

**The Child Writer:**  
**Graphic Literacy and the Scottish Educational System, 1700-1820**

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**Abstract**

The story of Enlightenment literacy is often reconstructed from textbooks and manuals, with the implicit focus being what children were reading. But far less attention has been devoted to how they mastered the scribal techniques that allowed them to manage knowledge on paper. Focusing on Scotland, I use handwritten manuscripts to reveal that children learned to write in a variety of modes, each of which required a set of graphic techniques. These modes and skills constituted a pervasive form of graphic literacy. I first explain how children learned to write for different reasons in diverse domestic and institutional settings. I then explore how they acquired graphic literacy through the common techniques of copying, commonplacing, composing, book-keeping, scribbling and drawing. In the end we will have a more detailed picture of how children used writing as an indispensable mode of learning during the Enlightenment.

## Introduction

Within the wider history of pre-nineteenth century education, the act of writing anything beyond a signature or a scribble has played a limited role. To be sure, the presence of writing is frequently identified as a subject in school textbooks or as a goal for the curriculum. But little sustained attention has been given to how schoolchildren outside elite settings mastered the act of writing, or, more broadly, how they internalised the techniques of graphic literacy required to inscribe the ordered lists, sentences, and tables into the commonplace books, ledgers, marginalia, doodles and diaries they would eventually end up making as adults. Indeed, as recently shown by Ruth Bottigheimer, Jill Shefrin, Mary Hilton, and Susan M. Stabile, the histories of the material and visual culture of objects made or actually used by children at home or in classrooms have only just begun to be explored.<sup>1</sup>

In this essay I offer an account of how writing served as a crucial mode of childhood learning in the Scottish educational system during the long eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> While the historiographical tools of literacy and education in the Atlantic world form the background of my analysis,<sup>3</sup> my line of enquiry will be based on the graphic approach to learning developed within the visual anthropology of Tim Ingold and Jack Goody. Both Ingold and

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth B. Bottigheimer, 'The Book on the Bookseller's Shelf and The Book in the English Child's Hand', in Donelle Ruwe (Ed.), *Culturing the Child 1690-1914. Essays in Honor of Mitzi Myers* (Lanham MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 3-28; May Hilton and Jill Shefrin (Eds.), *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), see especially Hilton and Shefrin's introduction; Susan M. Stabile, *Memory's Daughters: The Material Culture of Remembrance in Eighteenth-century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> For notable studies on the history of Scottish education during the long eighteenth century, see: James Grant, *History of the Burgh and Parish Schools of Scotland* (London: William Collins, 1876); John Edgar, *History of Early Scottish Education* (Edinburgh: J. Thin, 1893); Alexander Wright, *The History of Education and of the Old Parish Schools of Scotland* (Edinburgh: J. Menzies, 1898); John Strong, *A History of Secondary Education in Scotland: an Account of Scottish Secondary Education from Early Times to the Education Act Of 1908* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909). For influential late twentieth-century histories that cover all or part of the long eighteenth century, see: Alexander Law, *Education in Edinburgh in the Eighteenth Century* (University of London Press, 1965). James M. Beale, *A History of the Burgh and Parochial Schools of Fife*, Donald J. Withrington (Ed.), (Edinburgh: Scottish Council for Research in Education, 1983). Robert Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People, 1750-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995). See for a parallel study of England, see Cowan, Steven, *The Growth of Public Literacy in Eighteenth-Century England* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London 2012),

<sup>3</sup> I have found E. Jennifer Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005) and Stabile, *Memory's Daughters*, particularly helpful on this point.

Goody emphasise that learning to write is a long and difficult process that is best understood by taking a very close look at how the graphic artefacts, especially those made through writing and drawing, are created and used on a daily basis in sites of learning.<sup>4</sup>

At one level, the graphic artefacts of eighteenth-century childhood education include the textbooks traditionally studied by historians of education, particularly those that influenced how children conceived the shape of letters and the graphic layout of a text. But at a much deeper developmental level, such objects also include hitherto neglected paper tools such as the copybooks, diaries, commonplace books, manuscript textbooks and ledger-books through which children learned to write or draw every day. In particular, Ingold argues that the lines of graphic artefacts – either as symbols or shapes – are forms to which inscribers learn to attach meaning.<sup>5</sup> In making such a move, he jointly emphasizes both the materiality and visibility of scribal artefacts used by learners.<sup>6</sup> In what follows, I use Ingold's graphic insights to transform the graphite and ink lines of Scottish children into a fresh corpus of evidence that can be used to cast new light on the central role played by writing, especially the act of copying, as an indispensable educational tool.

### ***Learning to Write***

A core point underscored by most histories of literacy and education in recent decades is

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<sup>4</sup> Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (London: Routledge, 2007). Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) and *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> Ingold (2007) repeatedly underscores this point and it rests on his longstanding interest in how the act of copying – either verbal or graphic – plays a core role in learning and human cognition. See Tim Ingold, 'From the Transmission of Representation to the Education of Attention', in Harvey Whitehouse (Ed.), *The Debated Mind: Evolutionary Psychology Versus Ethnography* (New York: Berg, 2001), 113-153.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the joint material and visual emphasis of Ingold's anthropology, see his *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (London: Routledge, 2011), especially Chapter 2, 'Materials against Materiality', 19-32.

that knowing how to read and knowing how to write are two different cognitive abilities.<sup>7</sup> Recent histories of child writers also have shown that children learned different genres of writing, and that children who knew how to write did not necessarily know how to write well.<sup>8</sup> This being the case, the next two sections lay out the techniques and tools through which Scottish children learned to write in communal settings, either at home or in institutions.

The writing skills of Enlightenment children varied based on age, ability, interest, environment and mode of instruction. The main sites of early learning were homes, charity schools, village (or neighbourhood) schools, workhouses and hospitals.<sup>9</sup> One of the most important factors that influenced how a child wrote or eventually made a notebook was the context of her education. The foundations of organised writing in Scotland were laid when children first learned to recognise the letters and numbers printed in hornbooks, ABCs and the Shorter Catechism of the Church of Scotland.<sup>10</sup> The common act of learning letters with a paperback ABC at home during the 1760s was once recounted in an autobiographical memoir written by the poet and dramatist Joanna Baillie. The daughter of a minister, her earliest memory was sitting on the stairs of Bothwell Manse near Hamilton, Scotland. Her sister held 'a paper on which was marked the large letters of the ABC' and she loudly repeated the alphabet.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The classic formulation of this point is T. C. Smout, 'Born Again at Cambuslang: New Evidence on Popular Religion and Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', *Past and Present*, **97** (1982), 114-127.

<sup>8</sup> M. O. Grenby, *The Child Reader: 1700-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Arianne Baggerman and Rudolf Dekker, *Child of the Enlightenment: Revolutionary Europe Reflected in a Boyhood Diary*, Diane Webb (trans.), (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> For household education, Marjorie Plant, *The Domestic Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1952), Chapter 1; John Mason, 'Scottish Charity Schools in the Eighteenth Century', *The Scottish Historical Review*, **33** (1954), 1-13.

<sup>10</sup> The Westminster Shorter Catechism was set in 1648 by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. It was published in various forms throughout the eighteenth century to promote piety and literacy. See *The Confession of Faith* (Edinburgh: Lumisden and Robertson, 1736); *The Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechism* (Edinburgh: E. Robertson, 1757); *The A, B, C, with the Shorter Catechism* (Aberdeen: Chalmers, 1737). All of these texts went through multiple editions.

<sup>11</sup> Judith Bailey Slagle, *Joanna Baillie: A Literary Life* (London: Associated University Press, 2002), 47.

