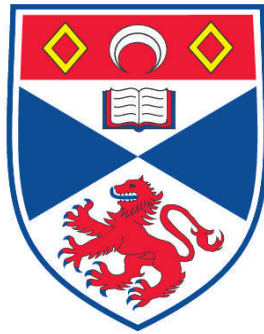


**WILLIAM MCTAGGART : LANDSCAPE, MEANING AND
TECHNIQUE (VOL. I)**

David Scruton

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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WILLIAM McTAGGART: Landscape Meaning and Technique

by

David Scruton

Submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

University of St.Andrews

September 1990



ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to provide an interpretation of McTaggart's work within a discussion of critical discourse in British art, referring in particular to the relative values of content and technique, in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The first section contains an overview of the critical approaches to McTaggart's work from early career to the present day, centred upon how the notion of "impressionist" has been applied to McTaggart. This is followed by an examination of some of the broad determinants of McTaggart's career, such as patronage and his relationship with Academic establishment.

Section II deals with content in landscape art, looking first at the status of landscape in British art. It examines how content was dealt with in Scottish landscape painting prior to McTaggart, and how McTaggart's choice of painting locations addressed traditions of Scottish landscape. The notion of the "poetic" landscape is advanced as an appropriate interpretation of McTaggart's approach. Within this, specific influences upon McTaggart, such as that of J.E. Millais and J.C. Hook, are studied.

In Section III, the issue of technique is examined. Again, McTaggart's work is set within a framework of critical values, outlining the importance of technique in critical debate in the late nineteenth century. The extent to which McTaggart may have come into direct contact with French Impressionism and contemporary colour theory is questioned and the way in which the concepts of "impressionism", "effect", "finish" and "unity" were discussed, and the extent to which they can be applied to McTaggart's work, are appraised.

The concluding section suggests that, despite apparent polarisation of form and content in critical debate, the fusion of technique and subject was still an important aesthetic standard. The inter-relation of content and technique in McTaggart's landscape art is examined within two case studies.

I, David John Scruton, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance No.12 in October 1983 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. in October 1984; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St.Andrews between 1983 and 1990.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Access to pictures by McTaggart and other artists has been aided by the staff of many galleries, museums and private individuals. I am particularly grateful to members of the McTaggart family, including Colin Fisher, Hugh Fisher, Ian Fisher, Nora Fisher, Miss Anne Macandrew, Hugh Macandrew, Mrs E MacTaggart and Neil McTaggart.

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My final thanks must go to Robin Spencer, my supervisor, for his valuable guidance and challenging suggestions.

For Laura

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Abbreviations used:

o/c	oil on canvas
o/p	oil on panel
w/c	watercolour
nd	not dated
PC	private collection

Measurements are given in centimetres, height preceding width. The dimensions of untraced works by McTaggart and of some works in private collections have been taken from James Caw William McTaggart (Glasgow, 1917). The years of undated works have also been taken from Caw.

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SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis does not set out to provide a chronological survey of the landscape paintings of William McTaggart.¹ It is concerned as much with a discussion of critical discourse in Britain during the period of McTaggart's career as with McTaggart's works themselves. It examines the critical standards, particularly in terms of content and technique, of landscape art in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century. The intention of this is to put McTaggart's work in a new perspective, which, I believe, comes closer to an understanding of the artist than the formalist, "impressionist" model which has often been imposed upon him.

As the critical overview will show, the reaction to McTaggart (often by Scottish art critics or critics writing about Scottish art and therefore bound up to some extent with the promotion of a Scottish national art) since James Caw's major biography of 1917 has concentrated primarily upon McTaggart as an "impressionist". Although during McTaggart's lifetime, and in the first part of the twentieth century, this interpretation of "impressionism" acknowledged the expressive (as opposed to the purely empirically naturalistic) potential of McTaggart's work, more recent criticism has tended towards a more formalistic interpretation, implying that McTaggart's work is concerned primarily with the recording of observed natural phenomena.

In this respect, the critical reception of McTaggart's work, both during his lifetime and after, has centred upon the relative value of content and technique. McTaggart's painting career spanned a period when art and art criticism in Britain appeared to undergo significant change. In the 1860s, art was still frequently seen in terms of subject-matter and was dominated by a Ruskinian sense of didactic moral value,

placing emphasis upon ideas conveyed by but external to the artwork. By the time of McTaggart's death in 1910 new approaches to art had fully emerged. For some New Art critics content was subordinate to the way in which a picture was painted. Paintings came to be seen more in formal terms.

In part, McTaggart's own approach to painting appears to broadly parallel these wider developments. There is a clear progression in his work away from largely subject-orientated genre pictures to apparently subject-less landscape paintings in which, it may appear, formal concerns are paramount. Whilst it is probable that McTaggart did not regard himself as following any particular school of thought, it is unlikely that he did not assess his work in relation to the wider implications of the situation developing around him; the way in which technique and subject matter were discussed would have been particularly pertinent to his work and indeed his work was discussed by critics in this context.

This over-simplification, however, raises a number of questions, not only about McTaggart's attitude to subject-matter in landscape painting, but to the broader problem of how landscape art was regarded in Britain in the second half of the 19th century. To what extent was landscape seen as a subject-less mode of art? How did landscape fit into the Victorian scale of art values? What landscape tradition was McTaggart building upon? Part of the argument of this thesis will be that there was some degree of continuity, in respect of the ultimate aims of art, in British aesthetics between Ruskin and the more progressive critics such as D.S. MacColl and R.A.M. Stevenson. There was scope for an artist such as McTaggart to be seen as progressive, particularly in terms of technique, but at the same time retain much of the emphasis upon the firmly established values associated with concepts such as "imagination" and "poetry".

The evidence of his pictures, as well as his few surviving statements, would indicate that content was very important to McTaggart. For a more complete understanding of McTaggart's art it is necessary to examine more closely the 19th century debate about subject and technique in art and assess how this is relevant to McTaggart.

Part of this thesis therefore deals with content or subject matter in landscape painting. I believe that McTaggart did pursue a self-conscious desire for significant meaning in his landscape art, which takes his work far beyond a simple naturalistic view of a scene. The definition of McTaggart's land/seascapes which seems to be most appropriate is that of the "poetic landscape", although this definition requires careful examination. Exactly what "poetic meaning" constituted was in question. It is significant that James Caw (close in relationship and, one suspects, aesthetic sensibility to McTaggart) and D.S. MacColl (a formalist critic of the new generation) could both see the potential for emotional or "poetic" expression in the work of an artist such as McTaggart.

There is in this approach, however, the danger that the pendulum will swing too far. The importance of McTaggart's technical development must not be lost sight of. The question of whether McTaggart was influenced by the French Impressionists is not a dead issue - it remains possible that McTaggart did respond in some way to what these artists were doing in a purely technical sense. He was certainly very aware of what other painters were able to achieve and his technique remained experimental throughout his career. Much of what was being discussed about technique at the time, particularly in relation to landscape art, was relevant to McTaggart's work and it is important that the development of his technique should be seen against this background. It is also necessary, therefore, to examine more closely McTaggart's technique and the critical standards in which it

developed.

Ultimately, it is the acceptance of the inter-relation of technique and subject which is vital to the interpretation of McTaggart's work. For McTaggart, technique and subject were not polar opposites, but part of a unified conception of art and nature. He used technique to support the interpretation of his subject matter, reflecting the critical standards of his age.

CHAPTER TWO

CRITICAL OVERVIEW

Following the publication of James Caw's¹ biography of McTaggart in 1917, the critic D.S. MacColl reviewed the book for the Burlington Magazine.² MacColl (1859-1948) had been one of the chief supporters and interpreters of French Impressionist painting when it had been introduced into Britain in the late 19th century and his understanding of Impressionism, as practiced by the French artists, was greater than that of most critics. MacColl is a useful starting point to assess how a representative of the New Art Criticism saw McTaggart, particularly in relation to Impressionism.

McTaggart's works had been little seen by the London art public during his life and his name would not have been familiar with the majority of the Burlington Magazine readership. MacColl, however, although part of the London art world, was a Scotsman with a knowledge of *Scottish art beyond* that of the London Scots such as Orchardson or McWhirter. Given his interest in Impressionism, it is not surprising that he would have been attracted by Caw's claim for McTaggart as a "Scotch Impressionist".

In 1901 MacColl had used the loan collection at the Glasgow International exhibition as the basis for his resumé of Nineteenth Century Art, published in 1902. In this MacColl takes the opportunity to further explain aspects of French Impressionism, which he uses as a yardstick by which to judge various examples of British art, including that of McTaggart. McTaggart's When the Boat Comes In, exhibited at the Glasgow exhibition, is illustrated with the comment that, "The sentiment (of McTaggart) for movement in light and air leads him to an extreme, at times, of fly-away execution, but the sentiment is a true one..."³

MacColl reaffirms his opinion of McTaggart in his review of Caw's biography, admitting that whilst McTaggart "took his material very casually" he "did develop a remarkable sensibility to sunlight and moonlight, wind and weather" and an appropriate "sketch-technique" to render these effects.⁴ For MacColl, McTaggart paralleled the French movement in two respects: the pursuit of high-key effects of shimmering light and the use of a broad technique suggestive of movement.

What he questions is Caw's assertion that McTaggart's pictures, unlike those of the Impressionists contained "poetic feeling".⁵ Caw believed that,

"whereas the Frenchmen (and later most of their English following, of whom Mr. Wilson Steer is the most notable) confined their efforts to recording the merely visual aspects of *actualitie*, and founded their treatment upon a scientific theory, McTaggart, while attaining effects quite as brilliant as theirs in the actual rendering of light, colour and movement, always painted the beauty and the emotional significance of which these appearances are the external expression."⁶

MacColl counters that McTaggart is not, as Caw suggests, simply more imaginative than Monet because he introduces figures into a picture with a sentimental title. Monet, he asserts, is more strictly conscious of his aim.

In an exchange of correspondence provoked by his review of Caw's book, MacColl questions Caw's positivistic interpretation of the French Impressionists, particularly Monet. He states that,

"Instead of being 'scientific' in the sense of rendering a normal photographic vision, Monet seems to me to be extremely personal and to have an interest in vision which, within those limits, is a passion."⁷

In a subsequent letter he dissociates Monet from what he terms the "pseudo science" of "Pissaro and still more the 'neo-Impressionists' Signac, Seurat & co.", claiming that science cannot solve the problems of art. ⁸

What is involved here was not simply a desire to downgrade McTaggart on MacColl's part but a defence of French Impressionism. Other critics, who like Caw welcomed the new technical approach of the Impressionists, had also questioned the wisdom of their apparently anti-traditional stance, their reliance upon "scientific" method and their disregard for the supposed higher aims of art. Although several progressive critics attempted to defend Impressionism by stressing historical precedents⁹, there was still a fairly consistent characterisation of the Impressionists as anti-traditional in the British journals. This was true even of those critics who saw value in the technical freedom of the Impressionists. For example, Phillipe Burty's account of the first Impressionist exhibition at the Boulevard des Capucines in Paris in The Academy, 1874, whilst welcoming the new challenge to "the contemporary French school, with its black, bitumous or grey colouring," warns that the approach of the young artists, unguided by traditional principles, can lead to "simply childish works" and that their art "based on the the swiftest possible rendering of physical sensation...considerably narrows the domain of painting."¹⁰ Similarly, E.F.S. Pattison, reviewing again in The Academy the London exhibition of the Society of French Artists in the summer of 1872, draws attention to the younger artists. She takes particular note of their technique "admirable for dash and command" but warns that it is "coarse" and questions,

"..what is likely to be the effect on taste of production in art of work which corresponds in style to the style of the sensation writers in literature? It is evident that we are to be completely freed from the yoke of the past, and thoroughly emancipated from tradition."¹¹

The value of this new freedom, argues Pattison, should be seriously examined.

The reception of Impressionism, therefore, rested to some extent upon how it was perceived *vis à vis* historical precedent. Content or "poetic meaning" was one element within this issue. MacColl considered, perhaps rightly, that Caw did not understand Impressionism and its relationship to tradition. He defends the Impressionists, especially Monet, by reaffirming their concern with content. He asserts that "poetic feeling" could be embodied in their work as much as in McTaggart's. Poetic significance did not merely depend upon such superficial devices as the introduction of a figure subject and the use of a title which goes beyond the merely topographical. He evidently believed that emotion or poetic meaning could be revealed in formal terms.

This is born out in other writings by MacColl. In "The Logic of Painting", published in the Albermarle Review of September 1892, he explains his own definition of poetic meaning:

"Narrative is a device more proper to literature than to painting, allegory is a device that is thin diet in either; but you do not get rid of poetry by discarding these. By poetry I mean the bringing home of an image to the emotions by the arts of the senses; literature must do this by evocation, painting does it by direct presentment. To say that the poetry is a pretext for the painting, is like saying that the Mass is a pretext for the sacring bell. Literature jingles the musical bells of one sense, painting waves the colour flags of another, and the image thus commended to the senses is permitted by them entrance to the spirit...Pictures are possible whose programme is only an entertainment of the sense, but if Mr. Whistler and M. Degas are not poets I should like to know who is...The act of vision is complicated by every element of thought

and feeling and breeding, as well as of sense ..."12

The assessment of McTaggart, therefore, has depended not only upon interpretation of his own work but upon the understanding of ideas like "Impressionism". For a critic such as MacColl, it was valid to see McTaggart's work in formal terms and still retain a high level of meaning, defined as emotional or "poetic" expression. For Caw, the expressive quality appears to have been bound more closely to subject matter. It might have made little difference to MacColl whether or not McTaggart included figures in his landscapes, but to Caw the issue would have been of more importance.

How then did other critics regard McTaggart's work? What emphases did they place upon subject matter and formal concerns? Was McTaggart seen as anti-traditional in the same sense that the French Impressionists were greeted by many critics in Britain?

The bulk of McTaggart's early output (of the 1850s and 1860s) consisted mainly of genre pictures. The first works which he exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1855 were two small watercolour portraits. These were followed in 1856 by two further portraits and a small oil painting entitled The Little Fortune Teller. By the end of the decade, however, subjects paintings dominated his submissions to the RSA and pictures such as The Yarn, 1862, Give us this Day our Daily Bread, 1863, and Willie Baird (pl.21), 1867, characterise his output. In the content of his work there would have been little to distinguish him from the other genre painters of the period. It is not surprising, therefore, that early reviewers tended to regard McTaggart as a genre painter and base their critique of his work upon its genre content. Thus, The Scotsman, reviewing McTaggart's Going to Sea (pl.5) in the RSA exhibition of 1859, concentrates upon McTaggart's approach to the subject matter. The same review, however, does also observe that "In colour

the picture is true and harmonious as far as it goes, to which no doubt ere long will be added more force and relief."¹³

In 1860, The Scotsman review of the RSA refers more generally to a number of artists from the Scott Lauder school: McTaggart, Cameron, Burr and Pettie. "All their works have great merit," it is claimed, "but they share one common defect - loose, sketchy execution, and a consequent want of solidity and relief."¹⁴

McTaggart's painting Past and Present (pl.8) is singled out as an example of this trend: "the figures are not relieved from the wall, and though the general colour is excellent, it is difficult to account for the red shadows which prevail in the picture - shadows in nature out of doors never taking that colour except from reflection."¹⁵ It is clear that both artist and critic were aware of concerns such as the representation of colour in shadows and that the technique of such works was not obscured by discussion of content. Nevertheless, it would be very wrong to suggest that at this stage formal concerns would outweigh the importance of subject in the mind of either critic or artist.

In The Art Journal also, McTaggart was regarded in the 1860s as one of the rising young artists of the Scott Lauder School. He was seen primarily as a genre painter and was classified by the Journal as a "figure painter" when notice was given of his election to membership of the RSA in 1870.¹⁶ Works such as Willie Baird, 1867, and Dora, 1869, (pl.23), were well received.¹⁷ In 1866, however, when McTaggart exhibited four works at the RSA, including The Pleasures of Hope, and A Day's Fishing (pl.17), The Art Journal remarked that his subjects were "slight, indeed petty" but that "we can recognise in them the healthy feeling, the truthful tone, and the good touch which have distinguished his more important productions."¹⁸

In general, The Art Journal's criticism was based upon a position which regarded contemporary Scottish art as strong on technique but weak in content. In reviewing the 1861 RSA exhibition, for example, it is admitted that the Scottish Academy is the most important exhibition in the country next to the London RA and that there is "a healthy national pride in the maintenance of a singularly well defined national school of Art."¹⁹ However, this national school, it is claimed, is based upon strength of colour. The exhibition of 1861, is in the critic's view

"deficient in those higher qualities of deep thought, strong imagination, and refined feeling, which formed the worthy and only enduring part of the artistic excellence of the Scotch school but a very few years ago."²⁰

This opinion of the new generation of Scottish artists of the 1860s and '70s was held by other critics. It is reiterated, for example, by The Academy, when reviewing the Scottish contributions to the Royal Academy exhibition of 1871, in which McTaggart had one work. The Scottish artists in London, it is claimed, "are all able executive artists without any mental power or purpose in particular."²¹

Some of the first reviews which clearly set McTaggart apart point to the originality of his technique. In 1878, one writer comments of The Fisher's Landing (pl.38), "...the style is vigorous and broad, and the colour fresh and clear. The work, as a whole, is likely to attract much criticism, as a daring interpretation of an exceptionally difficult idea."²² He also observes in A Day on the Seashore the "bold fresh colour, handled with great dash and vigour" and "The same peculiarity in the higher lights" [as in The Fisher's Landing] and "truth of the colour."²³

The critic here was perhaps more perceptive than some, and was predisposed to examine technique as much as subject matter, but it is also the case that by 1878 there was less

ostensible subject matter, in an anecdotal sense, in McTaggart's work to talk about.

By the 1880s a more radical change in the nature of art criticism, as well as in McTaggart's art, had come about. The New Art criticism was espoused with some enthusiasm by W.E.Henley in his memorial volume of the 1888 Glasgow International Exhibition, A Century of Artists.²⁴

Henley's emphasis upon formal considerations, "the hierarchy of paint", was criticised by the poet Mortimer Wheeler in his review of Henley's book contained in The Scottish Art Review:

"A picture, we are assured again and again, is primarily an 'arrangement in paint.' This is the single string on which Mr Henley has elected to fiddle while Ruskin is burning."²⁵

Wheeler argues that Henley is overstressing what had already become a well worn point of view. The Whistler versus Ruskin trial had taken place ten years before and Whistler's Ten O'Clock Lecture delivered in 1885 (published in 1888). According to Wheeler, Henley's message is "that of Mr. Whistler applied with little change to the elaboration of a catalogue." "The seed sown at ten o'clock has borne fruit in the morning, modified somewhat, if not marred, by conditions of soil and climate, but of clearly recognisable origins."²⁶

Despite Wheeler and other more conservative critics, the discussion of art in formal terms remained an active concern throughout the rest of the century and into the 1900s and the perception of McTaggart's work was, to some extent, caught up in this debate.

R.A.M Stevenson (1847-1900), a friend of W.E Henley and perhaps one of the most influential of the New Art critics,

was familiar with McTaggart's work, at least from the 1890s.²⁷ He appears to have seen it as a progressive art, linking it with the more technique-biased painting of the younger generation (such as the Glasgow school). Of the Scott Lauder artists, he remarked in the Pall Mall Gazette of 1897 that,

"The best of these men, the man whose influence and reputation has lived longest - is unquestionably McTaggart...Indeed his art and that of G.P. Chalmers may be said to have passed on into the New Scottish School and we may rather regard these two as precursors of the present men, than as Chief of the Old."²⁸

In another article in the Pall Mall Gazette, probably also by Stevenson, the author claims that "A generation before the 'New Impressionism'...was fashionable, McTaggart was a 'New Impressionist'...on his own account."²⁹

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the term "impressionism", as an expression of a positivistic approach, came to be applied to McTaggart's art. His work was developing within a critical context which placed value upon the "impression." When the term "Impressionism" was actually coined in France in 1874 and began to filter through to Britain, it was naturally used to describe, in so far as a correspondence could be seen with French works, what some British artists were already doing. When the term became common currency in Britain in the 1880s, McTaggart began to be termed an "impressionist." The first of these descriptions appear in the late 1880s.

Imperfect understanding of French Impressionism led, in some cases, to confusion and perhaps an overemphasis upon the issue of "finish." W. Armstrong in Scottish Painters of 1888, comments of McTaggart that "...of late years he has outdone the impressionists in the looseness of his handling."³⁰ Reflecting a more perceptive view in The

Scottish Art Review, 1889, J.M.Gray states that McTaggart

"...is an 'impressionist' in the best sense of the much-abused word, and conveys in his work - with an unrivalled appearance of fresh unlaboured directness - the totality of a scene in its broad relations as a harmonious whole."³¹

The concomitant atmospheric truth and fleeting effect seen to be inherent in McTaggart's work also contributed to the classification of him as an "impressionist" in both British terms and in relation to the French movement.

Attempts to make explicit any differences between McTaggart and the French Impressionists were limited. However, the stress laid by some critics upon McTaggart's independence have led them to make certain distinctions and superlative claims. Scottish critics in particular have emphasised what they have regarded as McTaggart's unique status. They have claimed that McTaggart's painting did not reflect French trends but represented an original, isolated formulation which pre-dated and surpassed the work of Monet or Pissarro. Blaikie Murdoch, for example, writing in Scotia in 1910, comments upon McTaggart "mastering the rapid noting of elusive appearances - and mastering it as few have done, not even excepting Claude Monet."³²

The most extended essay on McTaggart which follows this line was Caw's article of 1894, "A Scottish Impressionist", published in The Art Journal. In this Caw defines Impressionism as "..the presentment of the essential elements of a scene, a character or an incident, in the most expressive terms."³³ Within this very broad definition he includes such artists as Whistler, Degas, the Glasgow Boys and McTaggart. However, as seen in the debate with MacColl, Caw contrasts what he regards as McTaggart's poetic approach with "..the exact and scientific realism of Monet and his followers." McTaggart, he asserts, exceeds them in

"suggestion, significance, and beauty."³⁴

In Caw's view, McTaggart is concerned with many of the same issues as the French artists; he was "keenly sensitive to the vibration of light and the subtle influence of atmosphere on local colour." He does make a distinction in their technique. McTaggart's handling, he claims is not "'rough and chippy', nor his colour broken and detached as in the pictures of Monet and his school." Nevertheless, he admits that McTaggart's technique may seem incomplete, claiming that "the infinite cannot be expressed by the strictly finite."³⁵ He draws comparison with the suggestive handling of Constable and Corot. It is revealing that whilst Caw is keen to make distinctions between McTaggart and the French Impressionists, he is very ready to assert a kinship between McTaggart and the Barbizon school and contemporary Dutch artists. He terms McTaggart as "A kindred spirit to the Barbizon school and their Dutch followers," being akin to Corot in "poetic realism", to Millet and Israels in interest in humanity and to Monticelli in the loose and delicate way in which figures are incorporated into a composition.³⁶ Certainly, McTaggart would have been more familiar with works by these artists which were present in a number of Scottish collections. In critical terms, they were well established as reference points when discussing Scottish art in relation to continental developments.

Caw appears to react against the new art criticism which places emphasis upon technique rather than subject matter and which he sees to be centred upon the French Impressionists. It is this issue which he uses to contrast McTaggart with the French artists and to maintain McTaggart's supremacy: "Exceeding them in material beauty, as in the vividness of illusive effect, his work combines in a remarkable degree the charm of nature and the fascination of art."³⁷

This view of McTaggart allowed Caw to fully acknowledge the importance of figures within McTaggart's work - something

which more recent critics following a positivistic interpretation of "impressionism" have tended to disregard.³⁸ Caw readily links together content and technique in talking about the emotional quality of McTaggart's art. Writing in Blackwoods Magazine in 1895, for example, Caw comments that "It is difficult to separate human interest from landscape sentiment in McTaggart's art, for they have been conceived as a unity."³⁹

This view is expanded by Caw in his biography of McTaggart published in 1917. Here Caw asserts that McTaggart had developed his approach to natural lighting and colour in the mid 1860s and thus pre-dated the development of Impressionism in France. In Caw's understanding,

"It was almost a decade later before Claude Monet and the French Impressionists, whose art derives in part from Turner and possesses certain qualities in common with McTaggart's, began to take up the pursuit of this motive."⁴⁰

Since Caw, the interpretation of McTaggart has concentrated upon the idea of the "Scottish Impressionist" with, to a greater or lesser extent, some attempt to define the expressive tendencies in his work. Blaikie Murdoch, for instance, concludes that McTaggart was a "realist", but a realist who alluded to rather than delineated his subject matter. For Murdoch, the power of McTaggart's work lay in conveying the impression of nature, with no suggestion of the easel or studio or of "a definitely artistic aim." It was "life itself...truer than the truth."⁴¹

C. Lewis Hind in the second volume of Landscape Painting, published in 1924, adopts a view similar to that of Caw. He criticises the work of Henry Moore in much the same way that Caw dismisses Monet, claiming that the artist aimed at absolute truth but lacked imagination or romanticism. McTaggart's work, however, he describes in more romantic

terms, whilst retaining recognition of the importance of McTaggart's *plein air* approach to landscape.

"He was an open-air man, a nature man, a light and atmosphere man and so vivid and insistent were these conditions to him that his figures partake of these attributes. The children who frolic in his airy seascapes and landscapes are like will-o'-the-wisp in pinafores and stockings."⁴²

In British Painting, of 1933, Baker and James repeat Caw's assertion that "By 1875 [McTaggart] had attained an Impressionism comparable with Sisley's, Monet's or Renoir's" and that "His Impressionism...had the advantage of personal independence." They also refer to his use of saturated high-key colour and his "skilled suggestion of dancing, shifting sunlight, through which objects are seen veiled and absorbed into the ambient light."⁴³ They express some doubt about the lack of formal design in his work, which they consider normally fatal to art, but suggest that,

"McTaggart's case is rather different because of the transcendent quality of his realism that expresses not literal easy facts but the sensitive transmutation of things seen into emotion."⁴⁴

The idea of McTaggart as an "expressionist" was therefore already developing.

British Painting would have done much to introduce McTaggart's work to a general English audience. The chance to see his work in London came in 1935, when his centenary exhibition opened at the Tate prior to it being shown at the National Gallery of Scotland. The London reviews perpetuated the image of a Scottish Impressionist. The Sunday Times, for example, comments that "...in the history of modern painting the name of McTaggart should be coupled with those of Monet and Pissaro."⁴⁵

An opportunity to see his work in London within the context of other Scottish art was provided by the Royal Academy exhibition of Scottish Art in 1939. The Arts of Scotland, written by John Tonge, was published to co-incide with this event. In this, Tonge also asserts that "McTaggart evolved theories of light and movement very similar to the French Impressionists."⁴⁶ But he classes McTaggart as an "original romantic artist"⁴⁷ and re-iterates the claim of Baker and James that, for McTaggart, traditional coherent design and compositional structure was unimportant in the attempt to translate facts into emotions.

