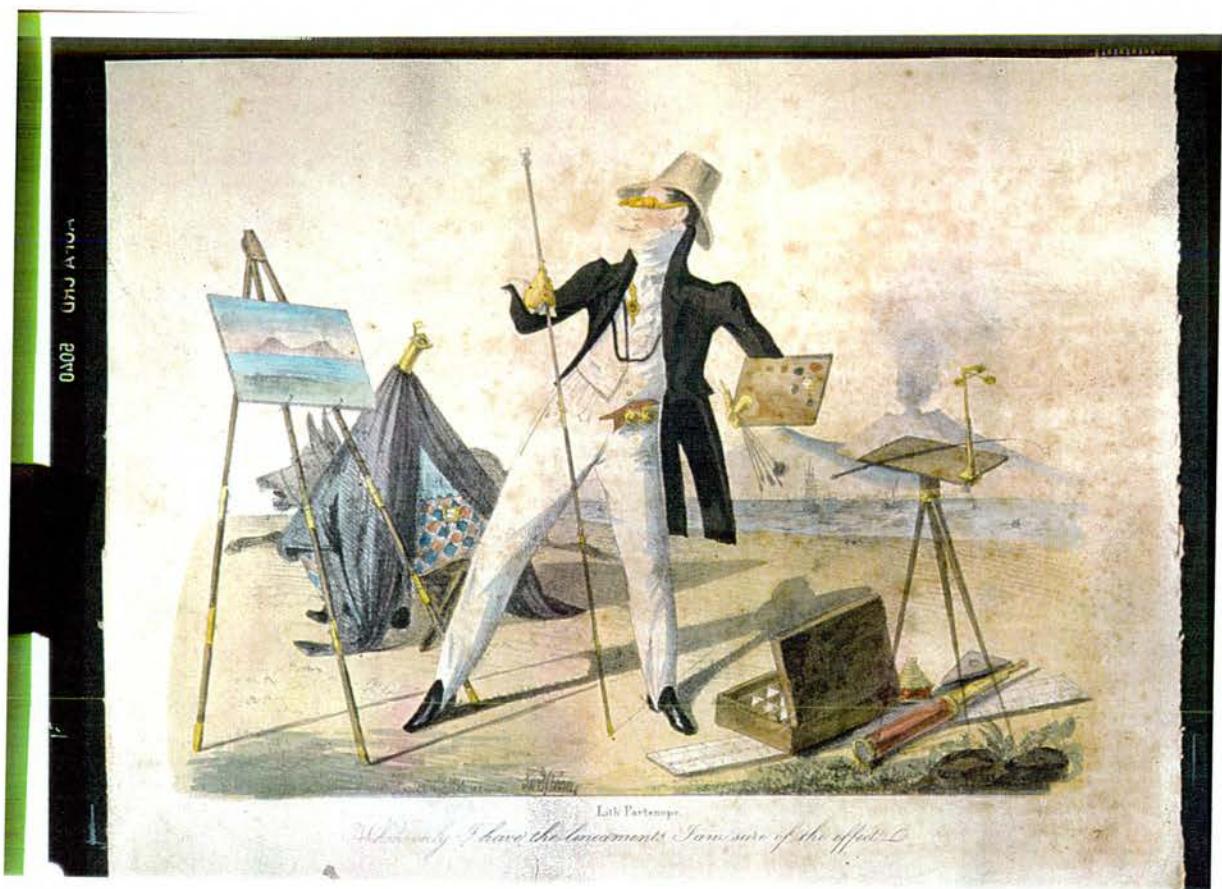


74. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Samuel Aitken, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



75. Carl Johan Lindstrom

*The British artist: 'When only I have the
lineaments, I am sure of the effect.'*

Lithograph

Private collection



76. David Octavius Hill

Rock House interior, c. 1852

Ink drawing

Whereabouts unknown, from a glass negative in Glasgow University Library,
Special Collections



77. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

The grounds of Merchiston Castle School, 1844

Modern print from a calotype negative

Glasgow University Library, Special Collections

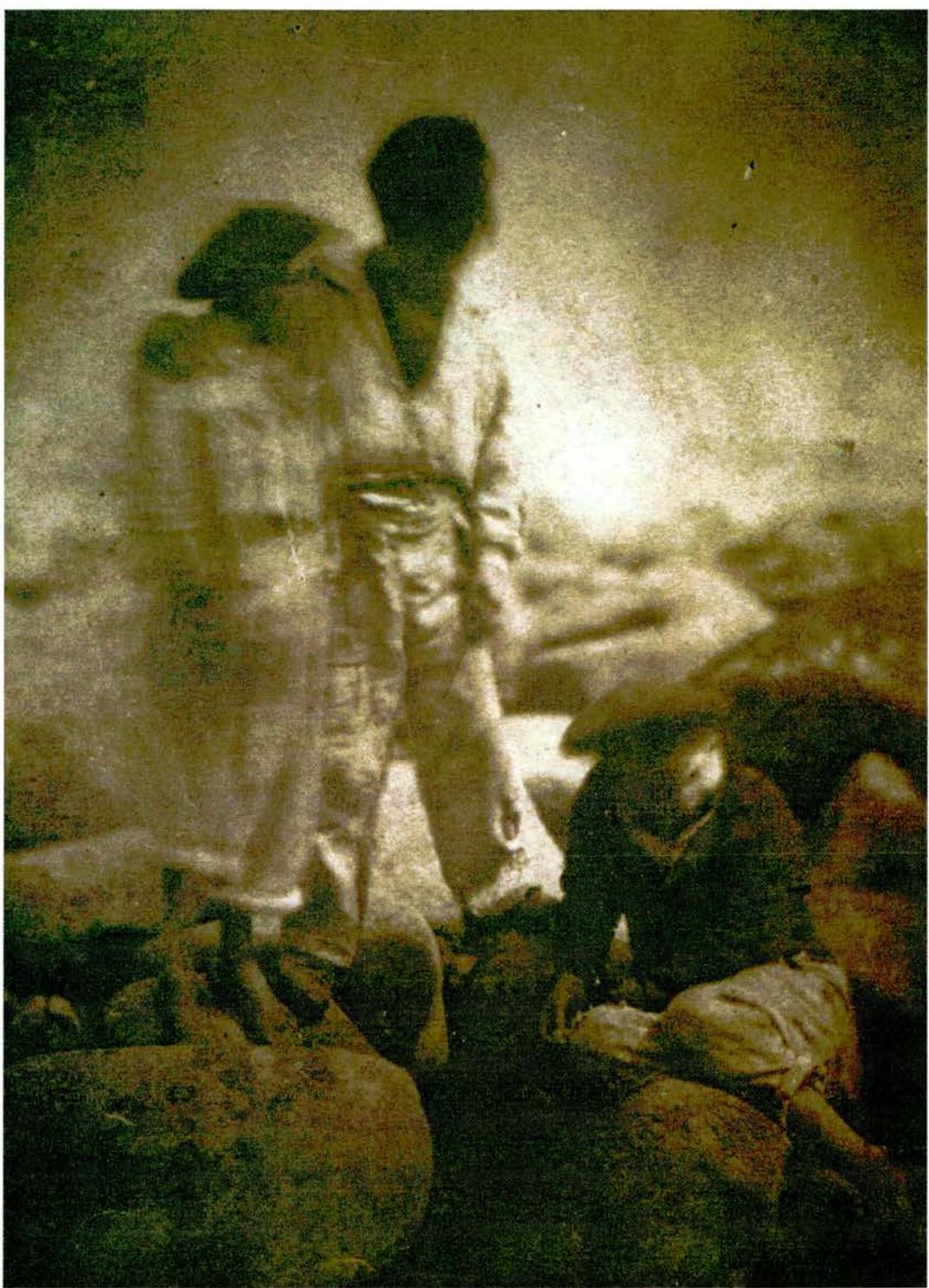


78. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

The Fairy Tree at Colinton, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



79. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

Boys standing on boulders, c. 1846

Modern calotype from an original negative

Scottish National Photography Collection, from the negative in Glasgow University Library, Special Collections