As intimated by Baillie's account and by Scottish instruction manuals, it seems that children learned to say and recognise the letters first and then learned to write them out later. Baillie, for example, began reading the alphabet with her sister at the age of three but read in a 'very imperfect manner' until she was sent to a dayschool in Hamilton when she was eight or nine. But encountering the pages of an *ABC* at such a young age imparted skills that would help children write in the future. Looking at the layout and letters of an *ABC* exposed them to a simple graphic format and shaped their ability to perceive the spatialisation of words on the page. Put more simply, *ABC* charts (printed or written) allowed family members or tutors to train children to recognise and individuate different kinds of letters and blank spacings that were formatted on horizontal lines running across a rectilinear grid.

Once children learned to pronounce sounds, they were then asked to read excerpts from the Bible or the Shorter Catechism and they wrote out exercises taken from spelling books published by popular authors such as John Warden, Arthur Masson, Gilles Ker, James Gray and Alexander Barrie.<sup>12</sup> This activity took place in schools or at home with a family member or private tutor serving as the teacher. The scribal evidence for this practice is exceptionally rare, particularly since writing letters and words was often done in chalk on a small slate tablet, or on scrap paper. The content of writing manuals also suggests that younger children were being taught how to make writing implements like ink and quills.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> John Warden, *A Spelling Book* (Edinburgh: Kincaid and Donaldson, 1753); Arthur Masson, *An English Spelling Book* (Edinburgh: Hamilton, Balfour & Neill, 1757); Gilles Ker, *A New Spelling Book* (Edinburgh: Hamilton, Balfour & Neill, 1757); James Gray, *A Concise Spelling Book, Seventh Edition* (Edinburgh: Caw, 1794); and Alexander Barrie, *A Spelling and Pronouncing Catechism* ([Edinburgh]: 1796). These books went through numerous editions. For a helpful overview of eighteenth-century Scottish catechisms and primers, see Alexander Law, 'Scottish Schoolbooks of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, **18** (1983), 1-71.

<sup>13</sup> Instructions for making and preserving red and black ink are given in T. H. ['A Lover of Children'], *The Child's Guide* (Aberdeen: Chalmers, 1796), 58-60. Instructions for making ink and pens were also included in books meant for older children. See George Fisher, *The Instructor: Or, Young man's Best Companion* (Edinburgh: Alston, 1763), 31, 37, 45.

Reflecting on his activities as a student in a village school near Peebles during the first decade of the nineteenth century, the publisher William Chambers summed up his early education in the following manner:

*My first school was one kept by a poor old widow, Kirsty Cranston, who, according to her own account, was qualified to carry forward her pupils as far as reading the Bible; but to this proficiency there was the reasonable expectation of leaving out difficult words such as Maher-shalal- hash-baz. These, she told the children, might be passed over.*<sup>14</sup>

As we will see in later sections, autobiographical accounts of pre-nineteenth century authors offer some insight, however, they tend to focus on the act of reading and not the act of writing, which is a strange irony when one considers that it was the act of writing that allowed them to compose their autobiographies in the first place.

### ***Learning to Write Well***

Having acquired a basic proficiency in recognising and writing simple words, children were then sent to burgh schools (in the city) and parish schools (in the country). The age of matriculation ranged from seven to nine years. From the late seventeenth century girls were also taught in some burgh schools, and from the 1750s onwards they were taught with boys on a regular basis in schools run by city councils and the Church of Scotland, or in the rising number of private schools in the cities [FIGURE 1].<sup>15</sup> Writing was an important part of the learning process in these settings, with school advertisements underscoring the links between composition and mental agility. John and George Burns, for instance, advertised their school in a 1764 edition of the *Glasgow Journal* in the following manner: ‘Young ladies

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<sup>14</sup> William Chambers and Robert Chambers, *Memoir of Robert Chambers with Autobiographical Reminiscences of William Chambers* (Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1872), 47.

<sup>15</sup> The coeducational history of Scottish burgh schools is addressed in Grant, *History of the Burgh and Parish Schools*, 535-537.

and gentlemen will be separately attended for learning the English Grammar and composition, so as to enable them to express their thoughts with ease and perspicuity.<sup>16</sup>

Both burgh and parish schools gave children the writing skills that would help them eventually take up a trade, secure an apprenticeship or, indeed, to make a notebook. During their first few years of school, children learned spelling, arithmetic, grammar and basic penmanship in the form of round, mixt or secretary's hand.<sup>17</sup> During their last few years, they learned more practical topics like accounting,<sup>18</sup> gauging, navigation and geography.<sup>19</sup> In addition to these topics, girls also learned sewing and baking.<sup>20</sup> Notably, though many children used the engraved specimens featured in printed copy-books and posters designed by writing masters like Edmund Butterworth (who famously taught the young Sir Walter Scott), advanced orthographic instruction was an extracurricular subject that required additional fees.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Quoted on page 69 in Sandra McCallum, *A Case Study of the Moore Family, with Particular Reference to the Extended Tour Abroad of (Sir) John Moore with His Father Dr Moore (1772-1776)* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Edward Cocker, *Cockers Arithmetick* (London: T. Passinger and T. Lacy, 1678); James Paterson, *Scots Arithmetician* (Edinburgh: Joshua van Solingen and John Colmar, 1685). Duncan K. Wilson, *The History of Mathematical Teaching in Scotland to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (London: University of London Press, 1935).

<sup>18</sup> Alexander Macghie, *Principles of Book Keeping Explain'd* (Edinburgh: Watson, 1718); Robert Lundin, *The Reason of Accompting by Debitor and Creditor* (Edinburgh: 1718); Alexander Malcolm, *A New Treatise of Arithmetick and Book-Keeping* (Edinburgh: Mosman, 1718). Robert Colinson, *Idea Rationaria or The Perfect Acomptant* (Edinburgh: Lindsay, 1683).

<sup>19</sup> Popular textbooks for these subjects were: William Panton, *The Tyro's Guide to Arithmetic and Mensuration* (Edinburgh: Reid, 1771); Alexander Ewing, *A Synopsis of Practical Mathematics* (Edinburgh: Smellie, 1771); Alexander Ewing, *Institutes of Arithmetic* (Edinburgh: Caddel, 1773); William Wilson, *Elements of Navigation* (Edinburgh: Robinson, 1773); and Batty Langley and Thomas Langley, *The Builder's Jewel, Twelfth Edition* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1768). For geographical instruction, see Charles W. J. Withers, 'Toward a Historical Geography of Enlightenment Scotland', in Paul Wood (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment: Essays in Reinterpretation* (Rochester: University of Rochester, 2000), 63-97, especially pages 72 to 74. A helpful reconstruction of the eighteenth-century curriculum taught in Fyfe's parish and burgh schools is given in Beale (1983), 122-177.

<sup>20</sup> Lindy Moore, 'The Value of Feminine Culture: Community Involvement in the Provision of Schooling for Girls in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', in Barclay and Simonton (2013), 97-114 (see especially page 100); Grant, *History of the Burgh and Parish Schools*, 527-531; Andrew Bain, *Education in Stirlingshire from the Reformation to the Act of 1872* (London: University of London Press, 1965), 131.

<sup>21</sup> Sam McKinstry and Marie Fletcher, 'The Personal Account Books of Sir Walter Scott', *Accounting Historians Journal*, 29 (2002), 59-89, see page 64. A good example of a folio-sized orthographic poster appears as the second sheet of Edmund Butterworth, *New Sets of Copies in Alphabetical Order* (Dumfries: 1778), NLS RB.s.447. For further examples of Butterworth's orthographic engravings, see Edmund Butterworth, *Universal Penman* (Edinburgh: 1785).

Like many orthographic textbooks published in the Atlantic world, the printed copy-books of Scottish masters like Butterworth contained engraved handwriting specimens.<sup>22</sup> Children studying with a writing master or with a household tutor spent hour after hour copying specimens until they were ready to write them into a notebook of their own making that served as evidence of their new orthographic skills. Confusingly, historians call this kind of child-made notebook a 'copy-book' as well. While a number of printed copybooks published by Scottish and, more widely, British, writing masters still exist today, there are only a handful of extant manuscript copybooks made by Scottish children.<sup>23</sup> Two excellent, rare specimens were made by Jean Greig in 1763 and Robert Richardson in 1778.<sup>24</sup> These show the skill and time that was spent by children on learning how to write well.