Ian Findlay, in Art in Scotland, of 1948, continues the view of McTaggart as a romantic artist. McTaggart, he claims, contradicts Wilenski's theory that only classical art can reflect the cosmic order. Again, he also echoes Caw in stating that McTaggart was "The most significant of the Scots Impressionists" and that "with him there is no question of deriving from the great Continental movement, for he forestalled the French."⁴⁸

Stanley Cursiter, in Scottish Art of 1949, adds little new: "McTaggart remains the great interpreter of the Scottish scene, but even more, in the very personal form of Impressionism which grew from his love of light and colour, he marks a great division between the earlier and later aspects of Scottish art."⁴⁹

The Irwins, in Scottish Painters 1975, conclude that McTaggart is an "impressionist" but not an "Impressionist" and comment also upon the lack of careful design in his later work. This they regard as bad draughtsmanship and remark that "His badly drawn figures conflict with the well-observed effects of sky, sea and fields."⁵⁰ They seem to be intent upon an interpretation of McTaggart in formalist terms.

William Hardie also draws comparison with the French

Impressionists and continues this formalist interpretation. He quotes the remark which Caw ascribes to McTaggart:

"You must trust to your observation and give a frank rendering of what you see. Sometimes a glint of sunshine will so modify the appearance of a boat or a group of distant sails that it becomes difficult to say what the actual form is, but one accepts that in nature for what it suggests, and in rendering it in a picture one should do the same".⁵¹

This Hardie likens to French Impressionist theory. The distinguishing feature, he claims, is that McTaggart attaches more importance to the idea of movement. He is not concerned with the frozen moment but with depicting movement.⁵²

The image of McTaggart as a uniquely Scottish artist has been perpetuated by Edward Gage in The Eye in the Wind, 1977. Gage writes of McTaggart's "instinctive, home-grown version [of Impressionism] with its vivid handling, its plein air touch.."⁵³ He isolates this more specifically to the later work, stating, like Caw, that McTaggart reached the same conclusions as the French Impressionists in "translating the visible world into pigment" and "recording the transitory effects of light in brush strokes of pure colour."⁵⁴ He claims a pseudo-scientific veracity in the theory of simultaneous development.

Like Caw, Gage also suggests that McTaggart went beyond the French Impressionists. "He was a Northerner and not merely concerned - as the French often exclusively were - with recording the fleeting fall of light, but with capturing and making palpable the moods of weather, the atmospheres of place." Gage follows closely the line taken by Caw that McTaggart was interested in more than simple empirical observation. According to Gage, in his later works McTaggart "comes closer to an Expressionist than an Impressionist mode of behaviour."⁵⁵

However, this still does not allow Gage to readily accept, as Caw had done, the presence of genre figures in McTaggart's work. Whilst claiming that McTaggart was "Scotland's first great modern painter" and admiring the pictures through which "his well charged brush flickers and scampers across the canvas miraculously to suggest an infinity of space..", he comments that,

"In such circumstances one readily forgives the sentimental knots of little children which sometimes dance into his gustier visions as being the light-weight reflections, the saccharine complements of emotions that are otherwise profound and passionate. Often they are so merged with rock or grassy bank that it seems their author was also embarrassed by their presence but had not the heart to banish them entirely."⁵⁶

Reflecting a similar viewpoint, William Hardie claims that The Soldier's Return (pl.83),, "..which is as ambitiously large as the big seascapes of the same period and equally concerned with the suggestion of movement and action, is slightly marred by an insistent element of genre."⁵⁷

It is interesting to contrast this with Caw's interpretation of The Soldier's Return. For Caw, the presence of figures in this work provided the key-note of the emotional quality of the landscape, in which subject and technique were intimately linked.

"Pathetic in its suggestion of unwelcomed homecoming and of the days that are no more, 'The Soldier's Return', like his pictures of Emigration, is redeemed from unavailing sadness and regret, not only by touches of kindness, but by splendid colour, vigorous handling and beauty of design."⁵⁸

A view of McTaggart as an "expressionist" is taken up by

Lindsay Errington. Of three works Away o'er the Sea... (pl.56), The "Dark" Dora (1889) and The Storm (pl.59), she writes,

"The great range and variety of tone, colour and brushwork...show the artist engaged in working out his own form of expressionism, the key element in his expressive language being the character of the individual brushmark."⁵⁹

Perhaps oversimplifying a contrast between "impressionism" and "expressionism", she compares this tendency with the move away from perceptual fact towards personal feeling taken by artists on the Continent such as Seurat, Van Gogh and Gauguin. The difference, however, she claims, is that McTaggart did not engage in any theoretical quantification of his painting practice.

In the catalogue accompanying the 1989 exhibition of McTaggart's work at the RSA, Errington examines much more closely the subject matter of McTaggart's paintings.⁶⁰ This has been a necessary and valuable counter to previous stress upon the issue of whether, in formal terms, McTaggart was an "Impressionist". However, her narrow interpretation of Impressionism allows little room for making a comparison between McTaggart and an artist such as Monet, which, I would suggest, it is still valid to do, at least on specific technical points.

Nevertheless, the issue of whether or not McTaggart was an "Impressionist" depends not so much upon how he may have been influenced by Monet or any other artist but on how Impressionism may be defined. It is perhaps misleading to attach terms such as "Impressionist" or "Expressionist" to McTaggart. As MacColl claimed, the recording of perceptual fact does not preclude the emotional response of the artist.

CHAPTER THREE

DETERMINANTS OF McTAGGART'S CAREER

INTRODUCTION

As a preliminary to the discussion of McTaggart's attitude to subject matter and technique, it is helpful to establish some of the general influences upon his work as a landscapist.

His initial training at the Trustees Academy in Edinburgh, and the milieu in which he was working at that time, helped shape the content as well as the technique of some of his early pictures. His early dependence upon portraiture as a source of income was also a significant factor; portraits continued to be an important, though a less evident, part of McTaggart's output throughout his career.

McTaggart quickly found, in the 1860s, a source of patronage which allowed him to experiment with a range of genre and subject pictures. These patrons themselves exerted some pressure upon the type of subjects which he was painting. Gradually, however, he gained more financial and artistic independence and from around the 1880s McTaggart appears to have had the freedom to work more or less on what he chose and at a pace of his own. This was in part the result of the support of the dealer Peter McOmish Dott. During the last two decades of his career, many of McTaggart's larger paintings remained in his studio for several years whilst he completed them to his own satisfaction. It is reasonable to believe that during this period, when he was rarely exhibiting, that there were few external pressures upon his work.

ACADEMY TRAINING AND THE EMERGENCE OF LANDSCAPE IN McTAGGART'S WORK

McTaggart's studentship at the Trustees Academy in Edinburgh was an important formative period in his career; an experience to be built upon not rebelled against.¹ As a number of sources indicate, this was primarily the result of the presence of Robert Scott Lauder (1803-1869) who had been appointed Director of the Antique, Life and Colour classes shortly before McTaggart's enrolment.² Lauder appears to have given his students a remarkable degree of freedom at a time when Academic training in fine art was usually highly structured.

The course at the Trustees followed the progression from outline drawing, through drawing from the antique to painting from a life model.³ (see pl.1). Nevertheless, according to Peter Graham, one of McTaggart's fellow students, Lauder encouraged his pupils to experiment with painting almost from the start of their training.

"One thing...that lives in my memory, was the effective way in which he gave 'heartening' to his students. He was constantly encouraging them, and urging them, even at an early stage in their career, to begin and work on a picture of some kind."⁴

It appears, therefore, that McTaggart would have had relative freedom in his student years and he began to exhibit small compositions at the Royal Scottish Academy whilst still a student. His first exhibits were two portraits in 1855 but in 1856 he exhibited a figure study, The Little Fortune Teller (Private Collection).

The subject matter of this work can be compared with many other genre paintings of the time. John Ballantyne

(1815-1897), for example, McTaggart's master in the life drawing class at the Trustees, was exhibiting several child-based genre pictures at the RSA in the 1850s.⁵ McTaggart's adoption of figure painting could also be seen as a direct development of his experience in the life classes at the Academy, where he would have begun to draw posed figures, sometimes grouped as a tableau rather than individually.

In 1857 McTaggart spent the summer and autumn in Campbeltown where he worked on the landscape setting for another genre subject The Sleeper and the Watcher.⁶ This depicted a sleeping girl, lost among the hills, watched over by her collie. According to Caw, this was McTaggart's first real attempt to work out of doors.⁷ Part of the impetus for this may have come from his experience of seeing the Pre-Raphaelite artists Millais and Holman Hunt at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition, which he had visited with his colleague George Paul Chalmers earlier that year.⁸ However, McTaggart would already have seen plenty of evidence around him in Edinburgh for landscape sketching and landscape composition. Horatio McCulloch (1805-1867), for example, was well represented at the RSA in 1857 with his view of Inverlochy Castle (coll: National Gallery of Scotland) and three other landscape paintings.

Landscape, however, played no part in official academic training. The extent to which pupils would have been led to consider landscape subjects during their free time probably depended partly upon the interests of individual teaching masters. This was the case in the French *Atelier* system, where landscape sketching was an unofficial part of the curriculum, encouraged by the masters such as Couture and Gleyre, who emphasised the importance of executing landscape sketches outdoors. Couture even accompanied his pupils on sketching trips.⁹

Hugh Cameron records that the first stage of study at the Trustees was painting subjects connected with architecture.

This involved outline studies of architectural detail, as can be seen from McTaggart's portfolio of student drawings (coll: McTaggart family), and Cameron remarks that he was kept in this first section for a long time. It appears, however, that the monotony may have been relieved by the occasional field visit. Cameron recalls that Alexander Christie, the head of the department, instituted visits with his students to buildings of interest such as Falkland Palace, Dunfermline Abbey and Linlithgow. Although Cameron states that such visits were undertaken with the idea of making restoration drawings, there might also have been an informal opportunity to make landscape sketches. As Cameron recalled, there was a general enthusiasm at this time to go "Back to nature" and his fellow students were exhibiting the results of this at the RSA.¹⁰

Within the Antique class itself there were still lessons to be learned which the young artist could apply to landscape painting. The knowledge gained of the effects of varied lighting on plaster casts provided important groundwork for McTaggart and his colleagues. Soon after his appointment Lauder instituted a new arrangement of the figure casts. This was again described by Hugh Cameron:

"When the second session came round the master had prepared for us a wonderful surprise, the statues which had always been monotonously placed against the gallery as separate figures, were now gathered into groups enhancing each other in a most interesting way, and the lighting was adjusted with reflectors that had hinged wings so that some figures were in strong light, others in low light, and still others in darkness; while the frieze of the Parthenon at the top of the wall running along the length of the gallery was seen in low tone."¹¹

In Thoughts about Art, P.G. Hamerton records Peter Graham's reaction to this method of study:

"He [Graham] believes, and so do I, that the shortest road to good landscape-painting is an indirect road, and that he himself got his first initiation into the mysteries of landscape effect through constant observation of the delicate play of light and shade in a gallery of statues.."12

Lauder himself painted landscape sketches. His View in the Roman Campagna (Private Collection) and A Vineyard, Gensano (coll: Aberdeen Art Gallery), for example, were painted whilst he was in Italy between 1833 and 1838 and demonstrate his interest in painting from nature. Lauder was also a close friend (and son-in-law) of John Thomson of Duddingston. MacMillan suggests that "Through Lauder, Thomson's approach to landscape was transmitted to Lauder's pupils.."13 Whilst this is perhaps too sweeping a statement, Lauder's interest in landscape and his association with Thomson should not be underestimated.

Ballantyne, also, in addition to portraits and genre subjects, painted several landscapes. He exhibited at the RSA in 1852 pictures entitled View on the Tweed, near Norham and Brinton Mill, near Flodden, which from their specific topographical references would suggest that preliminary sketches at least were begun from nature. In 1858 he exhibited two works described as Sketch from Nature and Study from Nature.

In more general terms landscapes were an important part of the RSA annual exhibitions by the mid 19th century and "sketches" or "studies" from nature were frequently exhibited by both established and young artists. McTaggart's fellow student John McWhirter was exhibiting works with landscape titles from 1854, including in 1857 Study near Colinton: Spring. McTaggart himself exhibited a Study from Nature in 1859.

Landscape painting and sketching also featured in numerous technical and theoretical treatises available to young artists in mid century, the majority of which exhorted the young artist to study from nature. John Burnet's Landscape Painting in Oil Colours was published in 1849 and C.R. Leslie's A Handbook for Young Painters, 1855, contained a section on landscape. Barnard's The Theory and Practice of Landscape Painting in Watercolours also appeared in 1855. Perhaps the most important publication for young artists such as McTaggart, in terms of raising the profile of landscape painting and encouraging direct study from nature, was Ruskin's Modern Painters, the first volume of which was published in 1843.¹⁴ A more formulated practical instruction was offered by Ruskin in The Elements of Drawing of 1857. As will be discussed later, the passing interest of McTaggart and other students in Pre-Raphaelite painting and in Ruskin's explanation of Pre-Raphaelitism can in part be associated with the direct relevance of detailed observation of nature to academic study, in which precise delineation of form and detail was important.

The milieu in which McTaggart was working would, therefore, have been supportive of an interest in landscape sketching and composition. The naturalistic depiction of landscape begins to play an important role in McTaggart's work of the late 1850s and early 1860s with such pictures as The Past and the Present (pl.8), 1860, and The Old Pathway (pl.10), 1861. McTaggart was keenly interested in the landscape portions of his oils; they were not simply painted around a figure subject but in some cases at least were painted as landscapes in their own right before a figure subject was added.¹⁵ McTaggart had painted a landscape watercolour as early as 1853, Ben Ledi (Private Collection), and certainly by the beginning of the 1860s Caw records watercolours with landscape titles such as A Wooded Avenue, Meikle Earnock (1862) and Arran Hills (1864). McTaggart refers to landscape studies from nature in his correspondence of the early 1860s with his patron George

Simpson. In November 1863, for example, he excuses himself for not being more advanced with Simpson's commission on the subject painting Spring "but when in the country I felt so strongly inclined to take advantage of the opportunity to make studies from nature that I painted nothing but landscape."¹⁶

Nevertheless, McTaggart described himself as a "figure painter" on his marriage certificate of 1863¹⁷ and his main exhibits at the RSA continue to include figure subjects through the 1860s and into the 1870s. Only gradually did the relative value of figure and landscape background begin to change until, with a number of coastal subjects of the late 1870s and a work such as The Storm (pl.43) of 1883, McTaggart's approach could be more appropriately described as that of painting landscapes with figures. But, as will later be argued, even with these works and with pictures from very late in McTaggart's career, figure incident remains an important part of McTaggart's perception of the landscape.

PORTRAITURE

During his training and in the years immediately following the completion of his studies at the Trustees Academy, McTaggart's main output was in portraiture and genre painting. His interest in portraiture was partly a matter of economic necessity, to help him pay his way through his years of study. Although there was no tuition fee at the Trustees, McTaggart, without any financial support from his parents, needed to pay for living expenses and painting materials.

Several of McTaggart's early portraits appear to have been commissioned in Ireland. Caw lists a portrait of a Captain Watt, skipper of a Glasgow to Dublin steamer, which probably led to McTaggart's subsequent trips to Ireland from 1853 to 1856.¹⁸ In 1854 McTaggart exhibited two works at the Royal

Hibernian Academy, Portrait of the Children of J.Morton Esq. and Our Jim. These were his first contributions to a major annual exhibition, predating his first works at the RSA in 1855. This link with Ireland, however, was short-lived. McTaggart did not exhibit again at the Royal Hibernian Academy until 1863 with a genre picture The Sprained Ankle, which was sent on to Ireland after having remained unsold at the RSA the previous year. Thereafter, he only exhibited at the Hibernian Academy in 1866, 1872 and 1901.¹⁹ It is possible that Ireland was not as great a source of portrait commissions as Caw suggests or at least that the portraits McTaggart was painting were not of sufficient importance for further submission to the Hibernian Academy. No positively identified examples of McTaggart's Irish commissions have been traced.

The majority of McTaggart's portraits from this period are in pencil or black chalk, often heightened with white and coloured (usually red) chalk. This medium is in part a development of drawings made at the Trustees Academy. As with several of his Academy drawings McTaggart also used a buff coloured paper for his portraits.

Although very carefully executed these early portraits are often freer in technique than his drawings made at the Academy, particularly those from the antique, where delicate tonal gradations are achieved by the use of the stump (see pl.1). In the portraits, McTaggart's technique is relatively more spontaneous and a broader range of handling is found. Although a rubbing technique is still used, this is often combined with more prominent use of cross-hatching, as in the Portrait of Walter Smith (pl.2) of 1856.

The variation in handling found between some of these portraits appears in part to correspond with the character of the sitter. Already at this stage McTaggart seems to be very aware of his medium as a vehicle of expression. The Portrait of Walter Smith is drawn with a strong, forceful handling

which matches the sitter's strong, rounded features. A Portrait of an Unknown Man (pl.3) of 1858 is by contrast more delicate and agitated, in keeping with the fine, nervous features of the young man.

These works derive from a tradition of portrait drawing. They could be compared, for example, with chalk portraits of Dr. John and Mrs John Aitken (coll: National Gallery of Scotland) by Daniel MacNee (1805-1882). It was to MacNee that McTaggart was introduced when he first moved from Campbeltown to Glasgow in 1852. McTaggart had apparently developed a talent for portraiture whilst apprenticed to an apothecary, Dr. John Buchanan, in Campbeltown. According to Caw, Buchanan had shown McTaggart portraits by MacNee and John Graham Gilbert (1794-1866), the two most prominent portraitists in the West of Scotland at the time, in the homes of various local families.²⁰ It is not surprising, therefore, that McTaggart might have first considered himself a portraitist and that it was to MacNee that Dr. Buchanan addressed his letter of introduction.

Portraiture continued to play a significant role in McTaggart's work throughout his career. From Caw's catalogue it is apparent that McTaggart was regularly painting portraits from the 1850s through until the 1890s.²¹ Apart from the early years, when he was supporting himself through portraiture, his most concentrated period of portrait painting was in the 1870s. Caw lists forty-six portraits during this decade. This compares with around thirteen in the 1860s, twenty-six in the 1880s and fourteen in the 1890s. Whilst some of these are informal portraits of McTaggart's own family, the majority appear to have been commissioned works. In 1870-71, for example, he painted five portraits of the children of the MP J.C. Stevenson, three of which were exhibited at the RSA in 1871 and two at the RA in 1872. Stevenson was MP for Newcastle-upon-Tyne and McTaggart perhaps received the commission through Stevenson's brother, who was a close friend of George Paul Chalmers.

It is also clear from McTaggart's exhibits at the RSA in the 1870s that portraiture was still a significant part of his output. In 1871 and 1872, three out of six exhibits each year were portraits. In 1873, it was four out of seven and in 1874, five out of eight. This proportion reduces slightly in the later 1870s but increases again with five portraits out of a total of seven pictures in the RSA exhibition of 1880. In the eyes of the Scottish public, therefore, McTaggart would still have appeared at least as much a portraitist as a genre and landscape painter. It is likely, even at this stage, when he had established other sources of patronage, that McTaggart still found portraiture a useful means of income; the annual RSA exhibition would have been an opportunity to display the quality of his work. In 1872 he had moved to a central and fashionable location with a flat at Hope Street in Edinburgh New Town and by 1881 he could afford to rent the lower rooms also, and by doing so acquired an address on Charlotte Square. This central position was ideally suited for the studio of a portrait artist and McTaggart appears to have spent much of his time in Edinburgh during these years engaged in portrait commissions.

Caw suggests that neither the Scottish aristocracy nor the municipal magnates sought portraits from McTaggart²² but he did find a secure source of commissions from a number of wealthy businessmen and industrialists, including those in Dundee who formed the base of his patronage in the 1860s. James Guthrie Orchar, for example, commissioned a portrait of his wife (1886) and Henry Gourlay commissioned a portrait of his children and a posthumous portrait of his wife (1877). One of McTaggart's last major portrait commissions was of Baillie Duncan MacDonald, a presentation portrait from the City of Dundee in 1896. His very last commission seems to have been a posthumous portrait (untraced) of Mr John Hart, a Glasgow banker, in 1901.

There are also several family portraits of the 1890s and 1900s. Several of these are in landscape settings, such as Babbie and Hamish - "The Companions" (Private Collection) a portrait of two of McTaggart's own children of 1897, which, although almost certainly a studio work, is concerned with creating a fresh out-door effect. These late family portraits are broadly handled, using a high-key palette and in this respect can be compared with McTaggart's late landscapes. There is certain amount of cross-influence between McTaggart's genre/landscape paintings and his portraits, particularly of children, from throughout his career.

It can be seen, therefore, that portraiture not only provided income but still interested McTaggart into his maturity. Although usually a neglected area of his *oeuvre* it was a significant element of his output and should form part of the overall picture when considering McTaggart's approach to subject matter and the "human" content of his landscapes.

McTAGGART'S EARLY PATRONS

The Arts in Dundee:

The catalogues of the RSA annual exhibitions for the 1860s reveal that by far the largest number of lenders of works by McTaggart came from Dundee. McTaggart's association with these Dundee patrons played a significant role in the development of his early career. They provided the basis of his patronage in a formative period. In particular, George Simpson, William Ritchie, J.G. Orchar and J.C. Bell formed important collections of his work. Their tastes exerted some influence upon him and helped to determine the progress of a number of his early paintings.

These men represented, to a much greater extent than early

collectors of McTaggart's work in Glasgow or Edinburgh, a distinct group of patrons. This can partly be explained by the relatively smaller size of Dundee and the more closely knit business community, in which business rivalry extended to their activity as art collectors. The rapid rise, also, of wealth in Dundee in mid century, fostered largely by a single industry (textiles), created a group of businessmen ready to buy art, but unguided by traditions of collecting established in Edinburgh, and to a lesser extent Glasgow, from earlier in the century. As in many other industrial towns in England (such as Liverpool, Leeds and Birmingham), a decade or so before, they tended to buy primarily contemporary art.²³

The Dundee businessmen would have perceived in the group of recent graduates from the Trustees Academy, including McTaggart, Chalmers, Cameron, Orchardson and Pettie, artists who, through their study under Lauder, approached a stylistic "school" and who were already receiving good reviews in the critical press. The Art Journal in 1859, for example, referred to them as "a class of students which, if the public and associations spoil them not, will mark an era in the history of Art in Scotland."²⁴ At the same time, their prices were not prohibitively high.

This interest in the arts came at a time of general enthusiasm for cultural ventures in Dundee. The Albert Institute (housing the public library, museum and gallery) was opened in 1867, ready for the meeting in Dundee that year of the British Association. J.C.Bell, J.G.Orchar, William Ritchie and G.B.Simpson all served on the executive Committee of the Association's Fine Art exhibition. This was the first important art exhibition to be held in the city. The works lent by members of the committee and other local collectors show how a pattern of taste had already developed. Orchar, for example lent twenty five pictures, including works by McTaggart and his Edinburgh contemporaries.

A second major loan exhibition was held in 1873, when Bell,

Orchar, Ritchie and Simpson were again lenders and served on the exhibition committee. The interest in contemporary art coalesced more fully in a further exhibition of 1877, the first in a series of important annual exhibitions in Dundee.²⁵ This was conceived as a commercial exhibition with artists submitting work for sale. In addition to Scottish works, pictures by several prominent English artists of the time were included; John Everett Millais, for example, was represented by a work entitled A Venetian Child, for sale at £88, and William Powell Frith by Sweet Anne Page at £150.

Orchar and others were also concerned that a permanent collection should be established in the new galleries of the Albert Institute. In 1874 Orchar donated the first picture, a work by one of the Scott Lauder school - Old Letters by George Paul Chalmers - to the Dundee collection. Other gifts followed, including pictures by Hugh Cameron, William McTaggart, Tom Graham, and John Pettie.

The Dundee business community, therefore, was an important and powerful base of patronage for the arts - and much of this patronage was directed at the Scott Lauder school. When they began collecting the work of McTaggart and his colleagues in the early 1860s, the artists were at the beginning of their careers. Their patrons held the upper hand, suggesting subject matter and taking a very close interest in the way in which pictures were painted. In several cases a genuine friendship developed between artist and patron, as with McTaggart and both George Simpson and James Orchar. These patrons should therefore be considered as an important influence upon McTaggart's early development.

J.C. Bell: (1816-1897):

Bell, a merchant in the flax trade, was probably one of the

first of the Dundee businessmen to begin collecting pictures. One obituarist remarks that it was Bell who set the example for collecting in Dundee, stating that it was more than fifty years before (ie. in the late 1840s) that Bell started to put together his initial collection and that he was a recognised collector of the work of the elder generation of Scottish artists, such as Horatio McCulloch (1805-1867), E.T. Crawford (1806-1885) and Sam Bough (1822-1878). With the emergence of the Scott Lauder artists in the early 1860s, he began also to collect their work.

Bell was a regular lender to the annual RSA exhibitions from 1859 onwards, with works by John Faed, Bough, McCulloch, Robert Herdman, McTaggart, Chalmers, Hugh Cameron and others. His loans to the Dundee Fine Art Exhibition of 1873 confirm this interest in Scottish art.²⁶

The first work by McTaggart which Bell purchased was the small oil Unwillingly to School (1863) lent by Bell to the RSA in 1864. This was followed by The Pleasures of Hope, the title of which was taken from a poem by Thomas Campbell²⁷, exhibited at the RSA of 1866. A third work, Willie Baird (pl.21), was lent to the RSA in 1867. This latter picture was commissioned by Bell, and its subject matter probably largely determined by him. Bell wrote to McTaggart after reading a poem by Robert Buchanan in the Cornhill Magazine of 1865. The pathos of the poem, which deals with the love of an old village schoolmaster for his favourite pupil who dies in a storm, had evidently caught Bell's imagination. In a letter of February 1866, he remarks to McTaggart, "Do you think you will begin now to that great and important work of art 'Wee Willie Baird'. I was reading the story again the other night with all the delight of the first impression."²⁸

McTaggart's subject matter during this period must therefore take account of his patrons. The anecdotal and literary subjects of such works as Unwillingly to School and Willie

Baird are at least as much a reflection of the collector's taste as of McTaggart's own interests. Although, as will be seen in the case of other individual collections, there was a wide scope in the type of pictures which these men collected, there was a predominant interest in rural or coastal landscapes and rural genre scenes. This is reflected, to a large extent, in the type of work which the collectors were buying from McTaggart and other Scott Lauder artists.²⁹

George B Simpson (1820-1892):

During the period of McTaggart's early career, George Simpson was in partnership in the textile industry with William Ritchie (see below). The business was of sufficient success to allow Simpson to pursue a passion for collecting antiquarian and art objects. By the late 1870s, however, Simpson encountered serious financial difficulties, resulting in the first of the sales of his varied collections in 1880, shortly followed by the disposal of his coin and medal collection and later a second sale of pictures in 1886.³⁰

The sale at Chapman & Sons in Edinburgh in 1880 comprised 129 paintings, including works by the leading Scott Lauder artists, as well as pictures by Sam Bough, Alexander Fraser and McCulloch. There were also a smaller number of works by minor French and Belgian artists and a few English works, the most important of which was Frederick Leighton's Star of Bethlehem (exhibited RA 1862).³¹ The subsequent sale of 1886 included several paintings which further reveal Simpson's taste. Pictures ascribed to Parmigiano, Salvator Rosa, Tintoretto, Jan Breughel, Adrian Brauwer, Caravaggio, Adrien van de Velde, de Hooze and Velasquez were offered.³²

Despite this wide range of taste, Simpson's early friendship with the young artists of the Scott Lauder school remains a very important dimension of his collecting approach. It had been during the 1860s that Simpson had closest contact with

McTaggart, purchasing some of the most significant of McTaggart's pictures of this decade. Amongst other works, he commissioned the two companion paintings Spring (pl.14) and Autumn (pl.15) of 1864 and the larger Enoch Arden (pl.16) of 1865. These works have rural and coastal genre settings. However, they also contain symbolic and literary significance which, even if not dictated by Simpson would not have been lost upon him. Simpson's library reveals him to have been well read, containing several volumes of Tennyson, including an illustrated volume of Enoch Arden on which McTaggart's picture was based. He also read widely on art and aesthetics, subscribing to The Art Journal and The Portfolio, and owned several of Ruskin's works including Modern Painters.³³

Simpson is of particular importance to the study of McTaggart because of the extant correspondence between McTaggart and himself, the bulk of which dates from the 1860s.³⁴ The letters provide a good indication of the developing friendship and business relationship between artist and collector. In the early 1860s McTaggart was still a struggling artist dependent upon his patron, who to a significant extent determined the type of work he was producing. Towards the end of the decade emerges the mature artist, who was at more liberty to execute his paintings on his own terms.