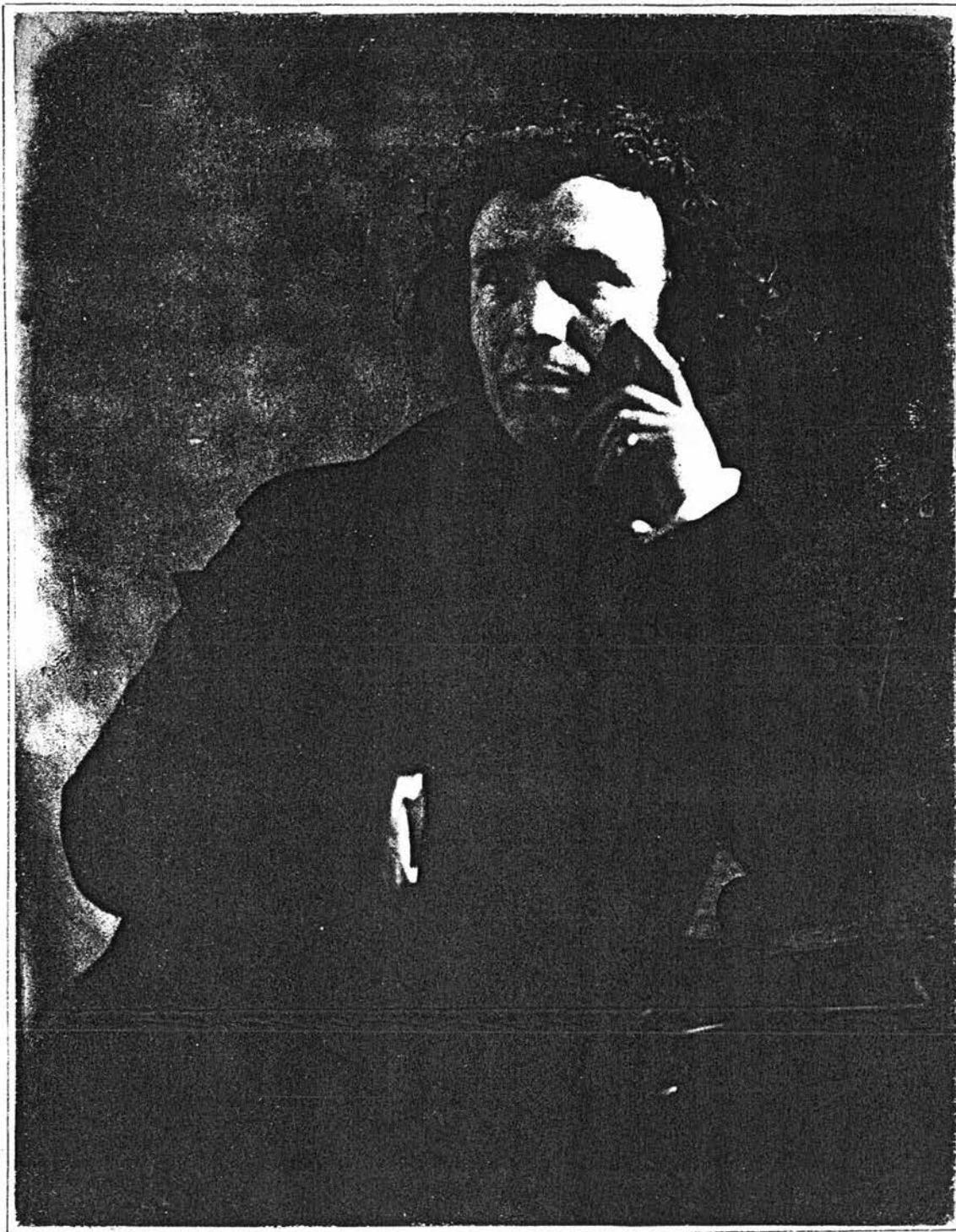


80. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

The Misses Farnie with the puppy, 'Brownie,' 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection



D .
Sir John Steell. R.S.A.
Sculptror
Indexed

81. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson

John Steell, 1843-7

Calotype

Scottish National Photography Collection

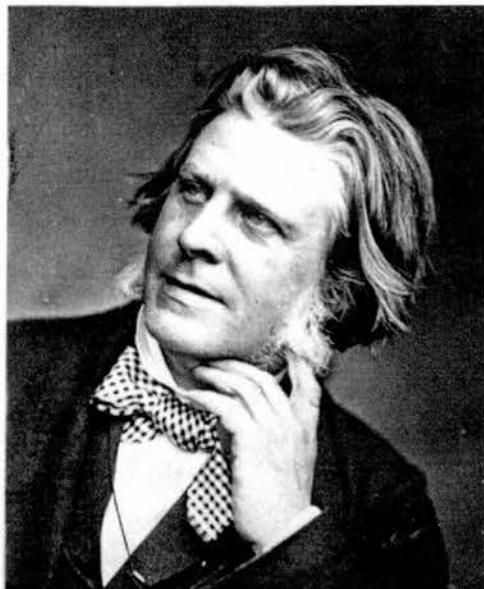


82. D. O. Hill and Alexander MacGlashon

'Burd Alane' (only child), c. 1860

Albumen print

Scottish National Photography Collection



83. John Adamson

David Octavius Hill, c. 1855

Albumen print

Royal Scottish Museum, John Adamson album