Most extant child notebooks from Scotland were made by children who had started or finished secondary school. Depending on their abilities, interests or socio-economic background, many boys and girls ended their formal education by progressing to a job or an apprenticeship. As ruefully noted by the pedagogue Elizabeth Hamilton and the scientific author Mary Somerville, it was boys who received further instruction at academies, grammar schools and universities.<sup>25</sup> Yet while this gender divide was certainly present, some girls learned advanced writing techniques through further instruction at home or in classes run by writing mistresses and masters.

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<sup>22</sup> Copybooks of the Atlantic world are explored in Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write*, 286-292 and Aileen Douglas, 'Making their Mark: Eighteenth-Century Writing-Masters and their Copy-Books', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 24 (2001), 145-159. For copy specimens made in the American colonies, see Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write*, 287-288.

<sup>23</sup> The classic text on printed copy-books, mainly for masters living in England, is Ambrose Heal, *The English Writing-Masters and the Copy-Books, 1570-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931). For a wider European perspective, see David P. Becker, *The Practice of Letters: The Hofer Collection of Writing Manuals 1514-1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard College Library, 1997).

<sup>24</sup> Jean Greig, *Copybook belonging to Jean Greig* (1763), Bound MS, NLS, Greig Papers, Dep. 190, Box 3; Robert Richardson, *Copybook* (1778), Bound MS, NLS MS 20987.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Anderson, 'Schools and Scottish Society in the Nineteenth Century', *Past & Present*, **109** (1985), 176-203, see especially page 179. Elizabeth Benger, *Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton, Volume 1* (London: Longman, 1818), 36-37. Somerville ended up teaching herself Latin with the help of a kindly uncle, the cleric Dr Somerville. Mary Somerville, *Queen of Science: Personal Reflection of Mary Somerville* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2001), 29-30.

A helpful visualisation of coeducational instruction appears in an oval vignette featured on the title page of the writing manual published by the Glaswegian teacher Colin Buchanan entitled *The Writing-Master and Accountant's Assistant*. It depicts a classroom in which students receive instruction from a female and a male teacher.<sup>26</sup> [Figure: 2] Outside educational institutions, boys and girls could also hone their reading and writing skills at home and in local libraries. The founder of the Innerpeffray library, David Drummond (the third Lord Madertie), for example, explicitly stated that the books were to 'be for the benefit of all, particularly young students'.<sup>27</sup>

Some boys were sent to academies after attending a parish or burgh school. This move was made when they were ready, but it seems to have occurred around age eleven. Academy students studied practical topics such as advanced algebra, geometry, trigonometry, surveying and accounting – all of which required advanced skills in orthography and graphic design. Mathematics played a particularly important role in these settings. In the words of the academy textbook author Alexander Ewing, 'the soldier, sailor, engineer, surveyor, and man of business, cannot follow his professional rationally, without being expert in most part of practical mathematics.'<sup>28</sup>

The most famous academy was in Perth, although others existed in Ayr, Dumfries, Inverness, Fortrose, Dundee and Banff.<sup>29</sup> From its founding, Perth Academy's standard of mathematical instruction was high, with several of its masters and tutors going on to

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<sup>26</sup> Colin Buchanan, *The Writing-Master and Accountant's Assistant* (Glasgow: Chapman, 1798), frontispiece.

<sup>27</sup> The quote is taken from the nineteenth copy of David Drummond's 1694 will and testament housed in the special collections of Innerpeffray Library in Perthshire Scotland. Many thanks to Lara Haggarty for pointing out this information to me.

<sup>28</sup> Ewing, *A Synopsis of Practical Mathematics*, iii.

<sup>29</sup> Lindy Moore, 'Urban Schooling in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Scotland', R. Anderson, M. Freeman and L. Freeman (Eds.), *The Edinburgh History of Education in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh History of Education in Scotland, forthcoming).

professorships in Scottish universities.<sup>30</sup> The school's teachers also paid an equally high amount of attention to the kind of 'fine writing' that allowed boys to produce a useful and attractive school notebook. Based on the extant notebooks of academy students, it is likely that they were required to make a manuscript textbook based on graphic material that they had been asked to copy or on dictations given to them in the classroom.<sup>31</sup>

For a more classical education, boys were sent to grammar schools. Perhaps the most famous of these institutions was the Edinburgh High School.<sup>32</sup> Grammar school students first learned Latin and Greek grammar through the lists and tables of words and sentences featured in textbooks written by popular authors such as Thomas Ruddiman, James Barclay and Alexander Adam.<sup>33</sup> They then went on to study the intellectual, political, and geographical history of ancient cultures. The purpose of such schools was nicely summed up by Robert Chambers in his reflections on his education at the affordable Peebles Grammar School:

*Boys for whom a superior education was desired were usually passed on [from a burgh school] at the beginning of their third year to the grammar school—the school in which the classics were taught, but which also had one or two advanced courses for English and writing.*<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Robert Hamilton (1743-1829), professor of natural philosophy and mathematics at the University of Aberdeen (Marischal College) served as Perth Academy's rector before his university appointment. John West (1756-1817), who taught as an assistant to Professor Nicolas Vilant (1737-1807), the chair of mathematics at St Andrews University, unsuccessfully tried to secure the mathematics mastership at Perth Academy early in his career. See respectively: Alex D. D. Craik and Alonso Roberts, 'Mathematics Teaching, Teachers and Students at St Andrews University, 1765-1858', *History of Universities*, 24 (2009), 206-279, see especially page 226; Rachel M. Hart, 'Letters and Papers of Dr Robert Hamilton', *Northern Scotland*, 9 (1989), 83-85.

<sup>31</sup> The Perth Academy's curriculum and its commitment to fine writing are summarized in 'Account of the Academy', printed at the end of William Morrison (Ed.), *Memorabilia of the City of Perth* (Perth: Morison, 1806), 345-349.

<sup>32</sup> James Dennistoun (Ed.), *Memoirs of Sir Robert Strange, Knt., Engraver, Volume 1* (London: Longman, 1855), 11.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Ruddiman, *Mr Ruddiman's Rudiments of the Latin Tongue* (Edinburgh: Murray and Chochran, 1779), and *Grammaticae Latinae Institutiones* [Twelfth Edition] (Edinburgh: Dickson & Creech, 1790). James Barclay, *The Rudiments of the Latin Tongue* (Edinburgh: Barclay, 1758). Alexander Adam, *Rudiments of Latin and English, Third Edition* (Edinburgh: Gordon, Bell, Dickson, Creech, Elliot and Balfour, 1772). Numerous editions of these primers were printed.

<sup>34</sup> Chambers and Chambers, *Memoir of Robert Chambers*, 57.

As indicated by Chambers, writing continued to be taught at this stage as well. Additionally, as pointed out by the educational historian Alexander Law, since it is likely that children often learned Latin orally, pedagogues like Ruddiman encouraged grammar school teachers to use the act of writing as a learning tool to help their students acquire the language more efficiently.<sup>35</sup>

Overall there was what might be seen as a scale of writing proficiency, one which consisted of several institutional levels. At the first level, children learned introductory writing skills at home, village and charity schools and hospitals. The second level included the basic copying, cyphering and composition skills taught at burgh and parish schools, or through apprenticeships. The third level eliminated girls and further honed the foregoing skills in relation to more specialized topics that ranged from surveying to ancient history. The final level included advanced skills of note-taking that were developed at universities in relation to specialised and systematised fields of study. Finally, girls and boys taught at home by a family member or a tutor could also learn various advanced writing skills outside traditional school settings.