In the early 1860s both Simpson and McTaggart were relatively inexperienced in the transactions involved in the sale of works direct from the artist's studio. Probably the first work which Simpson commissioned from McTaggart was Spring, the cause of an early rift between artist and collector. Preliminary to the painting, McTaggart had made a sketch of the subject which he offered to the dealer/collector Charles Hargitt.³⁵ Simpson was annoyed: "When I was first shewn the pencil sketch, I of course assumed that at that time I was the first to commission the subject and naturally, I think, consider it should have been held secure for me."³⁶

Simpson's correspondence reveals similar dealings with other artists, the balance of the relationship depending upon the status of the artist concerned. Horatio McCulloch, an established artist by the 1860s, was more able to state his own terms to Simpson. In 1863 Simpson offered to purchase one or two studies which McCulloch was working on. McCulloch replied "The price will be at least as much as any of my most successful works...I may mention that whoever gets them must allow me to use them in painting from as I have orders for two large pictures of the same subjects."³⁷ With a younger artist such as John Smart (1838-1899) Simpson held more power. In a letter to Simpson of 1865 Smart reassures Simpson that his picture "will not be reproduced"³⁸.

As a collector, therefore, Simpson was concerned with the status of his pictures within the art market. He was aware of pictures not only as objects of aesthetic pleasure but as property, remaining acutely conscious of the "originality" of the subjects he commissioned. It is important also to remember that Simpson was buying from McTaggart prior to the works being shown at the annual RSA exhibition and he was therefore in effect lending pictures to the RSA. Lenders were normally acknowledged in the catalogue and the exhibition of their pictures at the Academy was a reflection upon their status as collectors.

Simpson's early disagreement with McTaggart on the matter of replicas did not deter him from further dealings with the artist. McTaggart gave sufficient ground to mollify his patron, who continued to commission and purchase works direct from McTaggart's studio.

For most of the 1860s, Simpson continued to exercise what he saw as his rights as a patron, asking McTaggart to make changes to pictures. McTaggart kept him well informed of the progress of his preliminary sketches. The development of both Spring and Autumn, for example, is charted in their correspondence. At least part of the initial suggestion for

the subject of these two works may have come from Simpson and Simpson refers to his role as having commissioned the subject of Spring.³⁹

With another commission, Simpson did suggest the subject himself. McTaggart writes to Simpson in June (?)1867 stating that "I shall be delighted to paint the 'little one lecturing her shadow' and I shall endeavour to make it as fine as I can and I think it will make a beautiful little subject."⁴⁰

Later, Simpson writes to McTaggart, describing the receipt of a picture, probably Lecturing her Shadow, stating that,

"You will now like to know how (or rather that) I like it... Expecting an interior I was not at first - nor yet quite - reconciled to the background, on which you may perhaps sometime see somewhat to alter a little for the better."⁴¹

Two days later, McTaggart replies, "It is scarcely necessary for me to say to you that I shall be most happy to do anything to the little picture you may wish - even to painting it all over again if necessary."⁴² The picture (untraced) is described by Caw⁴³ as an interior. It seems, therefore, as if Simpson still had the controlling hand and that McTaggart did comply with his patron's wishes and alter the landscape background.

McTaggart's dealings with Simpson should not, however, be seen purely in terms of business relationship. During the 1860s, a friendship developed. This can be gauged from the tone of McTaggart's letters, in which he frequently relays information about other artists to Simpson and offers his opinions on the RSA and RA exhibitions. By early 1866, Simpson and McTaggart were planning a trip to Arran together, in the company of George Paul Chalmers.⁴⁴

The correspondence between McTaggart and Simpson begins to fall off in the early 1870s and their friendship, although

still maintained, is no longer so close. Simpson by this time was no longer actively collecting McTaggart's works.

William Ritchie (d.1881):

In business partnership with George Simpson, Ritchie also used his wealth to form collections of antiquities, decorative and fine art. The catalogue for the earlier sale of his picture collection in 1885 indicates a range of taste similar to that of Simpson.⁴⁵ His aspirations to the acquisition of old masters was less pronounced than in Simpson's case, although there are works attributed to Canaletto and Ruysdael and an early Italian Adoration. However, the Canaletto was valued at only 11 guineas, whereas several pictures by contemporary Scottish artists were entered at between 70 and 100 guineas. The most valuable work in the collection was McTaggart's Adrift at 200 guineas. There were seven other pictures by McTaggart: The Murmur of the Shell at 115 guineas, two fishing scenes at 110, News from the Far West at 70, and three smaller paintings.

Two of the early McTaggarts which Ritchie acquired, unlike Simpson's Spring and Autumn, were not commissions of original subjects. One was a small version of The Sleeper and the Watcher (the original of which McTaggart had exhibited at the RSA in 1858) and the other a small version of The Old Pathway (the original exhibited at the RSA in 1862). Nevertheless, Ritchie also exerted at least some influence over the development of McTaggart's work. In 1864, McTaggart wrote to Simpson of Ritchie that "I intend to begin upon his picture if the subject of the pencil sketch I have sent him will suit him."⁴⁶ This work was possibly A Summer Afternoon, exhibited at the RSA in 1865. The two works A Day's Fishing - Morning (pl.17) and A Day's Fishing - Evening (pl.18) were probably also commissions from Ritchie. Of matching dimensions, it is likely that they

were intended as a companion pair, perhaps to rival Simpson's Spring and Autumn.

The Murmur of the Shell (pl.20), 1867, was, according to Caw, developed from a watercolour sketch of the previous year.⁴⁷ It was nevertheless purchased by Simpson prior to exhibition at the RSA in 1867 and McTaggart refers to it as "Ritchie's picture" in a letter to Simpson of January 1867.⁴⁸

James Guthrie Orchar (1825–1898):

McTaggart's acquaintance with Orchar began in the mid 1860s. He was working on a picture for Orchar by the autumn of 1867 - probably Fish from the Boat. However, it was not until the 1870s that Orchar's main purchases from McTaggart began. By 1873, Orchar had bought from McTaggart three oils: On the White Sands (pl.25), Amongst the Bent and Something out of the Sea (pl.27). He appears to have frequently purchased works directly from McTaggart's studio; Through Wind and Rain (pl.29), for example, was bought from McTaggart before it was sent to the RSA in 1875.

By this time McTaggart's reputation was developing and the relationship between Orchar and McTaggart as patron and artist was more complex than that between McTaggart and Simpson or Bell. Although Orchar purchased subject paintings and rural scenes from other Scottish artists such as Cameron, Chalmers and Pettie, he was purchasing primarily coastal scenes from McTaggart, an area of subject-matter which is likely to have been dictated more securely by McTaggart himself.

As with Simpson, the friendship between McTaggart and Orchar evolved beyond a simple business arrangement. They were of similar social backgrounds. McTaggart was the son of a crofter and Orchar's father had been a country joiner and

wheelwright. In 1882 Orchar accompanied McTaggart on a tour of the continent, visiting Paris, Vienna, Munich, Prague, Dresden, Amsterdam and the Hague. McTaggart again spent time with Orchar in 1886 whilst painting a portrait of Orchar's wife, which was exhibited at the RSA the following year along with a portrait of Miss Douglas (a relation of Mrs Orchar).

Orchar accompanied McTaggart on several painting excursions. They spent a few days sketching together at Brig o' Turk in October 1877 and in the summer of 1880 Orchar travelled with McTaggart and his family to Kintyre. In a letter to Simpson, McTaggart writes of the trip that "Mr Orchar is also here and we are both very industrious. He is doing some very good work - between the beauty of the sea-shore and the beauty of the harvest fields how happy we be with either - it's very distracting".⁴⁹

It is likely that Orchar also spent time with McTaggart and their mutual friend T.S. Robertson, a Dundee architect, on sketching excursions to Carnoustie. Robertson remarks that he sketched with McTaggart on numerous occasions.⁵⁰ Two of Orchar's exhibits at the local Dundee Art Club exhibitions in 1884 and 1886 are entitled Sketch at Carnoustie.

These trips which McTaggart made with Orchar and other Dundee collectors, together with the numerous occasions on which he visited their homes, gives an indication of the common interests, and the perceived social equality, of artist and patron. A free exchange of ideas must have been habitual. McTaggart at this point in his career was not painting pictures in isolation but within a very definite background of reactive patronage.

Other Early Patrons:

The Dundee collectors are important not only for the

individual works which they commissioned and purchased from McTaggart but because they form an identifiable group and represent a solid base of patronage for McTaggart in this early period. McTaggart, however, was also selling to a number of other collectors outside Dundee in the 1860s and '70s.

A private Edinburgh dealer Charles Hargitt, for example, was buying works from McTaggart both for clients and for his own collection. A note in a sketchbook of about 1863 refers to two works The Orange Girl and The Fish Wife which McTaggart was painting on request for Hargitt.⁵¹ According to Caw, Hargitt had first established contact with McTaggart in 1858, asking McTaggart to send pictures on approval or give him first option. This resulted in the sale of The Thorn in the Foot (pl.4), of 1858, for £30.⁵² Later Hargitt purchased The Wreck of the Hesperus (pl.9), of 1860. Other works which McTaggart sold to Hargitt include The Dead Robin (exhibited RSA 1860), The Well (RSA 1863), Puir Weans (pl.12), The Ballad (RSA 1864) and The Wayside Breakfast (RSA 1865). Although as Errington⁵³ points out Puir Weans is unusual for McTaggart in that it represents an urban setting, these are on the whole conventional genre subjects. A survey of Hargitt's loan of works by other artists to the RSA shows that the parameters of his taste were comparable to that of the Dundee collectors quoted above.⁵⁴

Another patron of this period was a Glasgow collector Robert Craig, who acquired a version of Puir Weans and Helping Grannie (probably coll: Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Gallery). The best documented purchase which Craig made from McTaggart was the commission of The Past and the Present(pl.8). Caw suggests that several collectors from Glasgow and Edinburgh had first become seriously interested in McTaggart's work in 1859, writing to McTaggart whilst he was in Campbeltown that summer, requesting pictures subject to approval.⁵⁵ One of these was Craig, who wrote to McTaggart requesting rough

sketches of paintings, together with sizes and prices.⁵⁶ Shortly afterwards, McTaggart wrote to Craig from Campbeltown regarding The Past and the Present,

"I shall be here for some weeks yet I think: unless the weather should set in stormy or wet, as I have a good deal of out of door work yet to do. I will let you know what day I shall be in Edinburgh, and you can have the first refusal of my picture. I cannot fix a price upon it yet, it is so far from being finished."⁵⁷

Craig subsequently became very involved with the developing subject matter of the picture. McTaggart had apparently begun the work before Craig expressed an interest but had quickly sent him a sketch of the design in September 1859. By the end of the month, Craig replied,

"It occurs to me that the subject would be far more telling if instead of the house, you introduced a church or part of one, sufficient to convey the idea that it really is a churchyard; the tombstone certainly suggests that. but the ordinary house like appearance of the building removes it again; - & a title of "The Past & Present" or something of that kind would complete it."⁵⁸

McTaggart suggested that he might be able to alter the tombstones, giving them more character, but that the alteration of the house to a church might upset the arrangement of figures.⁵⁹ Craig later requested that more emphasis be given to the setting specifically as a churchyard and suggests that McTaggart visit various old churchyards including Restalrig, Seton, and Inchcolm.⁶⁰ McTaggart relented and introduced a blind gothic archway and lancet windows into the building, clearly denoting its ecclesiastical origin. Perhaps encouraged by this Craig ventured even further and suggested that McTaggart put in

"an old Kirk yard wall with monuments indented... Now my

worthy friend and brave associate, if you will put a pencil and some paper in your pocket, & go out as far as the old Greyfriars Church in Candlemaker Row, you will find the *very thing* we want...Were I treating the subject, I would introduce one or more of those flat *table* kind of tombstones with enough of others just to *tell the story* and *no more*, without interfering with the effect of the picture..."⁶¹

McTaggart did not introduce these new suggestions. His composition was too far advanced by this stage to incorporate such radical changes. It is significant, however, that he went as far as he did in accomodating Craig's wishes. As it stands, The Past and the Present must be regarded as compromise between the ideas of the artist and patron. If the references to mortality and the contrast between youth and age were more explicit than McTaggart might have wished they can be attributed to the influence of Craig. As will later be examined, Craig also expressed a desire for McTaggart to adapt the technique of of this picture, raising the common criticism of lack of "finish".⁶²

PETER MCOMISH DOTT AND LATER COLLECTORS

After the 1860s, it is probable that McTaggart's patrons were not able to exert the kind of pressure seen in the examples of Craig and the Dundee collectors. As he became more established and confident he was able to follow more strictly his own ideas, which perhaps in part explains the developing interest in coastal and landscape scenes during the 1870s and early 1880s. In this period he appears to have been able to find a wide range of buyers such as the Glasgow collector, A.B. Stewart, who purchased The Fisher's Landing (pl.38), William Chamberlain, of Brighton, with Along the Shore and "As Happy as the Day is Long and George Hart, of Edinburgh, with Gathering Drift and The Young Fishers (pl.31). At

least some of these works were purchased directly from the artist. Others, such as A Highland Burn (see pl.33), purchased by the Glasgow collector James Donald at the 1877 RSA, were acquired from exhibitions.

By this time Dundee was no longer such a secure source of patronage. The 1860s and '70s had been the golden age of the arts in the city. Although the annual fine art exhibitions continued throughout the 1880s, the sales from these exhibitions gradually fell, with the general depression of local trade being cited as the main factor.⁶³

This corresponds with a fall in McTaggart's sales to his Dundee friends and clients. Simpson's McTaggarts date from the 1860s; The business difficulties which he was encountering by the late 1870s meant that he was no longer actively collecting. J.C. Bell and William Ritchie also had only been collecting McTaggart's work primarily during the 1860s. Orchar was still purchasing a few McTaggarts in the 1880s and '90s, but the major part of his collection dates from the 1870s.

Nevertheless, Caw states that in his later career, McTaggart was regularly selling to collectors both directly and through dealers.⁶⁴ Although there is little surviving information upon these later patrons, it can be seen that a number of individuals did build up collections of work by McTaggart. One of these was John Duncan, of Edinburgh, who had owned at least 36 McTaggarts.⁶⁵ Apart from one or two pictures from the 1860s and '70s, these works date from 1880 to 1906. There were eleven pictures from the 1880s, thirteen from the 1890s and nine from the 1900s. It is likely that Duncan was actively collecting McTaggart's work from the early 1880s.

Amongst McTaggart's dealers in this later period were Agnews and Alexander Reid (Glasgow). McTaggart's relationship with most dealers was probably fairly casual, with occasional sales of individual pictures rather than regular supply. With

the firm of Aitken Dott, however, McTaggart had a more stable agreement. Since Dott's record books prior to 1896 have been lost it is uncertain when they first began to buy from McTaggart but from his earliest student days, McTaggart had bought canvas and painting materials from Dotts, the firm having been established in Edinburgh by Aitken Dott in 1842.⁶⁶ Peter McOmish Dott (b.1856), the son of Aitken Dott, ran the firm in the latter part of the 19th century and appears to have been responsible for establishing McTaggart as a client artist. Dott claimed of McTaggart,

"Always - following my father - I regarded 'Mac' as about the best artist in Scotland but I think that it was Fishers Landing in 1878 that first made me feel he was not merely a good artist but had a touch of higher genius. Once one had the idea it was not difficult to follow the scent & see the 'big' things emerging out of the earlier finely detailed smaller things. Long before 1890 I looked on him as a big European painter &, with Orchardson, at the head of British Art."⁶⁷

Numerous works by McTaggart passed through Dott's hands in the 1890s and the early 1900s. These included important late works such as The Harvest Moon (pl.84), The Sounding Sea and the second version of The Storm (pl.59), which was sold to Andrew Carnegie in 1901 for £1000. Several of the paintings appear to have been sold directly to Peter Dott himself, rather than to the firm. Dott later testified to the problem he had in finding new buyers for McTaggart's work. He claimed that

"My own clients had been 'educated' gradually. Nothing but Barbizon & Dutch was the right stuff to buy in those days. The big collections in Glasgow, Mr. Reid's & others, even with Mr Henderson's [probably McTaggart's brother-in-law, Joseph Henderson] aid, wd not usually swallow them. Such is life. It was not for years after until Ramsay sale & Mr Hendersons that the commercial side of his art was made

really secure & sound by increased prices",⁶⁸

Nevertheless McTaggart was receiving sufficient income from the sale of works to maintain a large house and family. When in 1901 he sold nearly 30 works to Dott by special arrangement it was not for any particular financial difficulty on McTaggart's own part but to establish his son Hugh in business.

The agreed price for the sale of this body of work to Dott was £5000 and Dott arranged to exhibit the pictures in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee. The only precedent for this for McTaggart was the sale of "The McTaggart Portfolio" of watercolours at Dowells, Edinburgh, in March 1889. For this previous sale, McTaggart had worked on numerous pictures specifically for the show, reproducing earlier oil paintings such as Willie Baird and Enoch Arden in watercolour versions. This appears to have been a calculated move, to attract collectors with works of proven appeal.

The sale of 1901 was based more upon recent works, with less concession to prevailing taste. Caw does remark, however, that McTaggart painted a few smaller pictures with more important figure incident to give variety to the exhibition, a point which Dott had insisted upon. Dott noted that "It was big even for him and a serious adventure for me." Understandably Dott did not wish in the first instance to bear all the financial risk himself. He tried to involve Agnews and various Glasgow dealers in a joint purchase but with little success. Eventually he had to borrow to carry through the purchase and "it was a very severe strain (as my wife can tell) to get the buyers."⁶⁹ Apparently Alexander Reid was the only dealer who subsequently bought works from the show, one for himself and one for a client.

It is interesting that the exhibition of the work was held in Dundee, where McTaggart still had some support, although not with the same core of collectors as before. Late works of the

1890s appear in the collections from the Dundee area. John Ramsay of Tayport, for example, was a keen collector of McTaggart's works and purchased two of the pictures shown in the 1901 exhibition: Good Luck! - Fishing Boats Going Out and Daybreak, Kilbrannan Sound. Although these particular pictures dated back to the mid 1880s, Ramsay was also collecting works by McTaggart from the 1890s and early 1900s.⁷⁰ Dott remarked of the 1901 sale exhibition that, in addition to Joseph Henderson, "it was the Dundee clients really set the thing moving..."⁷¹

Despite Dott's anxiety, the sale was successful and in 1906 Alexander Reid also staged an exhibition of McTaggart's work in Glasgow. Included were twenty-one oils and watercolours, most of them selling for less than £100. The most important pictures on sale were The Soldier's Return at £200 and a version of The Emigrants at £180.⁷² This was followed in 1907 by a second sale exhibition arranged by Dott, this time restricted to a showing in Edinburgh.

The support which Dott in particular gave to McTaggart, his enthusiasm for McTaggart and his willingness to spread this enthusiasm to other collectors, must have helped McTaggart to maintain his independence in the last two decades of his career. McTaggart appears to have closely guarded this freedom. When he and Dott argued over the sale of work in the early 1900s, Dott recalled, "He was down on me for interfering with his liberty."⁷³ The extent of McTaggart's independence can be gauged by the unhurried and reflective approach he was able to take to his work, allowing his major canvases to remain in his studio for several years, working on them at his leisure. The Sailing of the Emigrant Ship (pl.72), for example, which was begun in 1895 and is dated to that year, was still, according to Edward Pinnington, in McTaggart's studio in August 1899.⁷⁴ His large canvases were certainly not calculated commercial works. As Dott remarked, "I told him that there were no buyers for such big canvases in Scotland."⁷⁵ During this period McTaggart was

only very rarely publicly exhibiting his work, preferring to show his pictures to other artists within the environment of his own studio. His second studio at Broomieknowe, built in 1895, was constructed with this in mind and McTaggart displayed his pictures around the studio walls in the manner of a private gallery (see pl.158). During these later years, therefore, McTaggart should be seen as an artist painting primarily for himself, working through his own ideas, rather than for patrons or for a wider audience.

McTAGGART AS AN INDEPENDENT ARTIST

McTaggart and a National Art:

McTaggart's relationship with the Edinburgh Royal Scottish Academy, as well as with the Royal Academy and the London art world, also forms an important parameter of his career. To what extent was McTaggart specifically a "Scottish" artist; how far was he an artist of the Scottish establishment, working within the Edinburgh Academy system?

As outlined in the critical overview, several writers since Caw have upheld McTaggart as an independent, developing a form of "impressionism" in isolation from outside influences. Implicit in much of this critical writing appears to be a form of nationalism, a desire to promote Scottish art as a progressive force. In the 20th century McTaggart has been identified as providing the genesis of a modern Scottish school of painting in which broad handling and a vigorous and genuine response to the natural world are key elements.⁷⁶ In the attempt to define a Scottish school, McTaggart has become a case study in the promotion of a "national art."

This concern with nationality in art is not simply a phenomenon of the 20th century. It was a question frequently addressed during McTaggart's painting career and one with

which he himself must have been concerned to some degree. Reviews of the Royal Scottish Academy exhibitions in the second half of the 19th century often raise the issue of whether there was such a thing as a distinct and coherent school of Scottish art. From an English perspective, the Art Journal in 1861, for example, concluded that there was a Scottish school. It remarks upon the stimulating atmosphere for artists at the RSA and "a healthy national pride in the maintenance of a singularly well defined national school of Art" when compared with the English Academy.⁷⁷

By the 1880s the question of a Scottish national art became complicated by the perceived threat to a Scottish identity by continental influences, centering in particular upon the the relatively large numbers of Scottish artists studying abroad and what was seen as the influx of an "impressionist" style.⁷⁸ The extent of this debate is relected in James Paterson's article, "A Note on Nationality in Art", in The Scottish Art Review of 1889. In this, Paterson (1854-1932), one of the young Glasgow school who had studied in Paris from 1878-1882, defended the recourse to French *ateliers* as simply a matter of artists seeking a sound education. In doing so he denies the concept of nationality in art, anxious to defend his position and that of other artists accused of succumbing to "foreign influence" and the "broad painting" or "slurring over of difficulties" which was usually associated with it.⁷⁹

Although McTaggart himself was exhibiting qualities in his art similar to that of the young foreign-trained artists by this time, there was little suggestion in the critical literature that he too was "wandering towards the wilderness of cosmopolitanism".⁸⁰ On the contrary, as the preliminary overview has shown, most critics during McTaggart's lifetime were keen to stress his independence, claiming him as a peculiarly "Scottish" artist, as a kind of role model which McTaggart was probably happy to fulfil.

McTaggart's desire to stay in Scotland can be seen in the context of a national art and can perhaps be interpreted as a wish to remain at the forefront of a Scottish school, no matter how artificial a notion that may have been. In the 1860s many of McTaggart's colleagues from the Trustees Academy departed Edinburgh for London. John and Alexander Burr both left in 1861. Orchardson and Pettie went in 1862, Tom Graham in 1863, Peter Graham in 1866 and John McWhirter in 1869. Hugh Cameron also moved to London in 1876, returning to Scotland in 1888.

Caw mentions the possibility that around 1870 McTaggart considered such a move himself.⁸¹ T.S. Robertson, however, ascribes to McTaggart the claim that "I would rather be first in my own country than second in any other."⁸² McTaggart was certainly a successful artist within Scotland, having been made an Associate of the RSA in 1859 and a full Academician in 1870. As a member of the Scott Lauder group he was seen to be in the vanguard of Scottish art of the time.

His decision to remain in Scotland could be regarded as self-imposed isolation, and has helped fuel the image of McTaggart as an independent. It would admittedly be wrong to portray McTaggart as a cosmopolitan artist. He appears, for example, to have travelled abroad only three times: the first, to Paris in 1860, and to France again in 1876 and a lightening tour of Europe in 1882. These trips did not make any significant impact upon his work. Similarly he had partially withdrawn from actively exhibiting his works by the 1890s.

However, McTaggart was by no means isolated from the wider artistic environment. He was certainly familiar with the London art world in the first two decades of his career. He and other Scottish artists with whom he was in contact, were regularly in London from the early 1860s when their works were exhibited at the Royal Academy and other London shows.⁸³ Even when he didn't make the journey, he received

news from fellow artists who had, or correspondence from the resident London Scots, particularly John Pettie, who remained a close friend.

London and the Royal Academy was a powerful draw for Scottish artists. For much of the second half of the 19th century the Royal Academy, even within Scotland, still represented the touchstone of artistic achievement. The Art Journal had remarked in 1862 that "...with very few exceptions, nearly all the best of the Scottish artists reserve their best works for the Royal Academy in the first instance.." ⁸⁴ Initially, McTaggart was no exception and his most important works were sent first to London, and only then came back to Edinburgh to be shown at the RSA. ⁸⁵

Between 1866 and 1875 McTaggart exhibited eleven works at the Royal Academy in London. Included were some of his most significant pictures of this period: Enoch Arden in 1866, Dora in 1869, Adrift in 1870, Following the Fine Arts in 1874, and The Village, Whitehouse in 1875.

In most of the years that McTaggart's works were shown at the Royal Academy he appears to have travelled to London to see the exhibition, usually staying with John Pettie and, according to Caw, "was frequently accompanied by one or other of his lay friends, whom he delighted to introduce to Pettie and the other voluntary exiles in the South". ⁸⁶ On at least one occasion, J.G. Orchar, for example, was in London with McTaggart. Correspondence with George Simpson documents McTaggart's opinions of the RA exhibitions of this period. In a letter of June 1864 he remarks,

"I am expecting to get up to see the Royal Academy in a few days. I hear a great deal of my old friend's pictures there, Pettie and the Burrs and Orchardson. Pettie has been very successful I believe and I hear the exhibition altogether is more than usually successful." ⁸⁷

Hearing about the success of his friends at the RA and seeing their work on display was no doubt a stimulus for McTaggart to begin submitting his own work for exhibition. At this point in his career, an eventual move to London might have been feasible.