### ***Drawing as an Aid to Writing***

In order to write properly, children in Enlightenment Scotland had to learn a form of graphic intelligence, an ability to make and replicate various kinds of spatial arrangements of words and lines on the page. In an age of computer screens and printed texts, modern historians often overlook this mode of learning and they fail to see writing as a genre of visual culture, mainly because the textual material read or written by pre-nineteenth-century young learners was usually devoid of figural forms of representation. This means that words were

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<sup>35</sup> The practice of learning Latin orally in schools is raised in Alexander Law, 'Latin in Scottish Schools in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries', *The Bibliothek*, **15** (1988), 63-75, see page 69.

the main graphic medium on paper used by Scottish children, particularly those who did not come from privileged backgrounds. But just because most modes of teaching and learning in schools were overwhelmingly based on words does not mean that writing was a non-visual skill. Far from it. Writing, in fact, was more than words.

During the Enlightenment there were strong aesthetic considerations attached to the geometric formation of letters and sentences written on rectilinear lines.<sup>36</sup> In order to achieve this orthographic excellence, children had to treat their notebook pages as patterns, or even word pictures, plotted on a grid and shaped according to rules governing graphic elements like indentation, underscoring and typographic differentiation. Children were also encouraged to draw faint, ruled lines pencilled with graphite on which they wrote their words in straight lines. In addition to the technique of graphite gridding, they could, in the words of Todd's *The School-Boy and Young Gentleman's Assistant*, 'trace with a lead Pen the Space for regulating the Head and Feet of Letters.'<sup>37</sup>

The grid used to structure written pages did not come naturally to children and writing instructors often drew a sample that children learned to replicate. This technique was used at the Merchant Maiden Hospital School in Edinburgh. When it came to teaching children how to make graphite grids, the 1779 teaching handbook used by the school's writing mistresses and masters made the following suggestion: 'After you have ruled their book, copy it on the left side with a pen and ink, drawing straight scores all the way down as on the margin: Cause them [to] keep these strokes at an equal distance from each other, point the first line to them.'<sup>38</sup> As the verbs 'draw' and 'stroke' indicate, in many respects, the

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<sup>36</sup> Patrick Cramsie, *The Story of Graphic Design: From the Invention of Writing to the Birth of Digital Design* (London: The British Library, 2010), 111-135.

<sup>37</sup> James Todd, *The Schoolboy and Young Gentleman's Assistant, Being a Plan of Education* (Edinburgh: 1748), 67.

<sup>38</sup> Andrew Lawrie, *The Merchant Maiden Hospital Magazine* (Edinburgh: Darling, 1779), 43-44.

written page was a typographic picture, a visual pattern of words, numbers and symbols arranged on lines inside a column.<sup>39</sup>

As the eighteenth century progressed, more children in the Scottish lowlands were taught to sketch and draw and this had an impact on their abilities to make technical drawings and to make or buy important materials like ink, paint and drawing instruments.<sup>40</sup> Such drawings were made to accompany some forms of writing and constituted an additional tool that helped children write well. As intimated in teaching manuals such as Hannah Robertson's *Young Ladies School of Arts*, the techniques of drawing and painting were increasingly being included in a larger repertoire of graphic skills associated with a proper middle-class education.<sup>41</sup>

While drawing masters were available to affluent households during the early part of the century, instruction in the fine arts, particularly for middle-class boys, was sparked by the founding of Glasgow's Foulis Academy of Art in 1754 and Edinburgh's Trustees Academy of Art in 1760. The masters of these institutions trained adolescents to draw and paint so that they could pursue careers in manufacturing as illustrators, painters, and graphic designers in the printing, woollen and linen industries.<sup>42</sup> A core part of the training was keeping a sketch notebook, none of which seems to have survived, save for their likeness in prints. [Figure 3]

The overarching impact of a rising sense of graphic awareness is clearly evinced in the skillful

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<sup>39</sup> For the pictorial aspects of the typography in British primers, particularly those which addressed geographical topics, see Robert J. Mayhew, 'Materialist Hermeneutics, Textuality, and the History of Geography: Print Spaces in British Geography, c. 1500-1900', *Journal of Historical Geography*, **33** (2007), 466-488. A helpful overview of the visual elements of textbooks is given in James Hartley and Joyce L. Harris, 'Reading the Typography of a Text', in J. L. Harris, A. G. Kamhi, and K. E. Pollack (Eds.), *Literacy in African American Communities* (Mahwah: Erlbaum, 2001), 109-125.

<sup>40</sup> The materials and skills required to make paints are explained throughout Claude Boutet, *The Art of Painting in Miniature* (London: Hodges, 1739), with page 107 being a particularly good example.

<sup>41</sup> Hannah Robertson, *The Young Ladies School of Arts, Second Edition* (Edinburgh: Ruddiman, 1767).

<sup>42</sup> Nicholas Tromans, *David Wilkie: The People's Painter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 61-64. For the Foulis Academy, see David Murray, *Robert and Andrew Foulis and the Glasgow Press with Some Account of the Glasgow Academy of Fine Arts* (Glasgow: Maclehose, 1913), and the manuscript letters of the Foulis Press housed in the Murray Collection, GUL, MS Murray 506. The Trustee's Academy was serving a thriving art market in and around Edinburgh. See Stana Nenadic, 'The Enlightenment in Scotland and the Popular Passion for Portraits', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, **21** (1998), 175-192, see especially page 177.

drawings that accompany many of the children's manuscript textbooks, diaries and marginalia that I will discuss in later sections.

### ***Commonplace Writing***

During or after their years at a burgh or parish school, some young writers kept commonplace books in which they copied useful or amusing facts. While making such notebooks, which were also called 'pocket-books', was most likely a common occurrence, their ephemeral nature makes them incredibly difficult to find. As shown in the work of child historians Arianne Baggerman and Rudolph Dekker, commonplace books played an essential role in teaching British and Dutch children to remember information relevant to various forms of self-knowledge, particularly those which involved keeping track of time lost on selfish or unvirtuous activities.<sup>43</sup>

At present, there are only a few known copies of commonplace books made by middle-class adolescents in Scotland during the long eighteenth century. Written in a legible but not elegant hand, the 1710 commonplace book of the teenage James Dunbar contains useful information like mathematical and shorthand tables, suggesting that he was expecting to develop his accounting skills as an adult.<sup>44</sup> Written in a more elegant script, the seventeen-year-old John Greig made his commonplace book with equally utilitarian concerns. A merchant's son who would go on to a successful publishing career, Greig crafted his notebook to include hand-drawn tables in pen and ink of the tides, the phases of the moon and 'The Cycle of the Sun', thereby suggesting agricultural or maritime interests.<sup>45</sup> Since the notebooks of Dunbar and Greig do not contain what could be construed to be the corrective

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<sup>43</sup> Baggerman and Dekker, *Child of the Enlightenment*, 87-89.

<sup>44</sup> James Dunbar, *A Volume Completed by James Dunbar in 1710 containing Arithmetic, Introduction to Algebra, and A More Compendious Way of Writeing than Ordinar Called the Short Hand, Making Use of Farthing's Alphabet* (1710), Bound MS, NLS Acc 5706/11.

<sup>45</sup> John Greig, *Pocket-Book Belonging to John Greig* (1762-1764), NLS Dep 190, Greig Papers, Box 3.

marks of a tutor or teacher, they suggest that commonplacing was a form of inscription in which young writers were perhaps allowed to more freely choose the material they copied.