In April 1866 McTaggart wrote with some enthusiasm to Simpson about the picture Enoch Arden which Simpson had recently purchased; "Had a letter from a friend to say it had been accepted at the academy which is so far satisfactory as it is so very difficult apparently for to get a picture in."⁸⁸

The tone of McTaggart's correspondence suggests that it is likely this was the first year in which he had submitted work for the RA. Later he writes to Simpson, "I hope for both our sakes that our picture will get a *good place*, but I would not be over sanguine seeing that they are obliged to send back two thirds of the pictures sent for want of space."⁸⁹

Also symptomatic of the link between London and Scotland were the paintings by English artists regularly shown in various Scottish exhibitions such as the Royal Scottish Academy, the Glasgow Institute and the Dundee Annual Fine Art exhibitions. There were other various points of contact, few of which have been fully documented. During the 1870s, for example, Sir Coutts Lindsay was President of the Kirkcaldy Fine Art Association.⁹⁰

Exhibitions in Edinburgh and Glasgow frequently showed work by prominent English artists. The RSA gave McTaggart good opportunity to study the paintings of J.E. Millais at first hand. Millais, regarded as one of the most important living artists in the 1860s and 1870s, was created an honorary member of the RSA in 1866 and had thirty-six works exhibited in the Scottish Academy between 1852 and 1897.

The International Exhibitions in Edinburgh in 1886 and in Glasgow in 1888 brought a broad range of national and international art to Scotland. The Dundee Fine Art

Exhibitions also attempted to bring a wide selection of British painting to a Scottish audience, to the extent that The Art Journal in 1878 could remark of the Dundee exhibition that "the collection spoke well for current British painting at its best."⁹¹

Thus, Scottish artists, including those who remained in Scotland, were not isolated. They had the opportunity to keep in touch with current developments. Nevertheless, McTaggart did, to some extent, withdraw from the public arena of the Academies. He ceased to exhibit at the RA in 1875 and in the 1880s began to sever his connections with the Scottish Academy.

McTaggart and the Royal Academy:

Despite his initial enthusiasm for exhibiting at the RA, a note of ambivalence soon appears in McTaggart's opinion of the Academy. In a letter to Simpson of June 1868 there is a foretaste of his future dissatisfaction. He observes, "I told you before how they have rejected all the pictures from Scotland except two or three."⁹²

In 1869 he comments that "All our friends are sending pictures to the RA this time, borrowing old ones."⁹³ and expresses the hope that "..there wont be such a slaughter this time of the Scotch."⁹⁴ At the beginning of May he writes "I was in the RA on Thursday, the varnishing day for exhibitors, and saw all the English artists moving about the rooms exclaiming and admiring." He grumbles that Dora is only on the portrait line..." but also remarks that there have been more rejections than usual and that "Poor Cassie is out and Waller Paton and a host of others."⁹⁵ On returning to Edinburgh, McTaggart again wrote to Simpson and whilst declaring the RA of 1869 "finer than ever I have seen" there is further evidence of general dissatisfaction with the RA.

"B. Foster and a lot of the popular English artists

rejected - Waller Paton, Sam Bough and nearly all the Edinbro artists out. There is a great deal of dissatisfaction among the artists - but I suppose its no matter they are to have an exhibition of the rejected ones - but they will reject in their turn - they can't hang 1000 pictures."⁹⁶

In 1870, McTaggart is pleased that Adrift is hung on the line but comments that the works of several other Scottish artists, including the Burrs and James Archer, are badly hung.⁹⁷ The following year he is better pleased with the hanging of works by Scottish artists but also remarks that,

"The Hanging Committee this year seem to have hung the pictures exactly symmetrical without due regard to merit hence the [?]paradise of the extreme duffers and dissatisfaction among good artists generally. Park the only good painter on the committee gave up in despair - lots of portraits on the line."⁹⁸

Unfortunately there is no further correspondence to chart McTaggart's growing dissatisfaction with the RA. After 1875 he ceased to exhibit there but it is not certain whether he submitted any works, only to be rejected, in 1876 or after.

As seen, at least part of McTaggart's dislike of the RA stemmed from the hanging of the pictures. At a time when a large proportion of the paintings were hung well above or below the sight line, the judgement of the hanging committee had an important bearing on how a picture might be received. In 1874 a debate took place in the pages of The Times about the representation of landscape painters in the RA exhibition. "A Landscape Artist" addressed a letter of complaint against the RA Selection and Hanging Committee, claiming that the RA was unsympathetic to the aims of landscape painters, who were virtually left without representation.⁹⁹ The Art Journal also comments upon the situation, stating that there were many rejected landscapes

in 1874 and that although some landscapes were placed on the line, many good examples were given a poor position. "It is well known," the critic remarks, "that there is not a perfect cordiality between many landscape painters and the Academic body."¹⁰⁰

Several of McTaggart's exhibits at the RA were figure subjects such as Enoch Arden and Dora. Landscape, however, did play an important part in these pictures and in the 1870s he was moving more towards landscape exhibits with paintings such as Amang the Heather, exhibited in 1872, (untraced, but which Caw describes as "a landscape with an exquisite dreamy distance")¹⁰¹ and The Village Whitehouse, exhibited in 1875 under the title "'Twas autumn, and sunshine arose on the way". The representation of landscape painters at the RA would therefore have been of interest to McTaggart.

The other aspect of the debate surrounding the RA, of relevance to McTaggart, was the presence of Scottish artists at the London exhibition. Pettie, Orchardson, McWhirter and Graham made an important impact upon the London art world in the 1860s and '70s and there are frequent references to a "Scottish group" in the press at this time. Reviewing the RA exhibition of 1874, for example, the London correspondent of The Scotsman remarks that "...what may be called the Scotch contingent makes good its claim to attention."¹⁰²

Critics were often hostile to the Scottish artists, seeing them simply as exponents of bravura dexterity and little else. Writing in The Academy, for example, F.T. Palgrave criticises both Pettie and Orchardson for,

"a thin flashy sketchiness, a constant and intrusive presence of the conventionalities of the studio, as much in the painting as in the choice of material, and all brought into more prominence by the cleverness of the painters."¹⁰³

George Leslie in his account of The Inner Life of the Royal Academy remarks that,

"Neither Pettie nor Orchardson nor the other Scottish members mixed much in the general fun...after the manner of Scots, they clung together a good deal, talking over with one another the successes and failures of their fellow countrymen with the greatest interest."¹⁰⁴

The Sketching Club which had been begun in Edinburgh was revived in London and perhaps also contributed to the cultivation of a Scottish clique. Already in existence in London in the 1860s was the "Auld Lang Syne" club, formed by the elder generation of Scots in London. The London Scots, therefore, remained in part a closed group. This in itself would have helped to promote some degree of alienation and hostility. McTaggart's correspondence quoted above suggests that there was perhaps some resentment of the Scottish presence at the Royal Academy and this may have contributed to his decision to cease sending work to London. It is worth noting that a few other Scottish artists exhibiting at the RA up to 1875, ceased to send work or were rejected in some of the subsequent years. Waller Paton, for example, did not exhibit again until 1880. Arthur Perigal had no exhibits between 1876 and 1884 and Gourlay Steel, contributed exhibits only in 1877 and 1880. Whilst there is no evidence of a mass boycott of the RA on the part of the Scottish artists in the late 1870s, it is probable that there existed some Scottish dissatisfaction with their reception in London, over and above the general dissatisfaction with the RA within the London art world of the time.

McTaggart and the Royal Scottish Academy:

Having apparently abandoned any further attempt to exhibit at the London Academy after 1875, McTaggart's painting career

centred upon the RSA and, in so far as he regularly exhibited with the RSA and held office with the Academy until the 1890s, he became a member of the Scottish Academic establishment. On his death, the RSA mourned the loss of "one of its oldest and most distinguished members."¹⁰⁵ McTaggart had, in part, become one of the grand old men of the Scottish art world.

McTaggart first exhibited at the RSA in 1855, was elected an Associate in November 1859 and a full member eleven years later. Correspondence with Simpson indicates that, as with many other Scottish artists, the annual RSA exhibition was a focal point in McTaggart's working year. The completion of a major painting ready for the opening of the RSA in February was a frequent topic of discussion between McTaggart and Simpson.¹⁰⁶ From the mid 1860s, McTaggart did not necessarily exhibit at the RSA to sell from the walls. He was painting primarily for his patrons rather than for the exhibition and a large proportion of his pictures had already been sold prior to the opening. Thus, many of his important works of this period, such as Spring and Autumn for George Simpson, were of modest dimensions rather than large-scale exhibition pieces. Nevertheless, the annual RSA was a significant event for both McTaggart and his patrons and, as suggested above, reflected the status of both artist and patron.

As part of his duties as an Academician, McTaggart served in several capacities between 1871 and 1891 - as a member of the Council, Auditor, Curator and Trustee. Most significantly he served as visitor to the Life School in 1872 (with Kenneth Macleay and Robert Herdman) in 1873 (with Macleay and G.P. Chalmers) and from 1877 to 1883 (with, variously W.E. Lockhart, Herdman, J.M.Barclay, Otto Leyde, Norman Macbeth and Robert Gibb). For this period, therefore he was participating in the Scottish academic system.

McTaggart held strong views on the affairs of the Academy

which he did not keep to himself. Whilst he was serving on the hanging committee in 1885, two council members had, against regulations, reserved space on the wall for their own pictures. McTaggart complained but was left without support when the matter was referred to Council.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps partly as a result of this incident he refused to serve on any further hanging committee.

Other events also indicate friction with the Council. A note of 1886 signed by McTaggart and John Smart, referring to a recent decision to adopt a new charter, states that "Mr McTaggart begs to record his protest against the reconsideration of charter as at last meeting"¹⁰⁸ and in 1888, McTaggart wrote to George Hay, the Secretary of the RSA,

"I beg to protest against my having been debarred by you this morning from seeing the minutes of the General Meeting held on 25 April. As a member of the Academy I claimed the right of access to the book to see the minutes. On this occasion I was anxious to ascertain what business was done at the meeting on 25 April which meeting I could not attend."¹⁰⁹

These indications of McTaggart's attitude to the bureaucracy of the RSA presaged future events. His final split with the RSA occurred in March 1891 when he attended a council meeting chaired by the President, William Fettes Douglas. At the meeting it was moved that David Farquharson, an associate member who had departed for London in 1866 and had not submitted work to the RSA exhibition for the two previous years, should, under the RSA constitution, be struck from the Academy roll. McTaggart disagreed but Fettes Douglas refused to hear his objection and thereafter McTaggart did not return to official office in the Academy.¹¹⁰

It should be remembered, however, that McTaggart had moved out of Edinburgh to Broomieknowe in 1889 and had probably

already made a decision to distance himself from Academy affairs. Such incidents perhaps served as a convenient excuse.

At Broomieknowe, McTaggart exhibited less frequently in the major annual exhibitions, sending nothing to the RSA between 1896 and 1903 and nothing to the Royal Glasgow Institute between 1897 and 1901. Even when his works did appear they were not for sale but entered either without a price, indicating that McTaggart wished to retain them, or were on loan from various collectors. This had been true throughout most of his career; it would be mistaken to regard either of these exhibitions as an important market place for McTaggart. Many of his oil paintings he preferred to exhibit within the controlled setting of his own studio and several of his major pictures from the last twenty years remained with him until his death. In this sense, at least, he was an independent artist in late career. In the interview given to Black and White magazine in 1905, McTaggart had claimed that one gets tired of exhibiting and that it was best to leave space for younger artists who needed it more.¹¹¹

However, he was not completely isolated from current affairs. After 1899 his work was regularly shown at the Society of Scottish Artists, to which he had been elected as Vice-President that year. Caw claims McTaggart referred to this body as "the young artists"¹¹² and he enthusiastically entertained the Council of the Society to their annual meeting in his own home. Also, during the 1890s, he continued to send works to the Scottish Society of Water-Colour Painters, established in 1878 and of which he was Vice-President from 1879 until his death.

SECTION II

LANDSCAPE MEANING

CHAPTER FOUR

INTRODUCTION: THE STATUS AND FUNCTION OF LANDSCAPE ART
IN THE MID NINETEENTH CENTURY

Although, as will be examined in the following chapter, landscape painting in Scotland became increasingly important numerically during the 19th century, its status as "high art" in a wider theoretical sense, even into the 1870s and '80s, was still in question. McTaggart would have been faced with a situation in which there was still some ambivalence about the role of landscape art. Much of the critical reaction to landscape painting of the period was geared towards a search for a higher meaning within a set of values frequently attached to art.

The view of landscape as one of the lesser forms of painting had a long pedigree. In 1719 Jonathan Richardson had classified landscape and seascape with "Animals, Fruit, Flowers, or any other still life, pieces of drollery, &C" and contrasted them with history painting because they could only "please" and not "improve the mind" nor excite "Noble Sentiments."¹ This hierarchy persisted throughout the 18th century and was to some extent perpetuated in Reynolds' Discourses. Reynolds did admit of the idea of the poetic landscape but was clear that it could only be achieved within certain styles of landscape art. He criticised Wilson for introducing the figures of gods into landscapes which were "in reality too near common nature to admit supernatural objects."² In order to accommodate a subject of this type, claims Reynolds, "a peculiar style of art is required; and it can only be done without impropriety, or even without ridicule, when we adapt the character of the landscape...to the historical or poetical representation."³

Within Reynolds' definition much landscape was unsuitable for the poetic approach: "The Dutch and Flemish style of

landskip, not even excepting those of Rubens, is unfit for poetical subjects." Reynolds believed that "The painter who is ambitious of this perilous excellence, must catch his inspiration from those who have cultivated with success the poetry, as it may be called, of the art; and there are few indeed."⁴ As examples of poetic landscape, Reynolds cites works by Salvator Rosa and Sebastian Bourdon.

By the mid 19th century landscape art was being reassessed. It was John Ruskin, particularly in the first volume of Modern Painters, who set the baseline for the reaction to landscape art at the time McTaggart was beginning his career as a painter. Ruskin was an overwhelming presence in the field of art criticism, whose ideas filtered through to many levels of discussion. It is very likely that McTaggart possessed a copy of Modern Painters, a standard work in the library of artists, connoisseurs and institutions in the second half of the nineteenth century. Ruskin featured prominently, for example, in the libraries of McTaggart's fellow artist Sam Bough and of his patron George Simpson and in the library of the Royal Scottish Academy.⁵

Although Ruskin didn't deny that landscape could be "High Art", he claimed that it had in the past rarely achieved that status: "...no doubt can be reasonably entertained as to the utter inutility of all that has been hitherto accomplished by the painters of landscape."⁶

The landscape artist, asserted Ruskin, "must always have two great and distinct ends". The first of these is to faithfully convey the scene to the spectator. In achieving this, however, the artist "only places the spectator where he stands himself; he sets him before the landscape and leaves him." The second aim, which Ruskin clearly states is that of the highest art, is for the artist to share with the viewer "his own strong feelings and quick thoughts."⁷ In this, the artist enobles and instructs; he selects his subject matter of its "meaning and character" and uses it to elucidate his

own ideas. Whilst we can only react to a painting based on the first aim purely in formal terms (as, Ruskin suggests, in the pleasure to the eye of the opposition of warm and cold colours), the second aim arouses the imaginative idea, "an expression and awakening of individual thought."⁸

Similar ideas were expressed by John Burnet, whose particular interest in landscape painting was evidenced in his books on Turner (1852) and Landscape Painting in Oil Colours (1849). Burnet asserted that landscape painted simply as an exercise in truth to nature was limited in its effects upon the imagination. The introduction, however, of "poetic imagery" into a landscape raised it in status.⁹

This view was still current at the outset of McTaggart's career. In introducing the subject of landscape art to the student in his Handbook for Young Painters of 1855, C.R. Leslie complains that "The right appreciation of this lovely branch of Painting has suffered, like all others, by classification."¹⁰ He finds it necessary to defend landscape by asserting that it deals with more than simple outward appearance: "Rocks, trees, mountains, plains, and waters, are the features of landscape, but its expression is from above."¹¹

Reviewing the Royal Academy exhibition of 1865, The Art Journal, whilst proclaiming that "We use the term 'High Art' in no very superlative sense. The time has gone by when either pictures justify, or the public would tolerate, transcendental language," admits that "Still, however, there does exist a broad general distinction between styles high and low which cannot wholly be ignored." Works of "High Art" should conform to "dignity in subject and elevation in treatment."¹² It is still history painting which fulfils these conditions, and is accordingly given first consideration. The review of landscape, which it is observed have become "directly and dogmatically naturalistic," is placed towards the end of the article.

In 1867, P.G. Hamerton wrote about his observations on "The Place of Landscape Painting Amongst the Fine Arts"¹³ He claims that landscape painting was *still often thought inferior*. This he partly equates with the *persistent association between serious art and academic drawing and* observes that the *apparent facility of landscape painting* makes it difficult for this branch of art to achieve *Academic honours*. At the time of writing he asserts that *there are in England at least twelve excellent and twenty to thirty really good landscape painters but "we hear on every side complaints of the decadent condition of landscape."*¹⁴

On the publication of Thoughts about Art in 1873, Hamerton adds a footnote to the above observations, quoting from R.H. Patterson's Essays in History and Art.¹⁵ This he claims is typical of the prevalent feeling about landscape art and states that the idea man is more divine, and therefore worthy of attention, still persists.

Reviewing the RSA exhibition of 1876 in Pictor Depictus, the critic E.V. Ward mourns the lack of High Art, the biblical and classical scenes, which he interprets as being outwith the scope of Scottish morality. Instead, he observes, the exhibition is confined mainly to genre and landscape painting.¹⁶

McTaggart, therefore, was working in a climate of opinion which did not necessarily dismiss landscape as a lesser form of art but which looked to it to convey meaning. There was the belief that landscape, if it were to reach its true potential, should be invested with significance.

One area in which this was borne out in practice was the Pre-Raphaelite landscape. This is particularly *important for* McTaggart, given that some of the *earliest influences upon his work were from Pre-Raphaelite paintings*.¹⁷ Although the Pre-Raphaelites did inaugurate new standards of *naturalistic*

landscape (particularly in terms of tonal brilliance) it is questionable to what extent their work was seen, by either artist or audience, as purely objective naturalism.

The desire to make landscape significant in a moral or religious sense is at its most apparent in Millais and Holman Hunt. Millais claimed, for example, that Autumn Leaves (pl.133) in which the landscape is a key element in the creation of mood, was intended to inspire "the deepest religious feelings."¹⁸ It would appear that the invocation of similar feelings was intended in Spring (Apple Blossoms) (pl.135) and The Vale of Rest (coll: Tate Gallery), from the same period of Millais' career, which although again figure paintings contain important landscape passages and rely upon the association of landscape sentiment. Millais' later landscapes are also pervaded by a sense of implication beyond the mere statement of visual fact. In works with titles such as Chill October, Lingering Autumn and Flowing to the Sea Millais appears to have hoped to create landscapes of "human interest." Of Chill October (Private Coll.) he remarked "I chose the subject for the sentiment it always conveyed to my mind, and I am happy to think that the transcript touched the public in a like manner."¹⁹

Despite protestations of the objectivity of Pre-Raphaelite technique William Holman Hunt, in retrospect, declared of the early Pre-Raphaelite years,

"I think art would have ceased to have the slightest interest for any of us had the object been only to make a representation, elaborate or unelaborate, of a fact of nature. Independently of the conviction that such a system would put out of operation the faculty making man "like a god", it was apparent that a mere imitator gradually comes to see nature claylike and finite, as it seems when illness brings a cloud before the eyes."²⁰

Certainly such works as The Hireling Shepherd (coll: Manchester Art Gallery) or Our English Coasts (coll: Tate Gallery) can be seen in the context of such a statement.

A counter appears to be provided by Ford Madox Brown who stressed that his interest in the study of natural light was the paramount concern in such works as The Pretty Baa-Lambs (coll: Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery), The Hayfield (coll: Tate Gallery) and Walton-on-the-Naze (coll: Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery). Of Pretty Baa-Lambs, begun in 1851, Brown recorded in his diary "The baa lamb picture was painted almost entirely in sunlight which twice gave me a fever while painting."²¹ By 1853 he had retitled the painting Summer Heat which as a letter to James Leathart, who purchased the work in 1859, indicates, Brown regarded as "seriously the subject."²²

Nevertheless, when the picture had been exhibited at the RA in 1852 The Art Journal critic had expected there to be implications beyond the simple depiction of sunlight: "All that can be seen and understood of this picture is the minute finish of the figures..... but such is the general animus of the work that it is impossible to apprehend its bent."²³

Brown's choice of lighting conditions gives the work a heightened atmosphere, lifting it beyond the type of naturalism which his audience would have associated with landscape painting. Certainly a prospective buyer, Francis McCracken, found the colouring unusual "...I cannot understand the *Summer Heat*," he remarked,

"and the bluish green of the ground, or the purplish tone of the sky - I would say that strong sunlight would make the ground more of a *yellow tone*....pray explain to me how you can account for the colour of the grass and sky, and also if it is the moon which appears or the *Sun*."²⁴

Such criticism cannot be interpreted solely in terms of mid-nineteenth century expectations of landscape art or the availability of new pigments to the artist. The intensity of colour in this work still appears unusual today, when standards of outdoor naturalism more completely accept a "brighter" palette and high-key tonality.

The desire for an unusual quality of light again seems to motivate Brown in his depiction of Walton-on-the-Naze of 1859-60. Here he has sought a heightened state of nature, in which the crisp detail and presence of the rainbow and moon give a lyrical, poetic quality to the work. It could be compared with the atmosphere created by Millais' Blind Girl where the intensity of Pre-Raphaelite colour and observation conflicted with accepted values of naturalistic landscape. The Art Journal's remarks on the Blind Girl when exhibited at the RA exhibition of 1856 were succinct: "The background is a field rising in gentle acclivity, but the colour is most unnatural."²⁵

It is within this context that McTaggart first experiments with landscape painting. Although he may have sketched from nature and painted out of doors from a very early stage in his career, his attitude to the function of landscape first developed at a time when he was looking closely at Pre-Raphaelite paintings such as The Blind Girl and Autumn Leaves.

Later in McTaggart's career the situation is complicated by the development of a new critical approach. By the 1880s, there was emerging a more pronounced value upon technique rather than subject. In this climate it was more legitimate to see landscape, devoid of meaning, as a subject neither more nor less suitable than any other. This is seen especially in relation to the question of "impressionism", where the painting of an "impression" or "effect" in a landscape scene, as opposed to subject-matter in a more traditional sense, was regarded as the primary aim of the

artist. Thus in 1887, a writer in the Artist comments

"Impressionism in some form or another is becoming the central idea in a very large proportion of modern picture production. The desire to paint effects rather than subjects is rapidly spreading, and bids fair to grow into the chief motive of our art."²⁶

McTaggart's sketch-like method of painting and his readiness, from the outset of his career, to sketch and paint directly from nature, suggest that he might have been at least partly receptive to a view of landscape as an arena in which to explore technique rather than subject.

The extent, however, to which this new emphasis upon technique, which will be discussed in Chapter Eight, displaced the aim to achieve status for landscape as "high" art is questionable. As seen with MacColl, the belief existed that poetic meaning could be embodied in the painting process. It would be wrong, therefore, to assume that the New Art Criticism of the late 19th century was *simply* involved with formalism and that a narrow formalist interpretation of paintings from this period should be applied.

CHAPTER FIVE

MEANING IN SCOTTISH LANDSCAPE ART

INTRODUCTION - McTaggart as a Scottish Landscape Artist

For McTaggart, the emphasis upon landscape developed gradually. There is in part a shift in his subject matter from figure painting to landscape. In the late 1850s and 1860s, in such works as Going to Sea (pl.5), 1858, and Dora (pl.23), 1869, attention is still focused primarily upon the figure content of the painting. The landscape is significant to the mood of the picture, but as yet is not the real subject of the work. By the mid 1870s he is producing paintings, such as Through Wind and Rain (pl.29), 1875, in which the seascape and the weather effect receive greater prominence, but even here the figure subject remains the focus of attention. With a number of coastal subjects of the late 1870s such as The Bait Gatherers (pl.40), 1879, there is more of a sense that the figures are a natural part of the landscape rather than the carriers of narrative meaning. However, only in the early 1880s with The Storm (pl.43), 1883, is the scale of the figure element in an important exhibition work reduced so as to absorb it more completely within the landscape.¹

This gradual development suggests that McTaggart did not make a simple conscious decision to shift from figure to landscape painting. In many respects his approach to landscape grew from his earlier figure subjects and much of his later work continued to incorporate figure elements. Nevertheless the importance to McTaggart of landscape painting as an objective in itself is apparent from early in his career² and the notion of a "Scottish landscape" would have had significance for him.

Of the leading Scott Lauder artists, McTaggart, John

McWhirter and Peter Graham could be described as landscapists in their mature career. Graham and McWhirter moved to London in 1866 and 1869 respectively. Apart from a few landscapes produced by Chalmers, it was only McTaggart who, from among his main contemporaries at the Trustees Academy, remained to develop this genre in Scotland. As examined in Chapter Three, there is reason also to believe that McTaggart saw himself primarily as a "Scottish" artist. Resisting the move to London made by many of his friends, he rarely exhibited outside Scotland after the 1870s. A number of his major canvases deal with what can be interpreted as essentially Scottish subjects, such as the Emigrant series (pls.58 and 67) and the pictures The Coming of St. Columba (pl.71) and The Preaching of St. Columba (pl.80).

How, therefore, would McTaggart have seen landscape painting in Scotland and its possibility for development as a significant form of art? What were the traditions of Scottish landscape which McTaggart was building upon or reacting against?

LANDSCAPE IN 19TH CENTURY SCOTTISH ART

During the course of the 19th century, landscape painting in Scotland grew to become one of the most important areas of art in terms of quantity and prestige.³ At the beginning of the century, landscapes were produced against a background in which portraiture and subject painting were still seen by many to be pre-eminent. In Academic, though not necessarily in popular, terms, landscape, as an independent subject, came low down in the hierarchy of genres.⁴ The nature of the art market and the initial lack of public exhibitions in Scotland were also a factor. Part of the apparent dominance of portraiture in the early 1800s was the result of the limitations of patronage, confined primarily to the gentry. Lord Cockburn observed that at the beginning of the 19th

century "There was no public taste for art, and, except for Raeburn's portraits, no market for its productions."⁵

By mid century, however, artists such as Horatio McCulloch and George Harvey had begun to establish the landscape, and specifically the Scottish landscape, as a major subject.

Various reasons can be attached to this rise of landscape: a broadening or shifting basis of patronage towards the middle classes, a general broadening of taste fostered by the increased market for prints and the activity of dealers, new attitudes to the significance of landscape art cultivated by critics such as Ruskin, and the general increase in cultural awareness of the Scottish landscape as something worthy of attention.

A numerical indication of this complex shift in favour of landscape can be seen in the changing composition of the major annual exhibitions in Scotland. The first important public art exhibition in Scotland was held in Edinburgh in 1808 by the Society of Incorporated Artists under the presidency of a portrait painter, George Watson. Out of the 157 pictures exhibited, there were 70 portraits (44.6%), 46 landscapes (29.36%) and 35 subject or genre paintings (22.3%).