The idea of keeping track of one's mind via ordered commonplacing was also made familiar to young writers via *Ladies Pocket Books*.<sup>46</sup> Used by both boys and girls, these printed reference books contained excerpts of useful information like metric conversions and the dates of holidays. They also contained weekly calendars featured as a blank table of boxes that represented the days of the week. Each day was given a blank box that invited young readers to write 'Appointments, Memorandums, and Observations'.<sup>47</sup> Aside from developing a child's sense of observation and organisation, the graphic skills required to insert information into this kind of box no doubt aided children when they read or designed gridded tables featured in other forms of print and manuscript culture. The pages of the Greig and Dunbar commonplace books, for instance, show that children learned how to draw boxed tables into which they copied facts. This act of copying allowed them to learn to expedite information in a graphic, useful manner.

### ***Textbook Copying***

Most extant juvenile notebooks made by Scottish children are manuscript textbooks, that is to say, they are textbooks that were copied out by children. The practice of textbook copying was not confined to Scotland and it was most likely a common practice throughout the Atlantic world.<sup>48</sup> Copied textbooks in Scotland contained primarily material inscribed by

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<sup>46</sup> The use of Ladies Pocket Books as information management devices is addressed throughout Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

<sup>47</sup> Each weekly calendar featured in *The Ladies Complete Pocket-Book* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Printed by T. Saint, for Whitfield and Co., and W. Creech, Edinburgh, 1780) appears as table of seven blank boxes running down the entire length of the page, with each box being labelled with the day of the week and the date. The top of every weekly table reads 'Appointments, Memorandums, and Observations'.

<sup>48</sup> The most detailed study of eighteenth-century manuscript textbooks copied by students is Thomas Knoles, Rick Kennedy and Lucia Zauha Knoles (Eds.), *Student Notebooks at Colonial Harvard: Manuscripts and Educational Practice, 1650-1740* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 2003). The book includes several helpful

students attending academies, burgh schools, parish schools or grammar schools. In other words, they were made by children who were in their early to mid-teenage years. These notebooks often consist of smaller booklets (quires) on different topics that were later bound together into one volume.

Kept from 1780 to 1784, James Fowler of Strathpeffer's school notebook, for example, contains notes taken on arithmetic, algebra and trigonometry classes, as well as 'The third book of Homer translated in an elegant and free Manner'.<sup>49</sup> Further examples of the kinds of copying techniques used by Scottish students to create a manuscript compendia textbook also can be seen in Fowler's *Schoolbook*, the illustrated school notebooks made by Robert Jackson and by (anonymous) students who attended Perth Academy from the 1770s to the 1790s.<sup>50</sup> [Figure 4] Such manuscripts are surprisingly devoid of doodles and present mathematical information in a neatly copied fashion.<sup>51</sup>

Students attending their final years of grammar school usually made notebooks that contained copies of their Latin translations. They tended to translate Virgil's *Pastorals*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Gerardus Joannes Vossius's *Compendium of Rhetoric* and the letters and orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero.<sup>52</sup> Whereas the act of copying notes at an Academy inculcated mercantile facts and values, making and copying translations of classical works instilled a notion of natural order that was one of the key assumptions behind the laws and methods that guided the sciences of mind, society and nature that underpinned the Scottish

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photographs of copied textbooks. See also the photograph of a copied mathematics textbook in Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write*, 295.

<sup>49</sup> James Fowler, *Schoolbook of James Fowler, Strathpeffer* (1780), Bound MS, NLS MS 14284, f. 136.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Jackson, *Geometry Notebook of Robert Jackson, A Schoolboy* (1788), Bound MS, NLS MS 9156. [Anonymous], *Perth Academy Notebook* (1780s-90s), Bound MS, NLS MS 14291. [Anonymous], *Perth Academy Notebooks, 3 Vols.* (1787), Bound MS, NLS MS 14294-6.

<sup>51</sup> Some copied textbooks are so neat that it is difficult to tell if a child or professional transcriber made them. A case in point is [?] Carre, *A Treatise of Algebra 1458* (17[43]), Bound MS, NLS MS 5455. 'Carre his book' is written on the title page but it is uncertain who, precisely, copied it.

<sup>52</sup> The Latin texts used by grammar schools are discussed in Chapter 3 of Law, *Education in Edinburgh*, and Bain, *Education in Stirlingshire*, 128. For the curriculum of the Glasgow Grammar School, see McCallum, *Case Study of the Moore Family*, 59-64

Enlightenment. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, for example, promoted the 'chain of being', while Virgil's *Pastorals* underscored the intricate empirical and aesthetic connections between the animate and inanimate world.<sup>53</sup>

Like the content of manuscript texts made by students attending institutions such as the Perth Academy, or even burgh schools, there was a certain amount of latitude in the kinds of information included in grammar school notebooks. In the end, however, like most young learners during the early modern period, students usually created their copied textbooks for their teachers to mark or parents to see, thereby implicitly conforming to the moral and utilitarian topics promoted by Enlightened adults.<sup>54</sup> As indicated by extant ephemera of Edinburgh High School, grammar school students presented their written work to be read by their Latin teachers, most likely for prizes.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, the children of Alexander Monro Primus, the professor of anatomy at the University of Edinburgh, read their Latin compositions to soirees held by their father and mother at their Edinburgh home.<sup>56</sup>

Outside formal classroom settings, adolescents studying with private tutors specialising in moral education or even conduct lessons made manuscript textbooks based on their lessons with a tutor. At least two anonymous students of the blind teacher and poet Thomas Blacklock made notebooks by copying their rough notes, or an exemplar copy, and Margaret Monro copied conduct letters written by her father, Monro Primus, into a bound manuscript

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<sup>53</sup> The connection between natural and textual knowledge in Scottish educational contexts is treated throughout Matthew Daniel Eddy, 'Natural History, Natural Philosophy and Readership', in Stephen Brown and Warren McDougall (Eds.), *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 2* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 297-309.

<sup>54</sup> The pedagogical and mnemonic advantages of copied textbooks are underscored in Knoles, Kennedy and Knoles, *Student Notebooks at Colonial Harvard*.

<sup>55</sup> [Anonymous], *Notebook of Juvenile Latin Verses and Exercises* (1742-46), NLS Newhailes, MS.25413. [Anonymous], *Notes Mainly on Classical Authors, Also Latin and Greek Verse and Prose Composition, Including Some Juvenile Exercises*, (1744-1787), Newhailes, MS. 24516. For Edinburgh High School, see the EHS collection housed by the Edinburgh City Library.

<sup>56</sup> The Monro family Latin soirees are explained in Margaret Monro, *The Professor's Daughter: An Essay on Female Conduct by Alexander Monro (Primus)*, P. A. G. Monro (Ed.), (Edinburgh: Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, 1996), 3-4.

book entitled *An Essay on Female Conduct* in 1739.<sup>57</sup> Like the sentences of copybooks, the content of the conduct notebooks kept by Blacklock's students and by Margaret Monro was overtly moral in tenor, allowing them to write virtuous thoughts onto the page and into their young and impressionable minds. This was doubly the case for Monro, who most likely annotated her notebook after she had copied it.<sup>58</sup>

Keen to capitalise on the fine arts educational market, schools and academies began to include basic drawing instruction or endeavoured to retain a drawing instructor who students could hire for an extra fee. The rising level of graphic intelligence affected the figural content of manuscript textbooks made by children. Some institutions, Perth Academy for example, produced students who could make highly skilled technical drawings that combined advanced draughtsmanship and water-colour painting skills to make beautiful illustrations in their notebooks. Exquisite examples of this practice occur throughout an anonymous Perth Academy notebook kept during the 1780s or 1790s.<sup>59</sup>

The Perth notebook is filled with mathematical problems and answers that are illustrated by water-coloured figures. In the trigonometric 'exercises' section, for example, the question is posed: 'How far can a person see an object from an eminence 2 miles high on a level of the horizon[?]'.<sup>60</sup> [Figure 5] The calculations for the answer (126 miles) are written on a graphite grid and illustrated by a diagrammatic globe bearing trigonometric points that visually illustrate the problem's answer. Almost every figure in the notebook, which served as a manuscript textbook, bears a similar utilitarian purpose: to illustrate the practical

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<sup>57</sup> Thomas Blacklock, *Kalokagathia* [n.d.], (Anonymous note-taker), Bound MS, EUL Dc.3.45; Thomas Blacklock, *Kalokagathia* [n.d.], (Anonymous note-taker), Bound MS, EUL La.III.80; Monro, *The Professor's Daughter*.