By 1827, the year of the first Scottish Academy exhibition, landscape accounted for approximately 39.3% of the total exhibits.⁶ By 1864, the proportion had risen to c.54.5%, whilst between the same two years the number of portraits fell from c.33% to c.10%. Landscapes appear to have maintained a proportion of around 50% at the Academy through the rest of the century. (see Appendix III).

This development, however, should not be overstated. There was already a tradition of collecting Old Master landscapes in Scotland and these were shown in Edinburgh when the Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Scotland began to stage exhibitions in 1819. The Institution

was formed by members of the nobility and gentry, to the exclusion of professional artists, with the intention of encouraging a diffusion of taste. The principal lenders to the first exhibition, for example, included the Earl of Elgin, Sir John Erskine and the Earl of Hopetoun. Of this first exhibition, the Scotsman considered that

"It is particularly rich in landscapes, some of the pictures in that department being of the first order, and it gives the public of Edinburgh an opportunity, which we trust they will not throw away, of improving their taste and extending their knowledge of the Fine Arts."⁷

Landscapes by contemporary artists had been produced in Scotland since the mid 18th century. Decorative panels featuring landscape scenes by the Norie family, were found in Edinburgh households from the 1730s. Later in the century Alexander Runciman (1736-85) and Jacob More (1740-93) were also producing landscape works.

By the turn of the century Alexander Nasmyth (1758-1840) was established as the pre-eminent landscape artist in Scotland, receiving important landscape commissions. Many of Nasmyth's landscapes were associated with the notion of ownership and the patron's relationship to the landscape depicted. This is true even of more ostensibly neutral works, such as the set of four paintings of East and West Loch Tarbert, which were commissioned by the Campbells of Stonefield in Kintyre. Nevertheless, Nasmyth was able to exercise an interest in specific detail of locale and of atmospheric conditions. Significantly, critics were beginning to judge Nasmyth's work in terms of truth to nature. In the critique accompanying the catalogue of the fourth exhibition of the Society of Incorporated Artists in 1811, it is remarked that Nasmyth's Tantallon, East Lothian "is a manifest proof of the superiority of his talents. The painting of the sea must appear astonishing, to such as have contemplated the similitude in nature."⁸

There were therefore sources of patronage and a general attitude to landscape within which Scottish landscape art could develop. The restriction of patronage in the early 1800s, observed by Lord Cockburn, did not in itself mean that landscape was neglected. The impact of what was considered a general "lack of taste" in Scotland was felt mainly in the realm of history painting. Of the exhibition of the Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in 1820, consisting of Old Master paintings, The Scotsman asserted that,

"The Exhibition of this year is rather barren in History, which may be intentional; since it is hardly to be expected that historical works should be much encouraged in this corner of the island, and because Landscapes, Conversations, Portraits & c., may be better adapted to the taste of most visitors."⁹

In reviewing, the following year, the first exhibition of the Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts to be composed of the work of living artists, The Scotsman takes a similar tack.

"The pictorial art has never found many opulent patrons in Scotland. In the north we have never, perhaps, possessed the opulence necessary for carrying it to a great height. And this may be the reason why a feeling for the grand style has never prevailed extensively in this country. Our artists have been compelled to adapt their wares to the state of the market."¹⁰

There were few historical paintings in the exhibition of 1821 but it was rich in the genre work of such artists as David Wilkie (1785-1841), who was represented by Pitlessie Fair, Alexander Carse (d.c.1838) and Walter Geikie (1795-1837). There was also important landscape representation. The Scotsman went so far as to claim that,

"The strength of the present Exhibition is in Landscape, of which we have a considerable variety, from the pencils not only of our old friends, Mr Nasmyth and family, Andrew Wilson, P.Gibson, J.F. Williams, Schetky & c., but also of John Wilson, F.Nash, and T.C. Hoffland of London."¹¹

Landscape was thus already established as a significant area of Scottish painting and the basis for its development during the 19th century was in place. The increasing involvement in the art market of the merchant class, the growing source of patronage in both the East and West of Scotland, assisted in the process.

THE PERCEPTION OF THE SCOTTISH LANDSCAPE

McTaggart's approach to content and meaning in landscape painting, particularly in relation to Scottish tradition, is revealed in a small number of statements. James Caw ascribes to McTaggart the remark,

"People talk about the commonplace...but only commonplace people see the commonplace in the ordinary. The natural, the everyday, is the most wonderful thing in the world. All things are possible, but the sensational and abnormal have less of the divine than the natural."¹²

This view is substantiated in an interview which McTaggart gave for the magazine Black and White in 1905. In this, McTaggart, asked whether the artists of the Glasgow School were afraid of painting "scenic views", replied,

That may be. After all, it is not grand scenery that makes a fine landscape. You don't find the best artists working in the Alps. It's the heart that's the thing. You want to express something that appeals to our common humanity, not

something extraordinary...Of course, you can understand the older Scottish landscape painters going to the Highlands in the footsteps of Sir Walter Scott but humanity's the thing."¹³

These remarks indicate that McTaggart assessed his own work in relation to previous Scottish landscape art. Implicit is an acknowledgement that the landscape paintings of the older generation of artists, such as McCulloch, drew upon association - in this case the literary association of Sir Walter Scott. McTaggart could not have helped but be aware that much Scottish landscape art of the past was steeped in this kind of associated significance. It would have helped determine his own attitude to meaning in landscape art. His stress upon a landscape in which "humanity" rather than the scenic view was important indicates that he sought a new form of landscape art, still meaningful, but free of the type of national significance which pervaded earlier Scottish landscape painting.

The Classical Ideal:

In the 100 years prior to McTaggart, various structures of meaning in Scottish landscape had developed.¹⁴ The real emergence of a school of Scottish landscape is usually seen as taking place towards the end of the eighteenth century, especially in the work of Jacob More (1740-97) and Alexander Nasmyth (1758-1840). These artists were able to construct their landscape paintings in the ready-made referential framework of meaning provided by the classical ideal. Classical influence in both literature and the visual arts was still prevalent at the beginning of the nineteenth century and governed the cultivation of what was regarded as a "higher" level of taste. This was evident in the attitudes towards the education of artists. In a letter to The Scotsman of November 1817 about the future of the Trustee's Academy in Edinburgh, a prescription for the attainment of

excellence by the student artist was outlined. The artist must have the,

"advantages of a liberal education; without which, his ideas (whether on canvas or paper) will be destitute of the classical elegance requisite to a pure taste. He must, in particular, be familiar with the authors of Greece and Rome, whose *educated admiration* of the fine arts breaks out continually in all their finest passages, and whose works abound with situations and scenes for the imitation of a painter."¹⁵

The young artist should also look to "the great models of his art, so as to perceive those high conceptions and artful combinations from which great charm proceeds." These models, it is implied should be classical.

"it is necessary that an accomplished painter should more minutely know the orders of architecture and classes of buildings - being, at the same time, acquainted with the great models of Greece, and, above all, knowing the principles according to which architecture can be combined with the most picturesque effect, with foliage and natural scenery."¹⁶

The study of classical form as an instructor of taste was embodied in drawing from plaster casts of Graeco-Roman sculpture which the Trustees Academy had begun to acquire in 1798. This was an important element of the Academy's activity and many new casts were purchased by the Trustees in the early 19th century.¹⁷

Nasmyth had studied at the Academy in the 1770s. At this time the Academy was still essentially an industrial design school rather than a fine art academy. There was, however, at least some reference to classical models. Under Alexander Runciman (1736-85), master of the Academy 1772-85, Nasmyth was set to drawing from a small cast of the Laocoön.¹⁸

For many artists, however, knowledge of classical models ran deeper. When he began teaching at the Trustees, Runciman had recently returned from a prolonged stay in Italy where he had studied classical architecture and had embarked upon classical subject painting. A sojourn in Italy was common practice for an artist at this time. Nasmyth also travelled to Rome, in 1782, where landscape appears to have been his main interest.

By referring to a classical ideal, a higher form of public perception and depiction was called upon which gave meaning to a work for both artist and educated audience. This was closely involved with the perceived purpose of art and the dominant aesthetics of the time. As Reynolds's asserted, the aim of the artist should go beyond "endeavouring to amuse mankind with the minute neatness of his imitations, he must endeavour to improve them by the grandeur of his ideas..." He observed that "The poets, orators, and rhetoricians of antiquity, are continually enforcing this position; that all the arts receive their perfections from an ideal beauty, superior to what is to be found in individual nature."¹⁹

It was not unnatural, therefore, that the landscape should be seen in these terms. For landscape, the typical reference point for the classical mode was Claude Lorraine (1600-1682). In his fourth Discourse, Reynolds's contrasts Claude with the Dutch school of landscape painting, asserting that Claude

"was convinced that taking nature as he found it seldom produced beauty. His pictures are a composition of the various draughts which he had previously made from various beautiful scenes and prospects...That the practice of Claude Lorrain, in respect of his choice, is to be adopted by Landscape Painters, in opposition to that of the Flemish and Dutch schools, there can be no doubt, as its truth is founded upon the same principle as that by which the Historical Painter acquires perfect form."²⁰

Thus whilst in Rome we find that, according to the Scottish antiquary James Byers, Nasmyth was involved in "copying a very fine picture of mine by Claude Lorrain."²¹

The notion of the classical ideal, however, did not necessarily mean that it was always considered necessary for a natural landscape to be distorted. Instead, classical references were used as a means of interpreting an existing landscape or natural phenomenon. This is seen in many of the observations of the landscape by travellers in Scotland in the late 18th and early 19th century. William Gilpin, for example, in Observations of the Highlands of Scotland describes a sunrise at Ben Lomond in the following terms:

"the vapours...began to discover through their thinner veil a fine purple tint, which had overspread the tops of the mountains... Poussin is so fond of it, that in general, I think, he throws too much purple into his distances: and the imagination of Virgil could conceive nothing beyond it in the Elysian fields, where he tells us that a brighter sun spreads it's radiance upon the mountains."²²

Gilpin therefore was not blinded to natural detail but examined it within a classical framework. In this case he even felt that observed nature reached a higher level of perfection than the models to which he refers.

Nasmyth likewise examined his landscapes in relation to a notion of a classical ideal. Castle Huntly and the River Tay (pl.139),c.1810, for example, is composed on a typical Claudian structure of dark green/brown foreground, light green middle distance and blue far distance. The trees are massed into *coulisses* and *repoussoir* figures add interest. Castle Huntly itself acts as a surrogate Arcadian Temple. Nevertheless there is particularity of detail in Nasmyth's work. The landscape is the product of close

observation, not simply a stylised representation. As indicated by the remarks made on Nasmyth's Tantallon Castle in 1811, his works were being assessed in terms of "similitude in nature" and by the 1820s he was exhibiting works titled "from Nature" at the Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Edinburgh.²³

There already existed, therefore, in Scottish landscape art at the beginning of the 19th century some degree of tension between reference to an external, contextual meaning and recognition of the actual landscape. The desire to "idealize" was tempered by a desire for "truth to nature".

By the 1850s the classical was no longer such a dominant factor in the education of the producers and consumers of art. McTaggart, however, did go through an Academic training which still placed some value upon the classical ideal. As will later be examined, McTaggart from the 1880s begins to adopt a manner of composition which resembles a classical idiom. Although his use of this type of composition would not have had the same level of meaning as it would at the beginning of the century, he does appear to use it as reference to an ideal, to support an expression of man's relationship to nature. This will be examined in more detail in section III.

The Sublime:

By stressing the "humanity" of his landscapes, McTaggart was in part rejecting the notion of the sublime, contained in many preceding Scottish landscape paintings, particularly those of the Highlands.

A philosophical framework for the appreciation of mountain scenery evolved from early in the 18th century with such works as the increasingly popular Greek treatise, attributed to Longinus, which by 1698 had been translated as On the

Sublime, and with Joseph Addison's Essay on the Pleasure of the Imagination.²⁴ In this Addison, although not using the term "sublime", examined the aesthetic reaction to spatial or physical magnitude. He differentiates between the great and the beautiful and elucidates the conditions under which these differing sources of pleasure are perceived.²⁵ The distinction between the "grand" and the "beautiful" set the baseline for 18th century aesthetics and the discussion of the "sublime", which reached a new level of popular transmission when Edmund Burke in 1757 published A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful. With its original approach and appealing style his work reached a wide audience.

For the landscape artist, the sublime offered the possibility of high art, an art which engaged the intellect beyond simple recognition or pleasure in a scene. The sublime landscape had the power to "elevate the mind in the highest degree".²⁶

The aesthetic reaction to the sublime does not appear to have been readily applied to the Scottish Highlands during the early 18th century. There were few significant depictions of Scottish scenery in the visual arts and most written descriptions of the actual landscape of Scotland from this time tend towards the detached, pursued with a spirit of empirical enquiry rather than aesthetic enjoyment, or the dismayed, governed by the physical problems of travel through such a landscape.

Later in the century, however, a response to the sublime does develop in what are ostensibly empirical records. Pennant, for example, in his Tour of Scotland of 1769, uses romantic, elevated language in his description of "the cluttered height of Quillin or, the mountain of CUCHULLIN," which, "like its ancient hero, stood like a hill that catches the clouds of heaven."²⁷

Certainly by the end of the first quarter of the 19th

century, the sublime had become an aesthetic standard by which to judge the Scottish Highlands. At the same time, the particularity of the Scottish landscape, discussion of specific areas in aesthetic terms, had become common. The Scotsman, for example, in April 1828, carried a full page leader article on The Highlands in Scotland. In this, the author assesses Scottish scenery in terms of the sublime, which gives a level of meaning to the landscape. Of the scenery in the Western Highlands it is claimed,

"Nature, still lovely in detail, was now stately, sublime, in her *tout en semble*: every thing about us proclaimed a power, which penetrated to the very centre of our being. Nature here was every thing; man nothing, except as he was filled with the grandeur and wonders of nature."²⁸

In this context, Nasmyth's classical compositions were becoming increasingly unsatisfying for an audience who had come to expect the embodiment of the sublime in the depiction of the Highlands. Seven years previously, the critic of The Scotsman had commented of Nasmyth's Glencoe at the 1821 exhibition of the Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts, that

"we have heard it remarked, that the gaiety of the effect of this picture is hardly in unison with the almost terrific dreariness of the region, and that a more gloomy tone of colour... would have given sublimity, where, it is thought, there is too much prettiness."²⁹

Historical and Literary Association:

Often attached to the appreciation of the sublime landscape was the recognition of historical association, adding another layer of meaning to the landscape. It has already been seen in Pennant's reference to the ancient celtic hero Cuchullin in his description of the mountains of Skye. Glencoe,

however, had more recent and potent meaning which travellers to the area readily combined with an aesthetic reaction to the sublime. One traveller in 1785, for example, observed of Glencoe that

"sometimes the craggy mountains were hid in black clouds, and, at others, visible through the mist, which served to aggravate the gloom of this awful place, and render it truly horrible. This seemed a fit scene for the massacre of 1691."³⁰

The growing attention to a national landscape, detectable both from within Scotland and in accounts by outside observers, could therefore be seen as an alternative to the gradually displaced classical perception. This transition can be interpreted in terms of a shift in the type of meaning ascribed to landscape, and its depiction in art, away from the wider European classical model and the pursuit of ideal beauty towards a more particularised response to the landscape in which specific regional association becomes of greater significance. Thus what was seen as Nasmyth's overly "pretty" Glencoe gives way to Horatio McCulloch's Glencoe of 1864 (pl.128), in which the dark and menacing sky and brooding mountains were more acceptable to the popular notion of what Glencoe ought to look like.

This form of historical association was given added impetus in the early 19th century by the work of Sir Walter Scott. Whilst facilitating reference to historical association, Scott also added another level of meaning through his literature itself. His own works became a point of reference when interpreting and discussing landscape and landscape images. The critic of The Scotsman, quoted above, reviewing Nasmyth's Glencoe of 1821, observed that "there are few minds that will not catch something like poetical delight from the glimpses of nature which are here given them. It reminded us of the subject of one of the finest descriptions in the Lady of the Lake."³¹

Historical association in landscape perception carries with it social and political implications. Early accounts of Scotland by English and European travellers often reflected the current perception of Scotland as a barbaric wilderness. In the early 18th century an account by a French traveller commented "...the *Back or Mountains of Scotland*, is inhabited by a People half barbarous,...these people are cruel, revengeful; living by Fishing, Hunting, and Plunder...The country is just like the inhabitants."³²

Published in English in 1719 such opinions would have found sympathy in much of Hanoverian Britain, where the Highlands were regarded as hostile territory. The Jacobite rebellion of 1715 was still fresh in the public mind. The view of the Highlands as a wild and savage place continued through much of the 18th century, strengthened by the Rebellion of 1745, and following Culloden the British Government attempted to suppress the outwards manifestations of the Highland threat, banning the kilt and condemning the bagpipes.

Attitudes in general began to change with the suppression of the Jacobite cause. By 1782 the ban on the kilt was removed. Jacobitism became less a political issue and more a matter of national nostalgia, particularly amongst Anglo-Scots. The destruction of the old clan system inherent in the defeat at Culloden signalled the end of a way of life in the Highlands. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Scotland, and the Highlands in particular, became a focus for a growth of nostalgia in the face of a changing society. This point of view pervaded the reactions both within and outside Scotland for much of the 19th century. It underlies much Scottish landscape painting which was being shown both at the Royal Academy and the Royal Scottish Academy when McTaggart was beginning his career. It fed the type of landscape depicted by artists of the Highlands to which McTaggart referred to in his interview of 1905. It would have impinged directly upon McTaggart's experience through the work of his colleagues,

John Pettie and Peter Graham, both of whom perpetuated this image of the Highlands rich in grandeur and associated meaning.

The Survival of the Highland Image:

The older generation of artists, whom McTaggart described as following in the footsteps of Sir Walter Scott, began with such painters as John Thomson of Duddingston (1778-1840).

McTaggart's work has frequently been associated with that of Thomson in the critical literature on Scottish art, in which Thomson has been seen as the progenitor of a true school of Scottish landscape painting. Caw, for example, interpreted Thomson's work as a form of "impressionism" and refers to him in a language very similar to that which he reserves for McTaggart.³³

Whilst McTaggart would undoubtedly, like Caw, have viewed Thomson's work with great respect, there is little in Thomson's approach to landscape which bears close resemblance to McTaggart's, other than what in generalised terms might be called a vigorous technique. Given McTaggart's statement on the dramatic in nature and on the artists who followed in the footsteps of Sir Walter Scott, it is likely that he would have viewed Thomson's work in the same vein as McCulloch's Highland landscapes.

Associated less with Highland landscape than with coastal scenes, Thomson was nevertheless upheld by Sir Walter Scott as the foremost painter of the Scottish sublime. In some respects Thomson's work represented a synthesis of old and new. He had been a pupil of Alexander Nasmyth and admired Poussin and Claude. This, however, was combined with a taste for the dramatic and romantic which found full expression in such pictures as Fast Castle from Below (pl.144) and other depictions of castles upon a storm-bound coast. Thomson's

work was closely associated with Scott's depiction of the Scottish landscape. In the Fast Castle produced for Scott's Provincial Antiquities, influenced by the approach of Scott and Turner with whom he travelled in the Lothians, Thomson conveys the threatening power of the sea reflected by Scott in the accompanying text.

One of Thomson's first oil pictures of Fast Castle was painted for Scott, who described it as a

"true Scottish scene. It seems to me that many of our painters shun the sublime of our country by labouring to introduce trees where doubtless by search they might be found, but where certainly they make no conspicuous part of the landscape."³⁴

The successor to this role was Horatio McCulloch, who likewise owed much to the inspiration of Scott. McCulloch reached a level of popularity previously unknown for a Scottish landscape artist and, for many, his work came to epitomise, in visual terms, the description of the Highlands. In works such as Glencoe (pl.128), 1864, and Loch Katrine (pl.129), 1866, he depicted definitive Highland locations, rich in associated meaning. As with Nasmyth, this approach to landscape did not preclude interest in a perceived truth to nature. The Scotsman, reviewing the RSA exhibition of 1867, saw McCulloch's Loch Maree, Ross-shire as a "faithful description of the loch" with "great mastery of colours...especially, for instance, the effect of the lichen on the bit of rock upon the right."³⁵ Another work, Glen Finnan, it is noted, was painted on the spot.

Similar interests are found in the work of J. Milne Donald (1819-66) and James Docharty (1829-1878). Between 1864 and 1878 Docharty exhibited at the RSA a steady stream of works depicting areas such as the Trossachs, Rannoch, Loch Etive, Ben Cruachan and Loch Maree. Frequently in the 1860s these are the subject of particular atmospheric effects, as in

Early Morning: Ben Cruachan (exhibited 1867) or Clouds passing off, near the Linn of Dee (exhibited 1868). The influence of McCulloch survived in his pupil John Smart (1838-1899), who continued to produce typical Highland scenes modified by stress upon painting from nature. Other artists working in a comparable Highland vein during McTaggart's career included J.B. MacDonald (1829-1901), Arthur Perigal (1816-84) and Pollock Nisbet (1848-1922). MacDonald regularly exhibited Highland landscapes at the RSA from the 1860s until his death. These included numerous views of the landscape around the Falls of Garry and Struan, landscapes with non-specific titles such as Highland Burn and landscapes with direct historical references such as his RSA Diploma work Glencoe, 1692 shown at the Academy in 1877. Perigal exhibited a unprecedented number of Highland landscapes at the RSA. From 1838 until 1885, he regularly exhibited at least five landscape works (often as many as eight or nine), the majority of which were Highland subjects.

McTaggart's contemporaries at the Trustee's Academy, John McWhirter and Peter Graham, also began to work on Highland subjects. McWhirter was exhibiting Highland scenes at the RSA from the late 1850s and this type of work continued to be well received in Scotland. In 1867, the critic of the Dundee Advertiser, whilst lamenting the general lack that year of pictures attempting the "sublime", praises McWhirter's Mountain Silence (see pl.131), which is described as "a truly sublime interpretation of one of the grandest effects of Nature."³⁶

John Pettie, also, dealt with the image of the Highlands in figure subjects such as Disbanded (pl.143), exhibited at the RSA in 1878. Here, the Highland warrior is now seen as hero rather than savage and there is a clear identification between him and the wild landscape to which he belongs.

It is significant that these paintings found an audience in Scotland. Pettie exhibited a number of similar works at the

RSA and the Glasgow Institute. Two of them, Disbanded and the comparable The Highland Outpost, were acquired by James Orchar.³⁷ Both paintings date from 1877/8. In the summer of 1877, Pettie had spent the summer with Orchar in Dundee following a stay in the Highlands.

Such images of the Highlands also found a sympathetic response at the Royal Academy in London. Highland landscapes by Graham and McWhirter were often amongst the feted exhibits in the 1860s and '70s. Landscapes in the tradition of McCulloch were still seen to convey the essence not simply of the Highlands but of Scotland. Graham's first exhibit at the Royal Academy, A Spate in the Highlands (pl.112), of 1866, is full of the same dramatic grandeur which characterised the work of McCulloch. As such it found full favour with English critics.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the persistence of the image of Scotland promoted by Scott and McCulloch during the 19th century, the validity and sincerity of this image was gradually being questioned. The Highlands began to suffer from an over-exposure which undermined the concept of wild, desolate sublimity upon which the initial perception was based. The meaning of landscape as conveyed through an aesthetic reaction to the sublime and through associated historical meaning had by the late 19th century become devalued by the sheer popularity of the Highland landscape.³⁸

In his own work, McTaggart avoided the typical Highland view. His attitude to popular Highland scenery, and its association with tourism, can be compared with that of other artists. The English artist Frederick Walker, for example, whilst holidaying at Oban in 1872 commented that,

"The place is lovely enough...but it's spoilt by a most insufferable kind of tourist, prig, monied, respectable, parsonic, element...The favourite topic is the different

routes; one gets sick of the names of 'Glencoe', 'Fort William', & c."³⁹

By the 1860s, when McTaggart had come to take an interest in landscape as a subject in its own right, this process of devaluation was already well established. It is not surprising therefore to find artists like McTaggart searching for a new form of meaning in landscape. Other Scottish artists in the late 19th century were also exploring new types of landscape. The Black and White interview of 1905 acknowledges that the Glasgow School, for example, had avoided "scenic views". In part, a solution was offered by emphasis upon naturalistic landscape, in which the depiction of natural detail became self-referential, an aim in itself in which the actual area depicted was of less significance. This can be seen developing even in the work of artists such as James Docharty, who although still painting Highland areas were less dependent upon the inherent drama of the Highland landscape.

Part of McTaggart's reaction to the Highland tradition was to find new areas in which to paint, areas which were not so heavily laden with associated meaning or the sublime. Unlike his contemporaries McWhirter or Graham he was not bound by an emphasis upon Highland scenery; much of his work reflects an appreciation of the less dramatic views of the Scottish landscape. His choice of painting ground was, therefore, significant.

McTAGGART'S PAINTING LOCATIONS

Kintyre:

It is with the land and seascape of the Argyll peninsular of Kintyre that McTaggart's work is most readily identified. For much of his painting career, McTaggart's relationship with

Kintyre was that of a summer visitor. In some respects he was a tourist. As the landscape of his childhood, however, Kintyre also had deeper personal associations for McTaggart. He was born in October 1835 at Aros, near Campbeltown, and lived in the area until 1852 when he left for Glasgow. After enrolling at the Trustee's Academy in Edinburgh in 1852 he spent summer vacations in Glasgow and Dublin working on portrait commissions. But in the summer of 1857 he returned to Campbeltown, where, according to Caw, he commenced his first serious outdoor landscape study. This was the beginning of regular summer trips to Kintyre.⁴⁰ Before 1861, when his parents moved from Campbeltown to Glasgow, these journeys must have been partly conceived as family visits, but he maintained them with the same *regularity after this date*. This annual procedure was closely related to traditional landscape practice, to some degree dictated by the practicality of working in a city studio during the winter months and only sketching or painting outdoors when the weather was more favourable. As such, it is an important factor defining McTaggart's contact with Kintyre. Despite his childhood ties, McTaggart did not live all year round in the landscape which was the subject of his painting, but approached it as much as a visitor as a native.

Unlike the true Highland areas of Argyll, Kintyre possessed little poetic or pictorial heritage. It received only a glancing mention in Scott's The Lord of the Isles and unlike Skye and the Western Isles had no particularly remarkable geographic features to warrant a firm place on the "Scottish Tour." This neglect was in part the result of the geographical isolation of Kintyre. Although the average tourists at the beginning of the century were willing to go out of their way to witness the splendours of Skye or Staffa, the long overland journey down to Kintyre held little promise of reward. In the search for sublimity and the rich picturesque, which so much of the rest of Scotland afforded, the landscape of the peninsular of Argyll was of little attraction. This is reflected in the general lack of coverage

of Kintyre in many of the Scottish guide-books up until the latter part of the century. One of the tours, for example, in Anderson's 1834 Guide to the Highlands remarks that "On passing Ardpatrik Point, the appearance of the bleak sombre, heathy hills of Cantire and Argyll is quite uninteresting; and the passenger will feel no reluctance in being carried away from the coast."⁴¹

This situation did, however, change. With the growth of "recreational" as opposed to "scenic" tourism, Kintyre began to assume a new importance. Whereas Machrihanish, Southend and Carradale formed no part of the early 19th century gazetteers, they began to feature more prominently in the tourist literature by the 1880s and '90s. By 1897 the ABC Guide, for example, could refer to "the celebrated golf links at Machrihanish, facing the wide Atlantic" and claimed that at Southend "A visitor from the South-Sea Islands would find himself at home, picking coral on the shore."⁴²

Machrihanish itself, however, had not been completely ignored in previous accounts of Scotland. Of all the locations in southern Kintyre it seems to have been one of those deemed most worthy of mention. Thomas Pennant in his account of A Tour in Scotland, and Voyage to the Hebrides made in 1772 writes, "Ride three miles along the sands of Machri' Shanais bay, noted for the tremendous size and roaring of its waves in stormy seasons; and for the loss of many ships, which by reason of the lowness of the land are received into destruction."⁴³ Nevertheless, at this stage, the area was not seen as suitable for artistic description; Macculloch comments that "The Bay itself is wide, open, sandy, and shallow, producing a great surf in west winds; nor is there anything picturesque in this quarter, unless it be under the high cliffs."⁴⁴ Later in the 19th century, however, some commentators could see Machrihanish in different terms. The compiler of the Argyll section of The New Statistical Account of Scotland declares that,

"There are few bays in the kingdom that can compare with this, extending as it does, in a beautiful curve for nearly six miles, while the beach is composed of fine white sand, of great breadth, and so firm, that it affords a most delightful ride...The islands of Islay, Jura, and Gigha are distinctly visible from this, and add to the beauty and grandeur of the scene. These together with a boundless expanse of the mighty ocean, form the main features of the landscape."⁴⁵

An appreciation of the bay and the seascape at Machrihanish, therefore, had become established. A further boost to the popularity of the area was afforded by the creation of the Machrihanish golf course, overlooking the Atlantic, in 1876. As can be gauged by the reference in the 1897 guide, the course quickly achieved a notable reputation. This change was already apparent in 1880 as a letter of 1880 to the sculptor William Brodie (1815-1881), then Secretary of the RSA, reveals. Of Macrihanish McTaggart remarks that "This place has grown to be a famous golf course and Macrihanish links are called the finest in the world. However, the exploitation hasn't yet spoilt the place for an artist of modest habit."⁴⁶ In the last two decades of the 19th century the development continued with the construction of several modern villas at Machrihanish, primarily for let to summer visitors.

An important factor in the gradual opening up of Kintyre was the development of the steamboat service from Glasgow to Campbeltown. At the beginning of the century, the only alternative to the long overland journey via Inverary and Lochgilphead had been the sailing packets, leaving at irregular intervals and taking two weeks on a round trip. By the 1880s the passage between Glasgow and Campbeltown had been reduced to three hours 45 minutes and passenger steamboat service arrived daily in Cambeltown, connecting with horse charabancs to Machrihanish.⁴⁷

Many of McTaggart's paintings of Kintyre reflect recreational and holiday associations. His contact with Kintyre as an adult was not simply as an artist seeking visual material. He usually returned to Kintyre, not on painting excursions with other artists or patrons, but with his family. The trips were, in several respects, family holidays spent by the seaside.

There had been a rapid growth in the popularity of seaside resorts in the 19th century, particularly after 1850. By this time, what had previously been the excursion of the gentry, aristocracy or affluent merchants, spread through white collar workers and right down the socio-economic class by the end of the century.⁴⁸ Similarly sea bathing, which had grown among the aristocracy and gentry in the mid 18th century, was by the latter part of the 19th century an integral part of the seaside experience.

Caw refers to McTaggart's love of bathing, sailing and walking, particularly in his early visits to Kintyre in the late 1850s and '60s.⁴⁹ In a letter of August 1859, Pettie wrote to McTaggart "you seem to be enjoying yourself as well as working" and expresses his regret at not being able to visit McTaggart in Campbeltown to go sailing with him that summer.⁵⁰

The view of Kintyre as a holiday destination is reflected in the, at times, limited aspect of Kintyre which McTaggart portrays. It is often a summer landscape with concomitant "recreational" associations, perhaps fed by his own childhood memories. McTaggart was partly thinking of certain works in these terms in the 1860s. In a letter of 1863, he refers to a landscape study and the type of figures which he intends to put into it: "Perhaps (?) twilight description of a midsummer holiday, the return of the boys in the evening. May rain a little, but glorious."⁵¹ The association between recreation and its painted image is also expressed by McTaggart in a letter of June 1868 to George Simpson commenting upon that year's Royal Academy exhibition.

Referring to the coast scenes of James Clark Hook McTaggart claims they are "..finer than usual - dangerous to look at in this hot weather they would send you off to the seaside at once whether convenient or not."⁵²

It is mainly from the 1870s onward that this type of image is seen in several of McTaggart's paintings of children bathing or playing on the shore and may, as will be examined later, have owed something to McTaggart's knowledge of Hook's work. For example, A Summer Idyll - Bay Voyach (pl.66) of 1875-93 or Girls Bathing - White Bay, Cantyre (pl.60) of 1889 are idyllic scenes in which there appears to be an unquestioning enjoyment of the land and seascape.

Nevertheless, McTaggart's contact with Kintyre was not simply that of a casual visitor. That he repeatedly returned to the same areas and paints similar views, gives his work an added dimension over that of the touring artist. His work is, for example, based on very different contact with the landscape from Turner's "one-off" views of Scottish scenery. Kintyre was not, for McTaggart, simply one stop on a sketching itinerary. Despite the large proportion of summer scenes and the fact that McTaggart never went to Kintyre during the winter months, he did observe the area under a variety of conditions. His early visits to Machrihanish, for example, were made in August and September but in 1892 he changed his routine and took his annual painting trip in June, when, according to Caw, "the day skies.... are more luminous and shining... and the wide ocean, if no more crystalline, flashes more brightly and is coloured more wonderfully than at any other time of the year."⁵³

Whether in June or in late summer, the quality of light and nuances of atmosphere interested McTaggart in many of his Machrihanish paintings. Works such as The Wave (pl.42), 1881 and Sunset over the Sea (pl.65), 1892, explore the effect of light on water and testify to the variety which McTaggart found at Machrihanish. His emphasis was not upon

the location as a "view" in itself but the more insubstantial and transient character of the land/seascape.

Tarbert:

McTaggart's first summer visit to Tarbert was in 1868, with subsequent trips in 1869 and 1871. At the southern end of Loch Fyne, Tarbert was, like Campbeltown, a centre for herring fishing, the staple industry of the area. Staying in the piermaster's cottage on the edge of the loch, McTaggart was at the heart of the day to day life of the fishermen. Watercolours such as Fishing Boats and Net Poles, Tarbert (coll: McTaggart family), 1869, indicate his interest in recording the activity of the fishing community.

The area around Tarbert and Loch Fyne had been more popular with travellers from early in the 19th century than Campbeltown and southern Kintyre. This was partly the result of greater ease of access and more diversified scenery. Lord Cockburn in his West Circuit of 1838 comments upon the beauty of the scenery around Loch Fyne,

"the picturesque hills, the bright water, the occasional masses and constant fringing of wood, the jutting and overlapping of the headlands...the fishing hamlets, with their boats slumbering in quiet bays."⁵⁴

These qualities of the landscape, picturesque in the accepted definition of varied and contrasting scenery, had drawn numerous artists to the area before McTaggart. A steady stream of views of the area were exhibited at the Scottish Academy from the 1830s up until McTaggart first stayed there in 1868. In 1831, for example, D.O. Hill had exhibited Tarbert Castle, Loch Fyne and in 1866 Sam Bough Tarbert, Loch Fyne.

McTaggart's image of Tarbert, however, relies little upon the

picturesque qualities of the area. His work there in the late 1860s was largely a development of his interest in depicting childhood scenes within a landscape setting, and stimulated by his observation of the fishing community.

Carnoustie:

McTaggart first went to paint at Carnoustie in the late Spring of 1872, after which it quickly became established, along with locations in Kintyre, as one of his regular grounds (see Appendix I). Like Kintyre, it was not a feature on the Tourist Routes of the first half of the 19th century. The first house was built there only in 1797 and Carnoustie receives no mention in the early 19th century gazetteers. By 1835, however, the population had risen to 1200, and in 1885 the Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland notes the extensive facilities, which by then included four hotels and a golf house.⁵⁵

This development owed much to the opening of the railway line between Dundee and Arbroath in 1838 and the growing popularity during the 19th century of the Carnoustie golf course. Whilst, for the "scenic" tourist, the landscape of the area would have held little attraction, the golf course and the beach, combined with ease of access, offered much to the vacationer in the second half of the 19th century. Already by 1874 the compiler of a guide to Carnoustie could observe that "...now thousands of strangers spend a portion of the summer and autumn in the locality, imparting to it much of that gaiety and life which distinguish the finer English watering places."⁵⁶ During the summer the population of Carnoustie (c.4000 in 1874) increased by at least a third, and several lodging houses and holiday villas arose to cater for the influx.

At Carnoustie, as in Kintyre, several of McTaggart's pictures represent idyllic, fine weather scenes with recreational

associations. They are landscapes devoid of crowds of people but nevertheless the human element, frequently children, is important. The Bathers (pl.53), for example, compares with his Kintyre scenes of children bathing.

These works are expressive of the "enjoyment" of the landscape, signifying that it is not a scene from which man is isolated. In Carnoustie, McTaggart had found a similar situation to that in Kintyre. It was an area off the path of the traditional tourist itinerary but which was beginning to enjoy a new form of popularity, in which the desire to be amazed or impressed by grandeur played little part. However, McTaggart did not ignore the more turbulent aspect of the Carnoustie shoreline. According to the 1874 guide, "Easterly winds prevail in spring...Gales from the south-east raise the sea into the most furious commotion, the bay presenting a scene of the wildest grandeur."⁵⁷

McTaggart was frequently at Carnoustie during the spring, and although this type of drama does not dominate his work painted there, some pictures do indicate bad weather, such as Carnoustie (pl.50) and Summer Storm, Carnoustie (pl.36).

Midlothian:

In May 1889, McTaggart moved from Charlotte Square, Edinburgh, to Broomieknowe in the Burgh of Bonnyrigg, close to the village of Lasswade. On the banks of the Esk, McTaggart was entering a region which had become well established as a tourist landscape by the 1880s, and to which there was easy access by both rail and a daily coach excursion from Edinburgh. It features prominently, for example, in Black's Picturesque Tourist of Scotland.⁵⁸ The area around Lasswade, and especially nearby Hawthornden and Rosslyn, had a rich literary, historical and pictorial heritage reaching back through the 19th century and beyond. Roslynn Chapel, founded in 1446, was regarded as a

particularly interesting example of highly decorated Gothic architecture and the poet William Drummond, born in Hawthornden in 1585, had become closely linked with the surrounding landscape.

The richly varied landscape, and its historical associations, attracted a succession of tourists throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. It finds a place in Pennant's Tour and Grose's Antiquities and was visited by Boswell, Johnson and Burns. In her recollections of the tours through Scotland with her brother in 1803, Dorothy Wordsworth claims, "I have never passed through a more delicious dell than the glen of Roslin."⁵⁹

The scenery was particularly suited to the requirements of the "picturesque" tourist and artist. Joseph Farrington, for example, visited the area in his Scottish tours of 1788 and 1792. Alexander Nasmyth also saw the Esk Valley in picturesque terms, finding in the crumbling ruins of Rosslyn Castle, the dense foliage and the shaded banks, suitably varied and textural subject matter.

The district derived further popularity from Walter Scott's attention. There is reference to the area around Rosslyn in The Lay of the Last Minstrel, published in 1805, the ballad Rosabelle and The Grey Brother. The Lay of the Last Minstrel found much of its romantic and supernatural inspiration in Rosslyn and its castle, with which Scott became familiar through several summers residence at Lasswade.

By 1889, therefore, McTaggart was faced with a landscape in which there were already strong associations of meaning. Rather than develop these, however, he appears to have deliberately avoided the traditional and more obvious areas of picturesque beauty. Although he did on occasion venture down to the more enclosed locations along the river, as in On the Esk (pl.73), or Roslin Castle, Autumn (pl.74),

both of 1895, he more commonly portrays an open, cultivated landscape with an aspect of the gentle Moorfoot Hills in the background, as in Cornfield (pl.77), 1896. This constituted a direct reversal of Scott's preference. In the Provincial Antiquities, Scott had noted in reference to Rosslyn Glen,

"It often happens, that amid an open and comparatively uninteresting country, where there is little to interest the traveller, he is conducted by the course of some fairy stream into a dell abounding with all the romantic varieties of cliff, and copsewood, and waterfall, through which the brook has found itself a more wild and pleasing course than along the surface of the more level ground."⁶⁰

McTaggart's contact with the area was not that of a traveller. Midlothian was a landscape in which he lived all year round and approached as a local rather than as a scenic artist. As such, he could observe the landscape under varying conditions; with his interest in atmospheric effect already well established by 1889, it was this aspect of landscape painting rather than the portrayal of any specific "view" which occupied him. By shifting his attention to a different and relatively unexplored perspective, McTaggart was able to escape the classic ground. In doing so, however, he had to create new structures of meaning.

CHAPTER SIX

THE POETIC LANDSCAPE

INTRODUCTION

"All things are possible, but the sensational and abnormal have less of the divine than the natural."¹

"It's the heart that's the thing."²

Such observations would suggest that McTaggart saw his landscape painting in terms of emotional content as much as naturalistic observation. He was of a generation whose aesthetics were still very much concerned with subject and content and for whom Ruskin was still a dominating influence. This is reflected to some extent in Caw's portrayal of McTaggart, both during McTaggart's lifetime and after 1910. Caw gives some flavour of McTaggart's aesthetic viewpoint, which in many cases is concerned with content, meaning or emotional significance. McTaggart, according to Caw, "felt keenly the close relationship between life and art."³ and that he talked less of practical concerns of painting "than of the mental and emotional aspects of art."⁴ The remarks which Caw attributes to McTaggart, although suspect as exact record, are consistent in depicting an artist interested in the spiritual or higher aims of art. He reproduces a long statement by McTaggart on the artist William Frith. For McTaggart, Frith was "a truly admirable workman, a keen observer," but "commonplace"; "his realism is most valuable, but not of the highest order." On the other hand "A painter who is also a poet is carried away by his impressions and must express them..." McTaggart questions "How can an artist, who has no impressions of his own, hope to impress others? Such a one may give us brilliant description and narrative, keen analysis, and fine craftsmanship; but he is no poet"⁵

The use of the term "poetic" to describe painting was common in critical writing in the 19th century. In general, it can be associated with emotional significance or meaning - the quality in a painting which lifts it above simple representation.

It is in this sense that Ruskin discusses the "Definition of Greatness in Art" in the first volume of Modern Painters.⁶ The technical processes of painting, asserts Ruskin, are nothing more than a basic language. The term "great poet" could be applied either to a painter or a writer "if warranted by the character of the images or thoughts which each in their respective languages conveyed." As an example, Ruskin cites Landseer's The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner (coll: Victoria and Albert Museum, London), "one of the most perfect poems or pictures (I use the words as synonymous) which modern times have seen."⁷ It is distinguished as a great poem because the artist expresses great thoughts which "stamps its author, not as the neat imitator of the texture of a skin, or the fold of a drapery, but as the Man of Mind."⁸

Ruskin clearly thought that the definition which could be given of a painting with an ostensible subject such as The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner could also be applied to landscape. Of Turner he claimed, "Increasing calmly in power and loveliness, his work would have formed one mighty series of poems..."⁹ The landscape artist, like any other must not only convey natural objects to the spectator but should "inform him of the thoughts and feelings with which these were first regarded by the artist himself."¹⁰ The poetic landscape, in which, for Ruskin, Turner was supreme, is therefore that which conveys emotional significance.

In 1853, shortly after moving to Redhill and embarking seriously upon landscape painting after years of portraiture, John Linnell (1792-1882) offered his own definition of what

he termed the "poetical landscape". For Linnell, "The business of the artist should be to create spiritual perceptions, and all the powers of imitation, the skill in design, in colouring and expression - are all to be used to this end."¹¹ As in Ruskin's analysis of The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner, he considered that the imitative facility of the artist was not an end in itself but the means of revealing "spiritual" content.

McTaggart's "It's the heart that's the thing" also echoes Ruskin and could be interpreted as a reaffirmation of Ruskin's concern for content in landscape art. Ruskin had stressed the need for landscape to reach the "heart." Of the landscape painters of the past, Ruskin claims that "No moral end has been answered, no permanent good effected, by any of their works. They have amused the intellect, or exercised the ingenuity, but they have never spoken to the heart."¹²

As seen in the critical review, James Caw claims for McTaggart status as a "poetic" artist, which he considers elevated him above an artist such as Monet, whom he interpreted as being concerned primarily with scientific principles of representation. Caw's biography makes frequent reference to the "poetic" quality of McTaggart's work. Into his landscapes, claims Caw, McTaggart "wove, with true poetic feeling and fine pictorial result, strands of human sentiment."¹³ His mature art, "while retaining close touch with reality, embodied a profound and poetic apprehension of the essential life and emotional significance of the world."¹⁴ The use of the term "poetic" here is very similar to that of Ruskin.

Even MacColl's definition of "poetic meaning" in art can be partly interpreted in Ruskinian terms. Although he denies the value of a conventional narrative in painting, MacColl stresses the importance of emotional experience. This can be conveyed not by a preconceived narrative or poem but simply through the sensual perception of the painting. "By poetry I

mean the bringing home of an image to the emotions by the arts of the senses." In this the process of vision "is complicated by every element of thought and feeling and breeding, as well as of sense."¹⁵ Ruskin himself did not deny this inter-relation of sense perception and emotional response. "It is not ...always easy, either in painting or literature, to determine where the influence of language stops, and where thought begins. Many thoughts are so dependent upon the language in which they are clothed, that they would lose half their beauty if otherwise expressed".¹⁶

Such a definition could evidently be applied to a wide range of art - reaching from the older generation of "narrative" artists such as Landseer to painters of the New Art such as Whistler or Degas, of whom MacColl asked if they "are not poets I should like to know who is."¹⁷ Its significance, however, is that it is an indication that, throughout McTaggart's career, critics (even formalist critics) were still thinking of art in terms of emotional content. It is within this framework, rather than that one which relies too heavily upon a purely formalist interpretation of impressionism, that McTaggart's work should be seen.

From the evidence of McTaggart's own statements and the continued presence of figure subjects, even in later landscapes, it is unlikely that he was simply striving towards a form of landscape painting in which there was no reference beyond the outward appearance of the scene depicted. The development of McTaggart's work reveals a search for "poetic" significance in various forms. This is more evident in earlier pictures but still underlies his approach to landscape until his death. Although the importance of naturalistic observation in his work should not be denied, this must be placed within a broader view of art which takes account of his apparent desire to impart some form of significance to his own landscapes, the "humanity" to which he refers.

SYMBOLISM AND THE INFLUENCE OF MILLAIS IN McTAGGART'S EARLY WORK

A major formative influence upon McTaggart's early approach to subject matter was the work of John Everett Millais. In particular, Millais' depiction of women and children within a non-specific subject, designed to be of emotional rather than of explicit narrative appeal, appears to have influenced McTaggart.

Millais' work of the 1850s was regularly discussed in terms of poetic feeling, which was seen by some critics as a distinctive quality, lifting it above the work of other artists. Of Marianna, exhibited at the RSA in 1852, The Scotsman remarked "her worn look and peculiar complexion have a poetical truth and deep feeling about them, worth all the conventional simpering beauty that could so easily have been bestowed upon her."¹⁸ In 1857, reviewing the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition (visited by McTaggart and Chalmers), a critic in The Art Treasures Examiner observes of Millais' Autumn Leaves,

"This is a poem put upon canvas by Millais, which everybody with a soul will understand...The picture is not of a moving accident or of a blood-freezing story; it is a picture for thinking hearts - translating into form and colour the intangible feelings that brood round the heart when lost in the meditation that is born of the season and the hour - autumn and evening."¹⁹

Amongst many Scottish painters, Millais was regarded as one of the most important artists working in Britain at that time. There was ample opportunity for them to observe his work first-hand. During the 1850s major loan works by Millais were consistently included in the RSA annual exhibitions. These ten works included Marianna (1852), Ophelia (1853),

Ferdinand Lured by Ariel and The Return of the Dove to the Ark (1854), and The Blind Girl and Autumn Leaves (1858). In 1866 Millais was created an Honorary Member of the Scottish Academy. Only two Millais' were shown at the RSA in the 1860s and three in the 1870s but knowledge of his work during this period would still have come to Scotland through the Scottish artists resident in London and artists such as McTaggart who were regularly visiting England.

Ruskin's lecture on Pre-Raphaelitism, delivered on November 18th 1853 as part of a series of four lectures at the Philosophical Institution in Edinburgh, was also an important factor in promoting the work of Millais and the other Pre-Raphaelite artists in Scotland. The full impact of these lectures on the Scottish art world has still to be assessed but the lectures were well attended and favourably reviewed.²⁰

In his lecture, Ruskin discusses the Pre-Raphaelites primarily in stylistic terms, assessing their historical role: "With all their faults, their pictures are, since Turner's death, the best - incomparably the best - on the walls of the Royal Academy."²¹ He also makes particular reference to painting from nature: "Pre-Raphaelitism has but one principle, that of absolute, uncompromising truth in all that it does, obtained by working everything, down to the most minute detail, from nature, and from nature only."²² Stylistically, Millais and the Pre-Raphaelites were important for several Scottish artists in the 1850s and 1860s. For example in Hugh Cameron's Going to the Hay (pl.102) of 1858-9, the hedgerow is depicted with a fine botanical detail, comparable to Ferdinand Lured By Ariel (Makins Collection), 1849-50. It is probable that artists of the previous generation, such as Horatio McCulloch, were also influenced by Ruskin and Pre-Raphaelitism. McCulloch produced a number of very carefully detailed landscapes in the 1850s which suggest a debt to Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites.²³

Given this general background of Pre-Raphaelite influence in Scotland, it is not surprising that McTaggart also, as a young artist, would have been interested in their work. McTaggart describes himself as having gone through a Pre-Raphaelite phase²⁴ in the late 1850s and 1860s and Millais features very prominently in McTaggart's correspondence with George Simpson in the 1860s and early 1870s.²⁵

The question of Pre-Raphaelite influence upon McTaggart's technique will be discussed in a later chapter but here it is more specifically a comparison with Millais' approach to subject matter which is of interest. The evidence of McTaggart's paintings of this period suggests that the inclusion of The Blind Girl (pl.134) and Autumn Leaves (pl.133) in the RSA exhibition of 1858 was of particular significance for McTaggart.

One of the first of McTaggart's paintings to suggest a direct debt to Millais is Going to Sea (pl.5). Painted in Campbeltown during the summer of 1858 it appears in composition and atmosphere to be based upon Millais' Autumn Leaves, which McTaggart would have seen exhibited at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857 as well as at the 1858 RSA spring exhibition. Like Millais, McTaggart uses a twilight setting and a high horizon to create a dark landscape backdrop. In both works the closely grouped figures are placed near to the picture plane, isolating them to some extent from the background, an effect which is emphasised by the frontal lighting of the figures. Nevertheless, both artists are concerned with suggesting an enveloping atmosphere and despite the low key, tonal clarity is preserved.²⁶

The narrative of Going to Sea is less generalised than that of Autumn Leaves, in which Millais was deliberately attempting to avoid his earlier illustrative approach, and whereas the girls of Autumn Leaves appear to be united in

their melancholy, McTaggart broadens his figure action, contrasting the enthusiastic attitude of the figures on the right with the trepidation of the boy looking outwards.

It is possible that the subject of Going to Sea was suggested by a picture by James Clark Hook, A Widow's Son going to Sea (pl.116) which was shown at the Royal Academy in 1857, the year before McTaggart began his own work. The picture portrays a young boy on a quayside, about to board ship.²⁷

It is a scene similar to this which McTaggart portrays. However, the lack of specific indications of subject in McTaggart's work led to a more questioning reception by the critic of The Scotsman, for whom the content of McTaggart's Going to Sea was not clear enough. It was claimed that McTaggart's picture "wants point, and constantly fails to convey its meaning clearly." The introduction of a sorrowing friend or relative, [as Hook, himself, had used with the figure of the grieving mother in the background] it is asserted would have explained the boy's doubtful expression, "but as the picture stands this is not expressed, either naturally or symbolically."²⁸

It is this lack of overt narrative which links McTaggart's work with Millais' Autumn Leaves. McTaggart seems to have gone beyond just the outward appearance of Autumn Leaves and learnt a means of suggestion rather than direct statement. In the implication of the ultimate loss of childhood, Going to Sea invites a mood of reflection comparable to that of Autumn Leaves. The emotional quality of each painting is strengthened by the use of twilight effect, and similar references to innocence, transience and death are invoked.

McTaggart dealt again with these themes the following year in The Past and the Present (pl.8). As previously discussed, the collector Robert Craig had some influence upon the final

appearance of this painting. However, the continuity of approach found running through Going to Sea, The Past and the Present and Spring suggest that McTaggart was also working out his own ideas. Although the twilight setting of Going to Sea has now been dropped in favour of full sunlight, McTaggart continues the juxtaposition of childhood and the suggestion of death. In this work he comes perhaps even closer to the generalised mood of Autumn Leaves. The decay inherent in the suggested setting of the ancient chapel and churchyard of Kilchousland, overlooking the sea near Campbeltown in Kintyre, and the memento mori of the old man in the background, provide equivalents to Millais' burning leaves. Similarly, the children are engaged in their actions not with carefree amusement but wistful contemplation. Whereas Craig had been determined to make the subject explicit, McTaggart retains the suggestive, poetic melancholy which he would have seen in Millais' work.

One significant alteration between the study for The Past and the Present (pl.7) and the completed work is the expression of the eldest girl. In the study she looks down with interest at the group of boys; in the finished work McTaggart has given her a more abstract gaze directed into space, similar to that of the young girl holding the apple in Autumn Leaves.

Although Millais had feared in 1856, (the year that Autumn Leaves was exhibited at the Royal Academy in London) that the public failed to understand his work, regarding it as "a simple little domestic episode chosen for effect and colour..."²⁹, by 1858 his Scottish audience was more responsive. The Scotsman observes, in its review of the 1858 RSA exhibition, that "The elevated sentiment and suggestive character of 'Autumn Leaves' by Millais - so pure, so holy in its calm repose - are to be felt rather than spoken of."³⁰

Whether or not McTaggart himself recognised the "deeply

religious reflection"³¹ which Millais had intended Autumn Leaves to convey, it is clear that both he and his patron Craig had conceived The Past and the Present in terms of spiritual content rather than simply as a genre subject; the difference between McTaggart and Craig being that McTaggart wished to make this reference more oblique and suggestive.