<sup>58</sup> Margaret Monro, *An Essay on Female Conduct Contain'd in Letters from a Father to His Daughter* (c.1738), Bound MS, NLS MS 6658. Margaret Monro recopied the MS as *An Essay on Female Conduct* (1739), Bound MS, NLS MS 6659.

<sup>59</sup> For the Perth Academy curriculum, see again Morrison, *Memorabilia*. For sample notebooks see Anon. Bound MS (1780s-90s), and Anon. Bound MSS (1787).

<sup>60</sup> Anon. Bound MS (1780s-90s), f. 15v.

application of facts relevant to the student's future role as a commercially viable member of the Scottish economy.

### ***Ledger Writing***

The ability to write out complex accounts was one of the key factors that contributed to the rise of fiscal literacy. Economic historians have shown how this new form of 'calculability' made it easier for the middle class to track the commodities that flowed through Britain's imperial markets.<sup>61</sup> Although male and female traders commonly practised the skill of keeping accounts, merchants, moneylenders and landlords operating in Britain,<sup>62</sup> the techniques of ledger writing have largely escaped the notice of historians of childhood literacy.<sup>63</sup> But making a ledger was perhaps one of the most graphically sophisticated skills learned by middle-class children, many of whom learned to write in various tabular formats.

Most accounting textbooks stressed the value of keeping a ledger notebook that was arranged into columns. The skill of designing the space of a ledger page was also emphasised in many compendia, including Todd's *School-Boy*. After extolling the virtues of Locke's pedagogical methods and then discussing genteel matters such as civil history and religion, Todd notes the benefits of keeping accounts and using the double-entry method of accounting where numbers were arranged into two columns on the page:

*I am apt to think, that, in the ordinary Course of Business, the Journal, the Ledger with the Alphabetical Index of Names of Persons we have Commerce with, and which directs the*

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<sup>61</sup> R. Macve and K. Hoskin, 'Writing, Examining, Disciplining: The Genesis of Accounting's Modern Power', in T. Hopwood and P. Miller (Eds.), *Accounting as Social and Institutional Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 67-97.

<sup>62</sup> From the late seventeenth century Scottish girls were taught accounting then went on to become merchants. Helen Dingwall, 'The Power Behind the Merchant? Women and Economy in Late-Seventeenth Century Edinburgh', in Elizabeth Ewan and Maureen M. Meikle (Eds.), *Women in Scotland c.1100-c.1750*, (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999), 152-162.

<sup>63</sup> An exception to this trend is Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write*, who underscores the direct link between writing and mathematics in books used in the British Empire. See especially pages 293 to 296.

*page of the Ledger where their Name and Stated Accompt is to be found are sufficient: And I have some times likewise fancied, that any Man may lay a Scheme of Book-keeping to himself, according to the Business he is engaged in. But in the Italian Method, which for some time has been much applauded, Mr Mair has wrote more fully, Mr Webster more concisely.*<sup>64</sup>

Here we have several forms of writing – the journal (of daily business activities), the ledger (of accounts) and an alphabetical index (of customers) – all of which required the spatialisation of information into lists or columns.<sup>65</sup>

It is likely that many children learned from family members to keep simple accounts of their own expenses. But keeping track of multiple entries written in a formal accounting ledger was more complicated. The ‘Italian Method’, which is now called double-entry accounting, was not something that most children could learn to write by simply reading a general instruction manual such as Todd’s *School-Boy*, or even popular accounting textbooks like John Mair’s *Book-Keeping Methodized* or William Webster’s *An Essay on Book-Keeping According to the Italian Method*. Boys and girls not only had to learn to write ledger book entries, they also had to learn how to draw the many lines and columns that were used to structure the space of a typical ledger-book page.

The graphic skills of ledger writing could only be learned through time-consuming cyphering exercises conducted under the watchful eye of a ledger-writing instructor. Due to the variety of book-keeping formats, children were asked to write out practice copies of different kinds of ledger entries. The main goal was for a child to submit a full notebook of handwritten ledger specimens as the final requirement of a book-keeping class. But before

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<sup>64</sup> Todd, *Young Gentleman’s Assistant*, 71.

<sup>65</sup> The book-keeping texts referenced by Todd were John Mair’s *Book-Keeping Methodized* (Edinburgh: 1736) and William Webster’s *An Essay on Book-Keeping According to the Italian Method* (London: 1719).

children could make such a graphically sophisticated creation, they had to practise their writing skills over and over on large slate boards. An excellent example of this kind of preliminary slate writing appears in the aforementioned oval vignette featured on the title page of Buchanan's *The Writing-Master and Accountant's Assistant* [See again Figure 2] and in the frontispiece of the 1765 edition of William Gordon's *The Universal Accountant* [Figure 6]. Buchanan's vignette features a boy proudly handing his practice slate to his teacher – a scene that undoubtedly occurred frequently in writing schools. Echoing the classical link between knowledge and beauty, Gordon's frontispiece portrays a goddess teaching a book-keeping student with a slate of numbers aligned into columns.<sup>66</sup>

Many schools and academies taught accounting as an extracurricular subject, meaning that, like orthographic instruction, ledger-writing instruction required parents to pay an additional fee.<sup>67</sup> Two immanently informative manuscript sources that shed light on how children learned the scribal skills of advanced accounting are the two school ledger books kept by Robert Richardson while he was a student at Perth Academy during the 1770s.<sup>68</sup> [Figure 7] Written in a very neat hand into columns made from graphite lines drawn on a grid printed in red ink, each book contains 'setts' (exercises) of detailed accounts. Richardson's handwritten practice ledgers reveal that he had to write out specimens from across the business world, with different kinds of accounts requiring slightly different kinds of columns and entries.

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<sup>66</sup> Buchanan, *The Writing-Master*, frontis.

<sup>67</sup> In addition to Mair, *Book-Keeping Methodized*, and Webster, *Essay on Book-Keeping*, other popular books were Macghie, *Principles of Book Keeping*; Lundin, *Reason of Accompting*; Malcolm, *New Treatise of Arithmetick*; Colinson, *Idea Rationaria*. During the last half of the century Mair's book continued to be used as a textbook. William Gordon's *The Universal Accountant and Complete Merchant* (Edinburgh: Donaldson and Reid, 1765) went through several editions as well. Overviews of accounting methods appeared in many compendia from the 1750s forward. See Fisher, *The Instructor*.

<sup>68</sup> Robert Richardson of Pitfour, *School Exercise Ledger* (1776), Bound MS, NLS MS 20985, and *School Exercise Ledger* (1777), Bound MS, NLS MS 20986. Robert's notebooks are held in the NLS collection of John Richardson, as successful merchant from Perth. A. R. B. Haldane, *The Fishmonger of the Tay: John Richardson of Pether and Pitfour* (Dundee: Abertay Historical Society, 1981).

Around the time Richardson was studying book-keeping, Robert Hamilton taught accounting and maths at the Academy and served as its rector. Hamilton eventually went on to be the professor of natural philosophy at the University of Aberdeen, at which time he published his Perth teaching material as a school maths and accounting textbook entitled *An Introduction to Merchandise*.<sup>69</sup> When the format and content of Richardson's setts are compared to the instructions and exercises featured in Hamilton's textbook, it can be seen that students, in addition to writing the ledger, also had to learn to navigate a diverse variety of accounting notebooks. Farmers, for example, often kept their accounts in 'field books' or 'corn books'. Students had to learn to extract facts from these sources so that they could insert the information into the columns of their practice ledger-books.

Hamilton's guidelines for keeping and using such ledgers and other manuscript accounting books are instructive, as they communicate the graphic elements (columns) and conceptual skills (assigning categorical meanings to the columns) being learned by students copying accounts:

*A FIELD-BOOK, [is a notebook] where several pages are allowed for each field, and rule with two columns, for extending the sum of the expenses, and the produce. The rent, seed, manure, ploughing, reaping, and the number of sheaves, quantity of corn, and value, are entered from the journal of work, or the corn-book. The register of the same field, in successive years, is continued from page to page, that success of the different manures, rotations, and methods of treatment, may be easily compared, and a judgment formed of the whole, when continued for a sufficient length of time.*<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Robert Hamilton, *An Introduction to Merchandise: Containing a Complete System of Arithmetic. A System of Algebra. Forms and Manner of Transacting Bills of Exchange. Book-keeping in various forms*. (Edinburgh: Elliot, 1788).

<sup>70</sup> Hamilton, *Introduction to Merchandise*, 492. Some of the skills used by adult accountants to extract numbers from different sources in eighteenth-century Britain are recounted in J. R. Edwards, "'Different from What Has Hitherto Appeared on this Subject': John Clark, Writing Master and Accomptant, 1738", *Abacus*, **50** (2014), 227-244

After the foregoing instructions, Hamilton gives a 'specimen' of how the account should look, thereby supplying a visual example of what a student might want to copy under the guidance of a teacher.<sup>71</sup> The overarching point to note is that learning to write accounts, which were effectively elaborately structured tables, required a range of writing techniques that took time, effort and money to learn.

### ***Marginalia and Scribbles***

In addition to copying textbooks, commonplaces and ledgers, some children made their own compositions. A simplified version of this practice came in the form of marginalia and scribbles. As argued by the historian of children's literature M. O. Grenby, marginalia potentially offer a direct, yet limited, access to the ordinary lives of Enlightenment children because they are more spontaneous and often occurred in unsupervised settings.<sup>72</sup> The most unadulterated, albeit brief, extant marginalia inscribed by young writers during the Enlightenment occur as scribbles written on pages of books. The marginalia inscribed by Scottish girls and boys appeared in places that ranged from court books to presbytery reports. It seems to have been common for several children to write in the same book over a period of time, inscribing things like signatures, poems, scripture verses or maxims they had memorised. The schoolgirl Jeane Masson, for example, staked her claim on a seventeenth-century copy of Ellon Kirk session minutes by writing: '*hic Liber ad me pertinet*' and the young John Greig wrote financial calculations in the *Edinburgh Almanack* during the 1750s and 1760s.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> For further examples of printed ledger pages, see the many examples given in James Scruton, *The Practical Counting House; Or, Calculation and Accountantship Illustrated* (Glasgow: Duncan, 1777).

<sup>72</sup> Grenby, *The Child Reader*, 226.

<sup>73</sup> Jeane Masson is quoted in Ian J. Simpson, *Education in Aberdeenshire before 1872* (Aberdeen University: PhD thesis, 1942), 206-207. John Greig's financial calculations were written in the 1756 and 1767 editions of the *Edinburgh Almanack*. The volumes are housed respectively in NLS, Greig Papers, Dep. 190, Box 4. For seventeenth-century scribbles, see Eila Williamson, 'Schoolboy Scribbles on a Burgh Court Book', *Scottish Archives*, 8 (2002), 96-112.

While historians sometimes note the importance of children's marginalia, hardly any of it has been collected or catalogued. The richest Scottish collection of extant marginalia is located in Duff House near Banff. The collection consists of hundreds of inscriptions made by the children of Sir William Erskine in the books of the family library during the course of the eighteenth century and, aside from being catalogued, it has yet to receive any sustained attention from historians.<sup>74</sup> But it is a treasure trove of information about the writing habits of children and it is a helpful indicator of the kinds of marginalia that can be used to investigate the forms of graphic order being spontaneously internalised by children in the late Enlightenment. It also points to the need for further studies on the kinds of childhood writing and drawing practices that were used in more specialised settings like libraries and homes.

Most of the inscriptions were made in ink, graphite and watercolours by Magdalene, Henrietta, Elizabeth, John, James and William Erskine, who wrote, drew and painted in the books from the 1770s to the 1790s.<sup>75</sup> [Figure 8] The children wrote signatures or marginalia in the library's primers and children's literature books. Other inscriptions were made on books that were publications intended for adults. They made tables, wrote words, aligned letters in palindromes, calculated equations, sketched polygons, and drew pictures. All of these marks shed insight into their interests and ambitions. Though the oldest son would be given a title, all the younger children, like many children of the lower ranks of the Scottish

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<sup>74</sup> Sandra Cumming, 'The Erskine Family through Their Books', [n. d.], unpublished MS on deposit at Duff House, outside Banff, Scotland. I should also note that there is marginalia in the educational books housed in the NLS's Castle Fraser Collection, however, most of it seems to have been made by adults. For example, the underscoring in John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education, Fourteenth Edition* (London: Whiston, &tc., 1772), NLS C.Fras. 67, is made on passages in which Locke is commenting on how to teach headstrong children.

<sup>75</sup> The ages of the Erskine children are established in Cumming [n. d.]. They are depicted in David Allan's portrait of the family painted circa 1788: 'Sir William Erskine of Torrie and his family', National Galleries of Scotland, Accession no. PGL 333.

aristocracy, would most likely have to make their way in the world through marriage, industry, trade or a profession.

The Erskine children copied information about animals and other juvenile interests. They also wrote lists that named notable professions and honed mathematical skills that would help them keep track of accounts in the future.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps one of the clearest examples of everyday mathematical learning is the multiplication table most likely penned by John Erskine in the library's copy of Eutropius's *Historiae Romanae Breviarium* (1779).<sup>77</sup> [Figure 9] As indicated by inscriptions in primers like Alexandre Scot's *Nouveau Recueil*, the children also learned modern languages that would help them pursue international business interests. James Eskine's marginalia, for instance, indicate that he studied French while learning other practical subjects at the Perth Academy during the 1780s – a fact memorialised when he wrote the following inscription in Scot's book: '*James Erskine Dec. 28th 1784 Perth Academy, 8 o'clock in the morning at French*'.<sup>78</sup>

The Erskine marginalia reveal how the power of writing was used by children to reinforce the strong utilitarian framework of the Scottish Enlightenment and in this sense it bears a similar pragmatic outlook to that evinced in the manuscript commonplace books or textbooks made by other Scottish children. This framework in turn shaped, and was shaped by, an educational ideology which, even at the aristocratic level inhabited by the Erskines, drew strong links between the act of writing and self-improvement. Writing, even when pursued in leisure as scribbles in library books, was indirectly a form of self-assessment, a

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<sup>76</sup> For inscriptions about birds, arithmetic calculations, professions and drawings, see the following books, respectively: James Moir, *The Scholar's Vade Mecum* (Edinburgh: Donaldson, 1775), Dunnimarle House Library Number (hereafter DH LIB No.) 2130; Boyer Abel, *The Complete French Master for Ladies and Gentlemen* (Edinburgh: Bell, 1782), DH LIB No. 986; [The Principles of Latin and English Grammar, 17--], DH LIB No. 247; John Mair, *A Radical Vocabulary, Latin and English, Fifth Edition* (Edinburgh: Murray, 1779), DH LIB No. 1791.

<sup>77</sup> Eutropius, *Eutropii Historiae Romanae breviarium, ab urbe condita usque ad Valentinianum et Valentem Augustos... In usum scholarum* (Edinburgh: G. Gordon, G. Gray, J. Dickson et C. Creech, 1779), DH LIB 362.