The importance for McTaggart of the churchyard setting is questionable. A graveyard location had been used by several other artists, including Millais in The Vale of Rest, exhibited at the RA in 1859, and by Henry Bowler for The Doubt: 'Can These Dry Bones Live?', exhibited at the RA in 1855. It is uncertain, however, whether McTaggart would have seen these works and although they exploit a similar religious pathos, their use of adult figures and more explicit symbolism suggest that they were not precedents for McTaggart's painting. A more obvious comparison could be made with Arthur Hughes' Home From Sea (pl.121), first exhibited with the single figure of the boy at the Pre-Raphaelite exhibition, Russell Place, in 1857. But Hughes' work touches upon a sentimentalism, based upon specific emotional content, which The Past and the Present avoids. McTaggart is also more successful in relating his figures to the landscape than Hughes. His looser handling and less insistent attention to detail create a more natural effect.³²

Most importantly, as already seen, the motif of the church in the background of The Past and the Present was not McTaggart's own idea but that of Craig.³³ McTaggart's early study for the picture (coll: Mrs Michael Cullen) gives no indication that the building behind the group of children is intended to be a church. Nevertheless the gravestones in the foreground were integral to McTaggart's conception of the picture and appear to have been part of the composition from the outset.

The theme of the "builders" (an alternative title by which McTaggart termed The Past and the Present), even if not

placed in a setting such as a churchyard, would have been likely to arouse a number of religious associations and like Millais' Autumn Leaves could be matched with several biblical quotations. For an Edinburgh audience it may have suggested the first verse of Psalm 127 - "Except the Lord build the house: their labour is but lost that build it", which in its truncated Latin form is the motto of the City of Edinburgh.

A similar theme, with biblical undertones, is returned to in 1866 with Enoch Arden (pl.16) based on the poem of that name by Tennyson. McTaggart portrays the scene from the second verse of the poem which refers to how the children "built their castles of dissolving sand/ to watch them overflow'd.." This could be linked to the Biblical quotation: "Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand." (St. Matthew, 7:27)³⁴

To Simpson, the eventual purchaser of the picture, McTaggart had said of Enoch Arden, "I think it will turn out the best thing I have done by a long way."³⁵ It was also glowingly reported to Simpson by George Paul Chalmers and it is interesting that Chalmers is keen to attach an air of mystery to the picture. Whilst praising the composition and colour, he also remarks that "there is a quiet sentiment and mysterious magnitude in the long stretch of sand and calm bit of ocean."³⁶ In its reception, therefore, this work might perhaps also be compared with Autumn Leaves. Although, based upon a specific poem it still seems to have been intended to evoke a more generalised poetic quality.

McTaggart's use of suggestive or symbolic content found in The Past and the Present was also developed in Spring (pl.14) painted mainly in 1863 and exhibited the following February at the RSA. This work has often been cited as a typical example of McTaggart's "Pre-Raphaelite" phase. Certainly its high-key tonality and hue resemble a

Pre-Raphaelite effect. Comparison could also be made with Millais' treatment of the theme in Spring - Apple Blossoms (pl.135). However, although McTaggart's work still reflects Millais' "painting without a subject" such a comparison serves partly to illustrate their divergence in style.

The general approach of Millais and McTaggart in their Spring subjects is the same. Both artists make the link between young girls and signifiers of spring: apple blossom and lambs. Although McTaggart doesn't introduce an overt memento mori, such as the scythe on the extreme right of Millais' picture, the rather mournful, contemplative expression of the seated girl fulfils a similar function. As with the expression of the girl in The Past and the Present, this was perhaps derived from the child holding an apple in Autumn Leaves. The reclining girl, toying with a flower, in McTaggart's Spring also corresponds to the girl lying with a grass stem in her mouth in Millais' picture. A significant difference, however, is that Millais' figure looks directly out towards the spectator, as is the case with two of the girls in Autumn Leaves. In McTaggart's Spring both girls are absorbed in their own thoughts, creating, as in Going to Sea and The Past and the Present, a more self-contained image and a more natural scene. The general effect of McTaggart's Spring is less calculated and artificial than that of Millais. Whereas Millais embodies Spring in terms of refined, delicately pretty young girls caught in a succession of static poses, within a formalised orchard setting, McTaggart's figures are more obviously country girls, dressed in poorer clothes and without shoes. More naturally posed, their appearance suggests that they are part of the landscape in which they are set.

This contrast in appearance is strengthened by each artist's technique and composition. It was Millais' intention to create a natural open-air effect.³⁷ A far more unified atmosphere, however, is found in McTaggart's Spring.

Instrumental in this is McTaggart's use of broken brushwork which contrasts with Millais' careful delineation of form. Although Millais was attempting to achieve a "broader" effect he was partly constrained by Pre-Raphaelite technical practice. Each figure appears observed in isolation, with corresponding discrepancies of illumination, and stands out in full relief from the background. The device of the low wall also effectively isolates the figure group from the landscape. On the other hand Millais' work cannot simply be viewed in terms of failure of purpose. The sense of artificiality seems to be integral to his painting and, as it has been observed, the frieze-like arrangement of the figures may indicate a response to Botticelli's Primavera.³⁸

Although it is possible that McTaggart had seen Millais' Spring, exhibited at the RA in 1859, what resemblances there are seem more likely to be the result of a common approach to content, following the exhibition of other work by Millais in Scotland. McTaggart would also have seen James Archer's Summertime, Gloucestershire (pl.98) exhibited at the Scottish Academy in 1859. Archer's picture resembles Millais' Spring in several respects (the figure types, the posing of the figures) and the contrasts made between McTaggart's and Millais' versions of Spring also apply in relation to Archer. But whilst in Summertime, Gloucestershire there is a similar division between fore and background as in Millais' Spring, Archer's figures have been grouped in greater depth and the landscape opened out. This, together with the sloping ground plane and the placing of the diagonal of the hill, create a composition which is mirrored in its basic components by McTaggart's painting.³⁹

This type of composition also bears some resemblance to The Blind Girl, the other work by Millais exhibited at the RSA in 1858. The impact of this work, however, is more clearly detected in another of McTaggart's pictures of about 1863. In Bessie Bell and Mary Gray (pl.13), McTaggart adopts a similar foreground group and a broad landscape sweep up to a

high horizon. The facial expressions appear to be derived from Millais' example (although perhaps more from Autumn Leaves than The Blind Girl) and like Millais, McTaggart creates an indeterminate pathos, based upon the emotional interaction of his child subjects and the landscape. In The Blind Girl Millais also links his figures more successfully in physical terms with the landscape. The high viewpoint includes the figure group in the movement of the eye across the landscape as a whole. This is facilitated by the match of tone and the repetition of hue throughout the work. From the evidence of Effie Millais' journal, the figure of the elder girl, for whom Effie originally sat, was at least in part painted out of doors.⁴⁰ Nevertheless the background and the figures were painted in two distinct phases and a clear fore/background division remains. The blind girl's shawl stands out in sharp relief from the field behind her which is painted up against the contour of the shawl. Even from illustration it would appear that McTaggart's Bessie Bell and Mary Gray (untraced) is more broadly handled in comparison with the Millais. As in his painting of Spring, this appears to assist the integration of the figures into their setting.

McTaggart returns to this format again in 1869 with Dora (pl.23). The placing of the figures, the foreground detail and the sunlit field bear even closer resemblance to The Blind Girl. Like Millais, McTaggart juxtaposes a quite detailed focus upon foreground foliage with a much broader treatment of the background field. Millais, however, continues a more detailed handling in the depiction of the village in the far distance, bringing the background closer to the picture plane, and the chromatic intensity throughout the painting contrasts with McTaggart's use of aerial perspective. Although high-key, Dora is painted with a less saturated colour scheme, which characterises many of McTaggart's landscapes from the early 1860s onwards. McTaggart was later to depict the intensity of natural phenomena in works such as the revised version of The

Storm. In Dora, however, McTaggart's emphasis is upon the quiet beauty of a natural setting, unlike Millais who in The Blind Girl had chosen an extreme atmospheric condition in which to exploit the brilliancy of Pre-Raphaelite colour and technique.

It is perhaps significant that McTaggart had originally painted Dora as a twilight scene, which, to judge from his oil sketch of the subject (pl.19), dated by Caw to 1866, and the earlier Going to Sea (pl.5) and The Wreck of the Hesperus (pl.9) would probably have been more theatrical in appearance, with overtly dramatic chiaroscuro lighting. The original work was exhibited at the RSA in 1868 with the line from Tennyson "And the sun fell, and all the land was dark " quoted in the catalogue. Remaining unsold at the RSA, it was repainted to a daylight effect before exhibition at the RA in London in 1869.⁴¹ We must presume, therefore, that McTaggart was dissatisfied with the original effect of the painting.

McTAGGART'S LITERARY SOURCES

In Dora McTaggart creates a mood of quiet reflection, centred upon the expression of the young woman, similar in effect to the emotional quality in Millais' The Blind Girl and Autumn Leaves. The lack of overt anecdotal theme or more specific interaction between figures distinguishes them from the Scottish narrative tradition of Wilkie or Faed, which might otherwise be expected to have provided the impetus behind McTaggart's childhood subjects in landscape settings.

Nevertheless, Dora is an illustrative painting, in which the subject is taken from Tennyson. Whilst playing down the narrative and avoiding a scene of dramatic import, McTaggart remains faithful to the essential details of Tennyson's poem.

Painted at the end of the 1860s, Dora is one of the last of McTaggart's pictures to be an illustration of a literary subject. It is significant that it occurs at a time when McTaggart was producing a number of illustrative paintings to accompany literary texts. In 1867, he had exhibited at the RSA an oil My Boy Tammie which was probably the basis for his illustration for Allan Ramsay and the Scottish Poets before Burns, published by Virtue in 1866.⁴² In 1865 he had also produced a wash drawing of Harry Bertram in the Kaim at Derncluith to illustrate Scott's Guy Mannering and in 1866 a wash drawing of Interview between Miss Wardour and Edie Ochiltree to illustrate The Antiquary, both for the Royal Association.⁴³ In 1868, he worked on three illustrations for a volume of Burn's poems published by Messrs. Nimmo.⁴⁴ Only much later, between around 1896 and 1899, did McTaggart again produce works intended for book illustration. These were a series of small oil sketches for the proposed volume of humorous Scottish stories which J.G. Orchar had hoped to publish.⁴⁵

Other works by McTaggart to derive their subject matter from poetry, without a specific link to literary commissions, are few. They are confined mainly to the 1860s but as the occurrence of such "subjectless" paintings as The Past and the Present indicate, they do not dominate his output of this period. It would be misleading to interpret a clear chronological progression away from illustrative themes to the less specific subject matter of McTaggart's later work.

As already outlined, some of McTaggart's early figure paintings which drew upon literary sources were works commissioned by patrons. Enoch Arden (pl.16), exhibited at the RA 1866 and the RSA 1867, also a subject from Tennyson, was commissioned from George Simpson. Willie Baird (pl.21), based upon a poem by Robert Buchanan, was initiated by J.C. Bell.⁴⁶ The choice of subject in these works may not, therefore, have been entirely McTaggart's own.

In some early paintings the relationship with a literary source is less straightforward. The Pleasures of Hope (untraced) was another work purchased, although not necessarily commissioned, by Bell. The title is taken from a poem by Thomas Campbell (1777-1844) but the subject matter (a small boy sailing a toy boat at the sea-shore looking up to see a tall ship sail across the ocean) doesn't correspond with any specific scene from the poem.⁴⁷ Instead, McTaggart deals with a similar generalised theme and makes reference perhaps to such isolated quotations from the poem as " 'tis distance lends enchantment to the view." It is this broader form of "poetic" reference which appears to underlie many subsequent land and sea-scapes. Titles such as Breezes of Spring Gladdening Sea and Shore, Away O'er the Sea - Hope's Whisper, In June When Broom was Seen and September's Silver and Gold occur throughout McTaggart's career, suggesting the "poetic", emotional response of the artist to his subject and the desire to invest the landscape with some form of content beyond naturalistic description. Some of these titles are quotations from specific literary sources. The Wind on the Heath (pl.91), 1905, derives its title from George Borrow's Lavengro (first published 1851).⁴⁸ Similarly the title of the 1902 And all the Choral Waters Sang (pl.87) is taken from a poem by Swinburne, reflecting the emotional quality, although not the actual content, of the poem.⁴⁹

These poetic references contrast with the mid 19th century preference of many Scottish artists for topographical or purely descriptive titles, such as McCulloch's Loch Katrine (pl.129), where the dramatic scenery is left to speak for itself or arouse the already well established literary reference to Walter Scott, or historical association.⁵⁰

McTaggart was dealing with new landscape ground - his scenes of Kintyre and Midlothian didn't have the type of built-in

associations of McCulloch's work. He was thus adding his own, less specific, poetic association. His use of figures within the landscape could also be seen in this context, as a means of adding "content" or human meaning to a landscape.

McTaggart's desire to express something which appeals to "common humanity" rather than "scenic views" or "something extraordinary" does link him as the critic of the Black and White magazine in 1905 seems to have intended, with the kailyard approach of the Glasgow School in the 1880s. Nevertheless, he is more clearly located within the Edinburgh based artists of his own generation. McTaggart, Chalmers, and Cameron were still dealing with a more abstracted, less specific view of the landscape than the Glasgow Boys in their depiction of rural labour of the early 1880s. It is possible to see how the young Glasgow artists could have admired the direct, bold composition and handling found in some of McTaggart's smaller works. Compare, for example, McTaggart's Two Boys and a Dog in a Boat (pl.28) of c.1871 with James Guthrie's A Hind's Daughter (pl.114) of 1883. In both, the children are positioned in the foreground of the picture. Their faces, square on to the picture plane, are portrayed *contre-jour* in broad strokes of colour. There is a simplicity and naturalness in their position within the picture and of the actions in which they are engaged. However, a work such as McTaggart's The Harvest Moon (pl.84) of 1899 presents a very different image, which more obviously strives towards a timeless and pastoral view of man's relationship with nature. The title itself carries poetic suggestion, enhanced by the young couple hand-in-hand, the sprawling children and the rich, glowing gold and green colouring of the picture.

It should be remembered, however, that the Glasgow artists themselves moved away from the realist stance of such works as The Hind's Daughter. E.A. Walton's Autumn Sunshine (pl.147) of 1883-4 or Guthrie's Pastoral (pl.115) of 1887-8 come closer to McTaggart's "poetic" landscape. The McTaggart

chosen as an illustration for the Glasgow artist's journal, The Scottish Art Review of September 1888 was a pastoral scene of children playing by a stream, A Highland Burn (pl.33) then in the possession of the Glasgow collector James Donald. Despite the reference to Highland in the title, the work is far removed from either McCulloch's romantic image of the Highlands or Guthrie's stark, realist Highland Funeral (coll: Glasgow Museum and Art Gallery). Instead, it is a pastoral scene in which the playing children express the link between man and nature.

This rejection of the "extraordinary" or the overtly dramatic approach in landscape painting found in the Glasgow artists, McTaggart and other of the Scott Lauder school is reflected in other cultural activity in Scotland in the late 19th century. John Veitch, Professor of Logic and Rhetoric at Glasgow University, produced, for example, a two volume essay on The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry in 1887. In this, he distinguishes between two trends in modern poetry: the love of free wild nature and objects that fill up the landscape, and imaginative sympathy for the grand and powerful in nature. Burns he associates with the former category.⁵¹ In referring to the visual arts, he detects a bias: "We should...have greater cause of gratitude if the artists in landscape would widen their range of vision, look less to mere sensuous grandeur and impressiveness, and be able to give us the power of the tender, the pathetic, and the solitary spirit." This, asserts Veitch, is to be found mainly in the lowland landscape.⁵²

McTaggart's advocacy of "humanity" rather than the sublime in landscape painting does indeed carry with it an implicit Highland/Lowland distinction and a corresponding emphasis upon the literary tradition of Burns rather than Scott. Whilst Scott's depiction of Scotland frequently stressed the richly romantic or the wild and inhospitable, Burns presented a land cultivated and inhabited by man. McTaggart's portrayal of figures, especially children, in the landscape links him

with this tradition. Writing in 1901, McTaggart's friend and dealer, Peter McOmish Dott remarked,

"McTaggart's art will be found to have certain elements in common with the songs of Burns. Each artist lacks that idealism which carries us away from simple Nature into the regions of lofty imagination... commonplace Nature becomes re-interpreted, vivified, and glorified for all of us. Throughout McTaggart's pictures runs a vein of kindly, democratic sentiment. Therefore, in landscape, he prefers homely and 'human' scenery, - leaving untouched the solitudes of Nature, however sublime."⁵³

In general terms, Burns was still an important source of inspiration for Scottish artists in the second half of the 19th century. Several artists illustrated volumes of Burns poetry. John Faed, for example, provided illustrations for Tam O'Shanter and the Witches and The Soldier's Return, two volumes published by the Royal Asssocation⁵⁴ in the 1850s. Paintings illustrating specific poems, particularly Tam O'Shanter and Auld Robin Gray, frequently appeared at the RSA annual exhibition. So too did paintings related to the life of Burns or accompanied by quotations from Burns' poetry.

Collections of Burns' poetry were still popular in the libraries of Scottish artists and collectors in the second half of the 19th century. George Simpson, for example, owned several editions of Burns. It is also reasonable to assume that McTaggart retained a copy of Nimmo's edition of Burns for himself.

As indicated, McTaggart had provided three illustrations for Nimmo's edition of Burns' works, published in 1868. In the same year he exhibited at the Royal Glasgow Institute a work (untraced) identified in the catalogue with the chorus of Burns' song Ca' the yowes to the Knowes. The Old Pathway (pl.10) and The Soldier's Return (pl.83) both appear to

derive in part from Burns' song The Soldier's Return or When Wild War's Deadly Blast. These will be examined in more detail in Chapter Fifteen.

The titles of several of McTaggart's later works also make reference to Burns. We Twa hae paidl't i' the Burn (1900), for example, is taken from the fourth verse of Auld Lang Syne. Other works with "poetic" titles such as Whar the Burnie rins into the Sea (1883) and When the Kye comes Hame (1901) allude to Burns.

Rather than the alienation of man in the face of nature, the harmony between man and nature seems to become a central theme for McTaggart. From an early work such as Spring of 1863 he used the image of childhood as an emotional link with the landscape. Although in Spring there are overtones of sadness, in the majority of works from the 1870s onwards (when perhaps the influence of Millais is beginning to recede) this is resolved into a less wistful, more joyful, mood. As in Spring the children continue to be country-bred, dressed in poor clothing but healthy and robust, suggesting a closer natural contact with the land. This is also suggested in The Harvest Moon where the lovers, hand in hand on the path, the workers bringing in the harvest, and the playing children in the foreground, are all part of an expression of natural harmony. In the use of this type of imagery, McTaggart seems to uphold a view of honest, unsophisticated rural life typified in Burns.

The celebration of the rustic, in opposition to the potentially evil influence of luxury and wealth, is a recurrent theme in Burns. The Cotter's Saturday Night is perhaps the summation of this point of view. Here Burns entreats of "Scotia! my dear, my native soil!" that,

"Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And O! may Heaven their simple lives prevent

From Luxury's contagion, weak and vile!"

Similarly, in The Twa Dogs, Burns presents a contrast between rich and poor, emphasising the virtues of peasant simplicity.

Whilst McTaggart's works do not encompass the breadth of observation of human life found in Burns' poetry, his pantheistic and essentially optimistic image of rural life continues elements of the poetic tradition of Burns. The language which McTaggart used in explaining his desire to find meaning within the commonplace and his belief that "It's the heart that's the thing" can be related back to Burns. Burns' approach to nature contains the basic ingredients of McTaggart's philosophy:

"Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then, tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire at Pleugh or cart,
My Muse, tho' hamely in attire, May touch the heart."

(From Epistle to J. Lapraik).

This view can perhaps also be detected as partly underpinning the attitude to the rural poor found in the work of a number of McTaggart's Scott Lauder contemporaries, particularly Chalmers and Cameron. Although Burns' poetry never became the same rich source of visual imagery which Scott had provided earlier in the century, he had been closely associated with Scottish painting since Wilkie and illustrative works such as The Cotter's Saturday Night established a tradition of depicting the rural poor which extended through Thomas Faed to George Paul Chalmers and Hugh Cameron. Chalmers' paintings The Legend (coll: National Gallery of Scotland) and The Lesson (coll: Dundee Art Galleries and Museums, Orchar Collection), for example, present images of the elder's wisdom and of religious observance within a rural setting, evoking Burns in spirit if not detail. Such imagery became

embodied in a widespread system of values in Scotland in the 19th century, upholding the rural poor as a model of social behaviour.⁵⁵

THE RURAL LANDSCAPE

Although it should be recognised that a particular trend in the depiction of the rural poor developed with the Scott Lauder school, McTaggart and his contemporaries were, in several respects, participating in a general view of rural life that had persisted throughout the nineteenth century in Britain as a whole. This was particularly evident as a form of rural idealism, linking man with nature in a pantheistic sense. Such a view had been typified at the beginning of the century by Wordsworth in the preface to his Lyrical Ballads where he stated that

"Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity... because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity"

and "because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature."⁵⁶

This poetic rusticism, which stressed the moral and physical benefits of the countryside, became increasingly formulated as a reaction against industrialisation and urban development, in which the dichotomy of town and countryside was made explicit. Amongst the many manifestations of this attitude was the appearance in 1865 of the first series of Country Life magazine. The issue of 1868 carried an article clearly outlining the virtues of the countryside. Rejecting any potential "glories" of town life, it is stated "Our

sympathies are rather with those who seek the most secret and exquisite haunts of Nature..” It is not, however, simply the picturesque, “the mere scenic effect of the theatre upon a vaster scale,” which is thought to be of value, but a deeper meaning couched in pantheistic language. The writer approves of those who “believe that in every age and clime..God has left some sermon in the stone - some book in the running brook, full of meaning to those who will listen to their voices.” “A closer alliance with Nature” is recommended: “We must go oftener than ever to Nature - not for amusement merely, but for her teaching - for that constant reference to first principles, without which there is little real happiness.”⁵⁷

Country life was regarded as a curative for the ills of city life in both a physical and spiritual sense. In 1888, Good Words celebrated the work of Elizabeth Rossiter, hailed as the originator of “Country Life for Poor Town Children”. It is observed “how utterly the sense of beauty, whether material or moral, seems to be crushed out of the lives of the poor in large towns.” and that in response to this Elizabeth Rossiter had drawn attention to “the needs of children for ‘nature as a teacher as well as a medicine chest’”.⁵⁸

In Scotland there were certainly some grounds for this general and widespread perception of the countryside. The standard of living of the rural poor was recognised as being good in relation to city slums. An investigation of the diet of Scottish agricultural labourers in 1868 revealed them to be “well fed”. Large and healthy children were recorded; a state of health which contrasted with the poorly-fed, rickett-suffering children of the city poor.⁵⁹

At the same time, however, there was a steady de-population of the countryside, which in itself contributed to the overcrowding and poor conditions in city slums. In 1851, thirty per cent of the male population of Scotland was directly

employed in agriculture. By 1901, this had dropped to fourteen per cent.⁶⁰ This was a Lowland phenomena as well as that of the Highlands. The poetic rusticism found in the arts could also, therefore, be interpreted as a form of middle-class nostalgia - the celebration of a way of life which it was clearly recognized was under threat.

McTaggart's move to Broomieknowe in 1889 could be seen as an escape from the city and the desire to actively participate in the rural ideal. For McTaggart, Broomieknowe represented a rural retreat, an early retirement, at the age of fifty-four, from city life. As Caw remarks, McTaggart's outlook from the garden of his house "Deanpark", "...might be right in the country save for a glimpse of the Bonnyrigg houses and steeple through the trees of an adjoining garden."⁶¹

This was, however, a very secure and tempered landscape. Although McTaggart's move may have been an escape from Edinburgh, it was not an escape to the "wilds". Far from being remote, Broomieknowe was only eight miles from Edinburgh on a direct suburban rail line, a journey of twenty minutes. It is significant for the future development of his work that McTaggart chose to move here rather than his native Kintyre, an area more remote and of potentially harsher appearance during the winter months. In McTaggart's pictures, Kintyre appears frequently as a summer landscape, reflecting its role as a holiday location. He rarely travelled to Kintyre before June or after September and thus avoided its bleaker aspects. At Broomieknowe, as well as being able to maintain closer links with Edinburgh life, McTaggart had the opportunity to portray a more cultivated landscape throughout the year. Even in winter he was able to select an undramatic, idyllic view of nature. Winter Broomieknowe (pl.79), for example, painted in 1896, transposes the "summer idyll" of children playing on the beach to a snowscape setting. Broomieknowe, therefore, appears to have been for McTaggart a rural setting in which the harmony between man and nature could be portrayed.

In order to preserve Broomieknowe as the location for an harmonious rural landscape, a somewhat selective vision was necessary. Adjacent Bonnyrigg was a busy and expanding town.⁶² McTaggart did not set out to depict at close quarters the people of the community in which he was living; nor do the more industrial aspects of the area, such as the nearby quarry or carpet factory, encroach upon his view. Although the Edinburgh to Polton railway line ran just at the end of his garden, McTaggart made no attempt to incorporate this "modern-life" motif into his work. At Broomieknowe, McTaggart's landscape subjects were confined mainly to his own garden, as in Blithe October (pl.62), 1891, or Consider the Lilies (pl.81), 1898, and the relatively unchanging views across the landscape to the Moorfoot hills, as in Cornfield (pl.77), 1896, and The Barley Field, Sandy Dean (pl.89). In this respect he appears to have been consciously depicting a specific view of nature, free of the impact of modern technology upon the landscape, which extended to the exclusion of agricultural machinery.

The same selective emphasis can be detected in the children who people McTaggart's landscapes. Children were a prominent feature of McTaggart's own life. Following his marriage to a young second wife, Majorie Henderson (the eldest daughter of Joseph Henderson, the seascape artist) in April 1886, he had eight children, the youngest being born in 1900. At a comparatively advanced age, therefore, he was surrounded by infants and young children.⁶³ Although McTaggart often used his own children as models for his pictures⁶⁴, he depicts them not as well-dressed, middle-class sons and daughters but as rural children.

The photographs which survive of his own family indicate that their usual form of attire consisted of smart dresses, pinafores and smocks, stockings and shoes or boots (pls.166 and 167). Often they also wear a hat of some description. In McTaggart's paintings, however, the children are most

frequently dressed in very simple rough clothing. This can be seen in early works such as Spring (pl.14), 1864, and, as far as McTaggart's increasingly suggestive technique allows, in mature works such as The Soldier's Return (pl.83), 1898. As well as the coarser clothing, the children in these works are often bare footed.

Although bare feet amongst children was still common in both rural areas and urban environments beyond 1900, it is a feature which carried particular historical, and perhaps picturesque, connotations about the rural poor in Scotland. In 1861, Cuthbert Bede had observed,

"It is this general absence in the Highland of shoes and stockings on the part of women and children (for you never see a barefooted man), that is striking to the English eye, which does not readily become accustomed to the novelty."⁶⁵

The practice was not restricted to the Highlands. When travelling through the Lowlands from England to Glasgow in the late 1830s Townsend remarked,

"The very circumstance of seeing so many weans and lasses paddling and tripping about with naked feet, gives one the idea of being in a strange land. The lower orders do not here, as in Wales, carry their shoes and stockings in their hands, as if in thrifty care of the most luxurious part of their apparel, but seem to discard these articles altogether."⁶⁶

McTaggart's portrayal of children in this way would therefore have had particular associations, arousing sympathy with a specific feature of Scottish rural life.