<sup>78</sup> Alexandre Scot, *Nouveau recueil: ou, melange litteraire, historique, dramatique et poetique; contenant le poeme celebre des jardins de Mons. L'Abbe de Lille* (Edinburgh: Elliot, 1784), DH LIB No. 293.

mode of internalising information that children associated with being a responsible, inquisitive and economically productive member of society.

### ***Diary Writing***

The most informative sources that shed insight into how children perceived the world through written compositions are diaries, which were sometimes called 'journals'. For many historians, a diary is a 'day-to-day record written shortly after events occurred'.<sup>79</sup> But, as intimated above, this definition could be applied to a commonplace book as well, especially since entries were sometimes dated. When it comes to researching children's diaries, Baggerman and Dekker hold that a 'diary' needs to have some sort of introspective element to it. Nevertheless, as they note on several occasions, extant child diaries of this specification are notoriously difficult to find. This being the case, it is worth mentioning that the ones I am about to discuss are some of the only specimens known to exist for Scottish children living prior to the nineteenth century.

Based on extant diaries and on reflections about childhood diaries in early nineteenth-century autobiographical works, it seems safe to say that Scottish diaries could be written by children as young as eight, but were probably written more by adolescents. The most famous child diarist writing in Scotland during the late Enlightenment was Marjory Fleming.<sup>80</sup> As her diary reveals, the content of children's diaries was influenced by what adults asked them to write and read. Since it was widely believed that young minds were

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<sup>79</sup> Lynn Bonfield Donovan, 'Day-by-Day Records: Diaries from the CHS Library. Part II', *California History Quarterly*, **56** (1977), 72-81. Quotation taken from page 72.

<sup>80</sup> Marjory Fleming, *The Journals, Letters, and Verses of Marjory Fleming in Collotype Facsimile from the Original Manuscripts in the National Library of Scotland* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, Ltd., 1934).

impressionable and needed to be guided, diary writing was oftentimes performed under the watchful eye of a parent or guardian, which was common in other countries as well.<sup>81</sup>

Fleming's diary was kept primarily in a domestic setting. But adolescents were also encouraged to keep travel diaries (or journals). The teenager Alexander Sinclair, for instance, recorded his trip from Edinburgh to Caithness in 1809 (giving great attention to his love for trout fishing) and the young Elizabeth Hamilton kept a journal of a trip she took from Stirlingshire to a party in the Highlands sometime in the late 1760s.<sup>82</sup> As evinced in the 1789 Italian journal of Lady Charlotte Maria Campbell, daughter of the fifth Duke of Argyll, aristocratic Scottish adolescents also kept diaries when they travelled through Europe.<sup>83</sup> All these diaries reveal that children were using the act of writing to remember what they saw shortly after they saw it. Campbell wrote several entries in a stagecoach and Sinclair inscribed his thoughts as they sprang into his mind, with words being crossed out and sentences being inserted between the lines.

After adolescents finished their schooling, they began to use their writing skills in a trade or to commit their thoughts to paper. But others kept diaries and these offer great insight into how Scottish adolescents actively internalised the world around them through writing. The diary of George Sandy of Edinburgh (1773-1853), kept when he was a fifteen-year-old apprentice lawyer, offers observations on his education, reading interests, social life and other personal matters. Many of its pages include impressive drawings of the places in Edinburgh where he spent his time. [Figure 10] The diary of the future East India Company

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<sup>81</sup> Baggerman and Dekker, *Child of the Enlightenment*, address the supervised reading of children's diaries, mainly by family members, throughout Chapter 2. Arianne Baggerman, 'The Infinite Universe of Eighteenth-Century Children's Literature,' in Claudia Jarzebowski and Thomas Max Safley (Eds.), *Childhood and Emotion: Across Cultures, 1450-1800* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 106-120.

<sup>82</sup> Hamilton's composition of a travel journal is recounted in Benger (1818), 51-52. Alexander Sinclair, *Journal of a tour from Edinburgh to Caithness* (1809), NLS MS.3090.

<sup>83</sup> Lady Charlotte Susan Maria Campbell, daughter of the 5th Duke of Argyll, *Memoir and Journal of a Tour to Italy* (1789). NLS, Acc.8110.

official George Bogle of Daldowie, Lanarkshire (1746-1781), most likely kept when he was a fourteen-year-old student at the University of Edinburgh, details fights, mishaps and social events like church services and theatre shows.<sup>84</sup>

Most, if not all, of the foregoing diaries served mainly to record daily events and, as such, strengthened a child's techniques of observation through the act of writing. Deep personal or philosophical issues are absent, mainly because family members or friends most likely read the diary. Indeed, Sandy's 'diary' was kept in part to record the meetings and outings of a club that he had created with two other friends. The language of the narrative clearly indicates that the other boys were allowed to read parts of the diary, making it a communal document.<sup>85</sup> But even so, the act of committing thoughts to paper served as a mnemonic aid for child writers and built on the graphic and conceptual aspects of writing that they had learned at home and or in school.

### Conclusion

In this paper I have historicised the writing and drawing techniques learned by Scottish schoolchildren during the long eighteenth century. Drawing from Ingold's work in visual anthropology, I conceptualised the scribal ephemera of young learners as important historical artefacts that can be used to investigate the graphic modes of learning which underpinned childhood education during the Enlightenment. Taken together, these techniques and modes constituted a form of graphic literacy that had to be learned in addition to the official subjects of the curriculum. The first sections examined how children

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<sup>84</sup> George Sandy, 'Legal Diary, March-July 1788', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, 24 (1942), 1-69; the original manuscript is housed as George Sandy, *Legal Diary, March-July 1788*, Bound MS, Signet Library, Edinburgh. George Bogle, 'Schoolboy Diary', Bound MS, Steggall Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow City Archives, TD1681/6/1. Content summaries of the Sandy and Bogle diaries are given respectively in William Matthews (Ed.), *British Diaries: An Annotated Bibliography of British Diaries Written between 1442 and 1942* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) 92, 130.

<sup>85</sup> The narrative uses both first and third person pronouns and Sandy devised his own cipher to write entries that he did not want the others to read. A photographic reproduction of the cipher appears opposite page 44 in Sandy, 'Legal Diary'.

acquired scribal skills, with special attention being given to where they learned to write and why they wrote for different purposes. The latter sections then explored several genres of child writing, giving attention to how they were used to internalise knowledge that was prized by the Scottish Enlightenment.

In order to identify the centrality of the act of writing, I underscored the fact that children's inscriptions were both visual and material objects that allowed information to be managed and circulated on paper. They came in many shapes and sizes. They addressed a variety of different subjects and could contain material that was copied and composed. On the whole, aside from the rather masculine Bogle and Sandy diaries, it seems that young learners wrote for pragmatic reasons and that they copied and composed material that had been selected or suggested by a teacher or tutor. It is also clear that children spent much of their time practising penmanship and copying out textbooks. Indeed, copying was a core form of learning and should be treated as such within the history of Enlightenment literacy and education.

Based on the Greig and Dunbar notebooks, it also seems that commonplace books served as a familiar form of writing through which children learned to draw tables or to plot numbers and words in patterns on the page in a graphically accessible manner. Like the manuscript accounting skills learned by Richardson and described by Hamilton, children's commonplace books contain tables of useful commercial and professional facts. Overall, when children wrote in their writing copybooks, diaries, ledgers, commonplace books, manuscript textbooks and marginalia, they were learning how to shape their own minds through graphic interface. Writing in this manner bestowed a rich cache of scribal techniques that allowed

them to extend the ability to judge facts and this in turn made it easier for them to understand the larger utilitarian ideologies that framed the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> The modes through which early modern accounting carried various ideological and philosophical meanings in early modern Europe are addressed in Jacob Soll, *The Reckoning: Financial Accountability and the Rise and Fall of Nations* (New York: Basic Books, 2014). See Chapter 8 for the eighteenth-century British context. The influence of John Mair's accounting textbook is addressed on pages 118 and 150.