In more general terms McTaggart's portrayal of children could also be seen as part of a tradition of depiction of the rural poor, found in varying forms in the work of such artists as

Thomas Gainsborough, George Morland and William Collins. In the latter half of the 19th century the desire to portray the simplicity of rustic life is typified by the work of Myles Birkett Foster. Birkett Foster's Children Running down Hill (pl.111) of 1886, for example, could be compared with McTaggart's Cornfield (pl.77), 1896. They contain comparable ingredients and appear directed towards a similar end, the representation of a benign aspect of the countryside. Both works depict the acceptable face of rural poverty; the children are healthy rural stock dressed in coarse but not unkempt or ragged clothing. They form the human expression of a rich and secure landscape and appear to signify the harmony between man and nature, carrying overtones of the abstract ideals of freedom and happiness which the Victorian urban audience had readily come to associate with the countryside. The perceived purity and innocence of childhood, already a common motif in British art⁶⁷, was an obvious vehicle for expressing the simplicity of a rural way of life and as used by McTaggart and Birkett Foster, they become generalised iconographic symbols rather than individual characters.

Many of McTaggart's works portray the co-existence of work and play in the rural landscape. In some, such as Harvest Moon (pl.84) and Harvest at Broomieknowe (pl.78), this is done in very literal sense, with children playing in the foreground and harvest workers in the middle-distance. In others, such as Corn in the Ear (pl.54) and Autumn Showers (pl.57) the same harmony is implied by the presence of children playing within an explicitly agricultural environment.

John Barrell explores the notion of the rural ideal, particularly in Gainsborough's rural landscapes, in terms of the blending of images of work and play.⁶⁸ In this sense McTaggart's view of the countryside and the life of the non-urban lower social classes in general (including his scenes of fishing life) could be regarded as a form of

idealism. This does not mean that McTaggart's landscapes should be read in the same way as those of Gainsborough; attitudes to rural labour had substantially changed in the intervening 100 years and were complicated by the presence of the urban poor.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, McTaggart perpetuates the tendency to view the rural poor as happy and contented, linked with an image of a cultivated and productive landscape.

McTaggart's use of children in this context should, be distinguished from the work of several other Scottish artists depicting scenes of childhood in rural settings. Very rarely after 1870 does McTaggart present a child in a manner such as George Manson in The Cottage Door (p.125) or Thomas Faed in Where's My Good Little Girl? (pl.108). Faed and Manson concentrate the viewer's attention upon the specific expression and action of the child, around whom the content revolves. McTaggart's viewpoint is larger, encompassing the landscape and its relation to the child figures. Whereas the cottage settings of Faed and Manson are almost incidental, reflecting the recurrent taste for rustic scenes in the 19th century, McTaggart's depiction of rural figure and landscape refers beyond the individual action.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FIGURE AND SEASCAPE

INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters, reference to McTaggart's landscape work has been intended to include the depiction of the sea as well as land. However, seascapes, with or without boats or figures, form one of the most significant areas of McTaggart's art. The proportion of seascapes in McTaggart's extant work is large and they have helped to form the basis of his reputation. As such they deserve consideration apart from the more general examination of his approach to landscape painting.

When McTaggart first began in the 1870s to seriously consider the sea and fishing life as a subject, he was entering a field in which a number of trends in depicting the sea would have been evident. There was in Britain a strong tradition of painting ships at sea, derived partly from 17th century Dutch marine art. The work of Clarkson Stanfield (1793-1867), for example, would probably have been familiar to McTaggart. Stanfield was considered one of the foremost marine artists of his time, exhibiting 135 works at the Royal Academy between 1820 and 1867. His main rival and successor was Edward William Cooke (1811-1880). John Schetky (1778-1874), working very firmly in the Dutch tradition, was employed as Marine Painter by Queen Victoria. For McTaggart, such artists would have represented the established tradition of marine art.

In Scotland, there were a number of artists painting seascapes in the 1860s and '70s, including E.T. Crawford (1806-1885), James Cassie (1817-1879), Sam Bough 1822-1878), W.F. Vallance (1827-1904), Colin Hunter (1841-1904) and Robert Anderson (1842-1885).

Crawford had visited Holland in 1831 and on several subsequent occasions. This is reflected both in the style of his work - which indicates the influence of such artists as Backhuysen - and in his numerous views of Dutch beach, harbour and river scenes. Although his depiction of the effect of light on water sometimes reveals sensitive observation, his work would probably have held little of real interest for McTaggart.

Bough's depiction of the sea covered a wide range of subjects and moods. His first sea and fishing subjects were shown at the RSA in the early 1850s. He became a close friend of McTaggart, probably first meeting him when Bough, attracted by the presence of Robert Scott Lauder, attended the Trustee's Academy as a mature student in the late 1850s. As will be examined in Chapter Thirteen, his watercolour technique and drawings of the east coast fishing villages were perhaps of some influence upon McTaggart.

W.F. Vallance studied at the Trustee's Academy with McTaggart and began exhibiting seascapes at the RSA in the late 1850s. By the 1860s these works, often quite broadly handled, were attracting good press reviews and McTaggart himself was responding favourably to them, mentioning them in correspondence with George Simpson.¹

Amongst the Scottish artists it is perhaps Colin Hunter whose work bears closest comparison with that of McTaggart. Hunter first began exhibiting seascapes at the RSA in the late 1860s. His scenes of fishing life and of stretches of coastline capture something of the freshness and vitality that came to be characteristic of McTaggart's marine paintings. Break of Morning (pl.123), 1877, for example, can be compared with McTaggart's shore scenes of the late 1870s such as Machrihanish Bay (pl.39), 1878. A small panel Breakers (pl.122), is painted with a sense of direct observation which McTaggart would have admired.

However, whilst some points of contact between McTaggart and these artists might be established, they had little to offer in the development of McTaggart's depiction of figures within land/seascape settings and the concept of the "poetic" landscape. This was largely an internal process, evolving from his early genre work, owing as much to the influence of Millais' figure subjects as to any of the marine artists in McTaggart's immediate circle.

THE SEA IN McTAGGART'S EARLY WORK

The sea began to feature in McTaggart's work from the outset. Initially it simply formed, in many cases, the background to figure subjects such as The Past and the Present (pl.8). Its presence is implicit in Going to Sea (pl.5) of 1859, although as a subject for pictorial description it is merely glimpsed at the edge of the composition.

The most important work of this period dealing with a direct portrayal of the sea is The Wreck of the Hesperus (pl.9), 1861. Again the figure subject is the centre of attention but the depiction of the sea, and particularly the interaction of the sea and sky, set the mood of the picture. It prefigures the artist's later approach to seascape (as in the Emigrant series) in which the figures and seascape are bound by emotional significance. The seascape cannot be interpreted simply as background.

This is true also of works later in the 1860s, such as Enoch Arden (pl.16), 1866, and The Murmur of the Shell (pl.20), 1867, where although the mood is very different from that of The Wreck of the Hesperus, the seascape plays an essential role in determining the viewer's response to the painting.²

It is in the mid 1860s that scenes of fishing life first

begin to occur in McTaggart's work. A watercolour The Herring Fleet, Loch Ranza - Evening, for example, dates from 1866. The small oil Fish from the Boat (coll: Dundee Art Galleries & Museums, Orchar Collection) is dated by Caw to c.1867/8. It is not, however, until McTaggart's first summer visit to Tarbert in 1868, with subsequent visits in 1869 and 1871, that the subject begins to form a significant part of his output. Drawings and watercolours, such as Fishing Boats and Net Poles, Tarbert (coll: Mrs E McTaggart), 1869, record the activity of the herring fleet.

McTaggart's main canvases from Tarbert, however, develop upon his interest in figure subjects of children. Although, as Errington points out, children were involved in various activities surrounding the fishing industry from an early age, McTaggart's image of them at this stage frequently stresses the notion of play rather than of work.³ They can in no sense be interpreted as dispassionate records of children at work. Young Trawlers (pl.24) of 1869, for example, depicts a group of very young children (ranging perhaps from three to nine years old) engaged in play. Similarly Adrift (pl.26) is involved with childhood incident. Although McTaggart has used his observation of the boats, nets and drying poles developed in his drawings and watercolours of this period, the subject of these paintings is still clearly that of childhood. In this respect his work bears comparison with that of other Scott Lauder artists, such as Cameron and Chalmers, who were depicting scenes of rural childhood.

The Old Net (pl.22) of 1868 does focus to a greater extent upon the observed labours of a fisherman. Even here, however, the meaning of the picture is determined by the presence of the children and their wistful expressions as they watch the old fisherman mending his net. This picture can be interpreted in similar terms as The Past and the Present (pl.8) 1860, and Spring (pl.14) 1864. The implied contrast of youth and age and the transience of existence, derived in

part from Millais' Autumn Leaves, is still present.

J.C. HOOK

Probably one of the most important influences upon McTaggart's development of coastal subjects, and in particular the integration of child figures within a land/seascape setting, was the English artist James Clark Hook (1819-1907).

In his review of the pictures exhibited at the 1888 Glasgow International Exhibition, Walter Armstrong places J.C. Hook at the head of a new movement in British landscape painting, "and one is inclined to ascribe their excellence to the force of his example."⁴ For Armstrong, Hook was the "*facile princeps* in the school which counts Mr. Colin Hunter, Mr. Hamilton McCallum, Mr. McTaggart, Mr.[John] Smart, Mr. Alexander Fraser, Mr. J. Henderson - all Scots, be it noted - among its members."

In the same year, Hook was also the subject of a series of articles by A.H. Palmer in Hamerton's Portfolio magazine.⁵ Like Armstrong, Palmer places Hook at the head of a renaissance in British landscape painting, stressing his importance as a colourist.⁶

For McTaggart, Hook would have been important as an example of a *plein air* painter, experimenting with the study of colour in natural light at the same time as McTaggart was developing this interest in his own work. Palmer credits Hook with being one of the first artists to use a large easel out of doors, secured by a heavy suspended stone to enable the artist to "paint in places and in weather where one of the ordinary kind would not stand."⁷ This, claims Palmer, was a type used by most landscape artists by 1888 and it is certainly similar to that which McTaggart is seen using in the photograph of him painting on Machrihanish beach

in 1898 (pl.152).

In several respects, Hook's procedure and attitudes to painting can be compared with McTaggart's. He had a preference for painting out of doors. Like McTaggart, he spent family holidays during the spring at painting locations such as Clovelly and his sons posed for some of the figures in his pictures. On at least one occasion, Hook specifically dressed up one of his children in a miniature smock, hobnailed boots and battered hat.⁸ According to Palmer, Hook referred to the rural lower classes as possessing "the soil-ed beauty of nature" and, in Palmer's own estimation, such figures looked more "natural and homely" in a painting of the rural landscape.⁹ Prefiguring McTaggart's move from Edinburgh to Broomieknowe, Hook moved from London to a country retreat, first the village of Hambeldon in Surrey and later to Witley. British poets, especially Burns, figured high in his reading tastes.

There are strong parallels, therefore, with McTaggart's poetic ruralism; the desire to escape the environment of the city, the focus upon "rustic" subjects which were seen to have a more intimate connection with nature.

As suggested in Chapter Six, a first point of contact for McTaggart may have been Hook's picture A Widow's Son going to Sea (pl.116), exhibited at the RA in 1857, a possible source for McTaggart's own Going to Sea, begun in 1858.

McTaggart would almost certainly have been familiar with Hook's Luff Boy! (pl.120), exhibited at the RA in 1859 and widely available through engraving, lithograph and chromolithograph. This had been one of the celebrated paintings at the RA that year, receiving fulsome praise from Ruskin.¹⁰

The composition of Luff Boy!, cutting the lower portion of the boat by the frame, was later adopted by McTaggart in

several paintings. George Paul Chalmers also uses this type of composition in Girl in a Boat (pl.104) of 1867, although here the quiet, contemplative mood of the picture is very different from that sense of scudding movement created by Hook or by McTaggart in such a work as Man and Boy in a Boat (pl.32) of 1876.¹¹

McTaggart's correspondence with George Simpson reveals that he was very aware of Hook's work in the 1860s. Writing to Simpson, giving his opinions upon the Royal Academy exhibitions, McTaggart mentions Hook several times. In 1866, when McTaggart claims to have "enjoyed the RA very much", Hook is the first artist whose work - "some charming pictures, seaside subjects" - he speaks of after his own.¹² In 1868, he reflects the common reaction to the vividness of Hook's effects, remarking that "Hook's pictures are finer than usual [,] dangerous to look at in this hot weather, they would send you off to the sea-side at once, convenient or not."¹³

The fact that McTaggart singles out Hook is all the more significant given that his correspondence with Simpson is biased towards news of the progress of Scottish artists in the London exhibition. Millais is the only other English artist whom McTaggart mentions more frequently.

Works by Hook found their way into Scottish collections. It may perhaps have been McTaggart's enthusiasm for Hook which encouraged Orchar to acquire a Coast Scene by Hook (undated, Orchar Collection). The Aberdeen collector, Alexander MacDonald also developed an interest in Hook's work. He collected at least six Hooks, dating from the 1870s and early 1880s, five of which were coastal subjects. Sea Earnings, exhibited at the RA in 1870, and the small panel The Mushroom Gatherers (pl.119), the sketch for a picture exhibited at the RA in 1879, display the integration of seascape and figure incident typical of Hook's work and which can be seen developing in McTaggart's shore scenes.¹⁴

This aspect of Hook's seascapes, and a clue to their popularity at the time, can be detected in reviews of his work. Of the Prawn Catchers (pl.117) of 1863, The Art Journal remarked,

"his figures comport so completely with the landscape in which they are made to blend, nature and humanity meeting as it were each the other half way - the landscape dressed up gorgeously, while the peasants are rugged as the beaten rocks."¹⁵

Of Word from the Missing (pl.118), exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1877, another critic (referring to the subject matter of two children on the sea shore finding a message in a bottle) claims that "..this incident is most naturally painted, and we might regard the sea as a background to be looked at anon, but that Mr. Hook's coasts are not thus to be postponed."¹⁶

It is the unification of simple figure narrative and an accepted naturalistic and vivid depiction of seascape which provides stimulus for McTaggart's work. In his paintings of the late 1860s such as The Old Net (pl.22) the figure subject is still the primary interest of the painting. The seascape and the depiction of the shoreline complement the activity of the children, in whom individual expression, as the carrier of emotional content, is evident. However, the balance between children and seascape begins to subtly alter around the turn of the decade in a number of smaller works depicting children on the beach and in boats. On the White Sands (pl.25), which Caw dates to 1870, and Two Boys and a Dog in a Boat (pl.28), of c.1871, although facial expression is still present, are as much concerned with the atmosphere of the setting as with any psychological import of the figures. The image McTaggart conveys is more purely that of fishermen's children involved in play or fishing activity.

There is in these works a very natural interaction between figure and setting. It is interesting, however, that in On the White Sands, which has a fresh sketch-like appearance, the figure group is still carefully posed, the figure of the reclining boy reminiscent perhaps of a classical river god. In Something out of the Sea (pl.27), of c.1870-73, the sinuous line of the figure group is again self-conscious, perhaps indicating a continuing memory of study from classical casts such as the Laocoön.

Nevertheless, during the 1870s there is a shift of emphasis in composition. A transition between figures with landscape to landscape with figures takes place and it is likely that Hook was an important model in this development. Using the same basic figure and seascape ingredients, McTaggart often adopted a format similar to that of Hook. Bait Gatherers (pl.40), of 1879, for example, could be compared with Hook's Mushroom Gatherers (pl.119) or the earlier Prawn Catchers (pl.117), of 1863. In this type of work, McTaggart, like Hook, places his subjects in the foreground. They form a significant element of the composition, but do not overwhelm the depiction of the land/seascape beyond. The titles of both Hook's and McTaggart's works relate to the action of the figures. The figures which McTaggart chooses are, like Hook's, usually children, dressed in rough clothing. The intention with both Hook and McTaggart would seem to be the suggestion of the natural affinity between the children and setting, the "soil-ed beauty" to which Hook referred.¹⁷ This type of image contrasts with that seen in photographs of McTaggart's own children playing on the beach at Machrihanish (pls.153-155). Although McTaggart may have used his children as models, his depiction of childhood is firmly based within a lower social class.

McTaggart continued to develop this type of subject interest and composition in much later works. The Mussel Gatherers (pl.82) of 1895, for example, although using a broader technique can still be compared with The Bait Gatherers.

THE STORM

During the 1880s, however, a further compositional development occurred in McTaggart's seascapes, seen particularly in The Storm (pl.43). This work, which Caw claims was begun at Carradale in 1883, stands out as an unusual and important picture in the development of McTaggart's work.¹⁸ Direct stimulus for the subject-matter, as Errington¹⁹ suggests, may have been the International Fisheries Exhibition in London of 1883, a potential source of visual and verbal material on the dangers inherent in the fishing industry. It is very likely that McTaggart was in London at some time during the run of the exhibition, where three of his own works were included, and for which he had been awarded a gold medal.

There had also been an International Fisheries Exhibition in Edinburgh the previous year. By the 1880s herring fishing was undergoing a period of rapid growth and improvement. The general importance of the industry and the spread of its influence through many layers of Scottish society can be gauged by the very large number of visitors attracted to what was essentially a trade show.²⁰

With the exhibitions in Edinburgh and London, therefore, it is likely that the subject of Scottish fishing life would have been particularly prominent in McTaggart's mind as a source of imagery in this period. Both exhibitions, however, came as the culmination of an already longstanding interest in the subject.

The subject of bad weather at sea was something which had become established within McTaggart's visual vocabulary from the early 1870s. It became during this decade a distinct theme in his scenes of fishing life, found in oils such as Through Wind and Rain (pl.29) of 1875 and watercolours like Summer Storm, Carnoustie (pl.36) of 1877. As McTaggart

became more familiar with the day to day life of the fishing communities at Campbeltown, Carradale and particularly on the east coast, where the weather was significantly worse, he would have become increasingly aware of the dangers which fishermen faced at sea.

If The Storm is not an unusual picture in terms of its subject matter, it does mark a turning point in how the subject is treated. It differs from many of McTaggart's earlier works depicting the sea and fishing life in its composition and the relative scale of figures to landscape. McTaggart no longer focusses so closely upon the fishermen themselves, as had been the case with Through Wind and Rain or the small panel Man and Boy in a Boat (pl.32). The Storm is perhaps McTaggart's first major work in which the figures are subsumed within the landscape. It is the first of his "grand" compositions, taking in a broad sweep of land and sea.

In this work, the viewer is effectively distanced from the subject matter - looking down from a height at the scene below. Part of the reason for this would have been McTaggart's painting location. The land/seascape background of The Storm was initiated at Carradale, where in 1883, McTaggart rented a house high on the bluff overlooking the bay and harbour. It is probable that The Storm, and the other important Carradale picture of this time Wind and Rain, Carradale (pl.45), were painted from the garden of the house. This would have been a convenient viewpoint and would have naturally distanced the artist from his subject. It is nevertheless significant that McTaggart did not choose a viewpoint closer to the harbour.

Although The Storm can be interpreted as a narrative of human drama, the viewer is less involved with this drama than in earlier works. In Through Wind and Rain, the proximity of the boat and the viewpoint directly above the surface of the water place us in a position close to that of the

fishermen. In Man and Boy in Boat we view the scene from the boat itself. The figures are individuals and their experience is immediate to us.

The Storm, despite the turbulent brushwork (heightened in the second version of 1890) and the extremity of the natural phenomenon depicted, is not as threatening or expressive of the immediacy of situation as several of McTaggart's earlier fishing scenes. The effects of nature and the human drama are grander and more generalised. The work appears perhaps as a summation of experience, not merely the depiction of an individual drama. The Storm of 1883 prefigures McTaggart's later works of grandiloquent vision and design, moving away from the more intimate exploration of the relationship between man and nature found in many of his earlier works. As will be discussed in Chapter Eleven his compositional method in a work such as The Storm partly links him to older landscape traditions.

McTaggart's developing experimentation with composition did not involve a complete rejection of his earlier approach. Many of his smaller works and a few larger canvasses, such as Dawn at Sea, Homewards (pl.61) of 1891, continue to focus upon figure incident and a more direct experience of the life of the fishing communities of Kintyre and the East Coast.

THE PURE SEASCAPE

McTaggart's interest in pure seascape is an important question to consider in relation to his attitude to subject matter. It necessarily involves a shift from narrative subject to a work in which natural phenomena become the focus of interest.

Although Turner had earlier produced works which could be regarded as pure seascapes, the painting of seascapes without

the addition of ships, wreckage or figure subject was not common in Britain until around the 1870s. One of the first and most important British seascapes of this period in which ships or other anecdotal details were largely suppressed was John Brett's (1830-1902) large painting The British Channel seen from the Dorsetshire Cliffs (pl.101), shown at the Royal Academy in 1871.

The scene encompassed in Brett's picture is a wide stretch of open sea viewed from a height. With no prosaic foreground detail, nature is presented as a spectacle or scene of grandeur, a process enhanced by the size of the picture (approx. 42" x 84"). Although two small sails in the middle distance aid a sense of scale and provide asymmetrical balance, the lack of conventional contrasts of texture afforded by the inclusion of boats or a section of coastline, focusses attention upon the portrayal of light and atmosphere. In 1886, Brett was to observe that "sentiment in landscape is chiefly dependent on meteorology."²¹

Henry Moore (1831-1895) was also painting pure seascapes in the late 1860s and early '70s. Such works as Seascape off Hastings (pl.137), dated 1871, demonstrate a simple compositional format, again stressing the role of the picture as a study of atmospheric conditions, of the effect of light upon water. Moore regularly sketched from nature and executed several of his studies from a boat. His mature work was often on a similarly imposing scale as that of Brett, culminating in two of his most feted pictures: Mount's Bay, exhibited at the RA in 1886 and The Clearness after Rain, exhibited at the RA in 1887.

McTaggart would probably also have been aware of Whistler's seascapes. Not necessarily always completely devoid of figures, the fluid technique and simple banded horizontal compositions of Whistler's seascapes compare to McTaggart's experiments with the subject. McTaggart may have seen Whistler's Sea and Rain (pl.148), 1865, exhibited at the RA

in 1867. The cool hues and limited tonal range of this work may have influenced McTaggart's painting of the sea in the background of such pictures as The Murmur of the Shell, 1867. McTaggart would also have had opportunity to see Whistler's seascapes and river nocturnes, exhibiting similar qualities in the 1870s. Trouville, 1865, (coll: Art Institute of Chicago), for example, was exhibited at the Society of French Artists Exhibition at New Bond Street in 1873 and Nocturne in Blue and Silver, c.1871/2 (coll: Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts) at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1879. In general, Whistler's work was frequently exhibited in London in the 1870s, particularly at the Grosvenor Gallery, the Dudley Gallery and the Flemish Gallery, where he held his first one-man exhibition in 1874.

McTaggart's first significant seascapes without figure incident date from the late 1870s. Machrihanish Bay (pl.39) is signed and dated 1878. It is a view looking across the bay towards the headland at the northern end. Painting in quite a high key, within a narrow tonal range, McTaggart has used smooth strokes of colour combined with impastoed areas of white highlighting the waves breaking on the shore. The most obvious comparison is with Whistler's seascape sketches, such as Sea and Rain, which employ similarly long horizontal strokes of paint. The Wave (pl.42) of 1881 is perhaps even closer to Whistler in technique and general effect. The composition is simpler than that of Machrihanish Bay, the narrow strip of foreground shore merges more fully, in tone and hue, into the seascape itself. The paint structure is simple, colour being applied in long liquid strokes.

Although there is similarity between these pictures and Whistler's seascapes, their place within McTaggart's work relates closely to techniques evolved in McTaggart's seascapes with figures. As suggested above, McTaggart may already have adapted knowledge of Whistler's seascapes in the background of figure subjects as early as 1866. In Something out of the Sea (pl.27) of c.1870-73, McTaggart is beginning

to make some use of long horizontal strokes in the depiction of the waves, although these are incorporated into an overall more varied range of brushwork. The composition also, despite the inclusion of children, prefigures that of The Wave, with a simple horizontal structure and the horizon approximately two thirds of the way up the picture. By 1879, with The Bait Gatherers (pl.40), the brushwork describing the sea has become longer and more fluid and bears more direct comparison with such a work as The Wave. The technique and basic composition of The Wave is not therefore confined in McTaggart's output to pure seascape. It originates in and develops in parallel with his figurative works.

Was the lack of figure incident in seascapes such as The Wave important to McTaggart's conception of the subject? His possible intention in introducing a figure subject into a seascape can be examined in two related pictures Summer Sundown, Tir nan og (pl.41), dated by Caw to c.1880 and Away to the West (pl.75), dated by Caw as 1895.²²

The earlier work is probably that which Caw identifies as Summer Sundown, Machrihanish.²³ The picture apparently remained in the artist's possession, without any subsequent repainting.²⁴ It would seem, however, that he was later tempted to experiment with the addition of figures by using the original picture as the basis for the later work Away to the West.

The second work is very similar in palette and in basic composition. There is the same juxtaposition of yellow/green and purple along the horizon and the positions of the waves, rocks and clouds are almost identical in each picture. Whilst it is possible that the earlier painting had been executed out of doors, the later work would almost certainly have been a studio picture. In the painting of the seascape itself, McTaggart seems to have intended to heighten the natural effect of the earlier work. In Away to the West, the light

is more lucid; McTaggart has toned up his palette slightly, using more white, especially in the touches of highlight.

His reassessment of the earlier picture, however, also extended to the addition of figures and a boat. The position of the figures had been worked out on the 1895 canvas before the land/seascape was painted up around them and it is possible that yet another, smaller version recorded by Caw was an intermediate study.²⁵

In Away to the West, three of the four figures look out to sea, enhancing the contemplative mood of the original picture and highlighting the interaction between man and nature. There is a link between this work and other seascapes of the late 1880s and 1890s, such as Away O'er the Sea, Hope's Whisper (pl.56) in which figures, placed in the foreground, gaze out over the water.

Although there is no record of whether McTaggart considered that poetic effect was, in this instance, strengthened, at least one critic felt that the lack of figures in a seascape by McTaggart meant that the picture was less "poetical". In his review of the RSA exhibition of 1889, Patrick Geddes remarks that

"McTaggart's 'Wave' stands above all others in its perfectly artistic seizure of the essential truth and beauty of at once the momentary, yet the most eternal of nature-processes, the mighty pulse-throb of the sea. Yet for complete poetry we need humanity, and this time Mr. McTaggart's seaside playfellows are not at hand."²⁶

However, McTaggart did continue to paint seascapes without figure incident. Some of the most important of these are the large seascapes painted at Kintyre in the late 1890s and 1900s, including A Westerly Gale (coll: Artist's Trustees, 1917) of 1897, And All the Choral Waters Sang (pl.87) of 1902, The Paps of Jura (pl.86) of 1902, and The Summer

Sea (pl.92) of 1907.

In these, McTaggart's interest in transient atmospheric effect is evident. He did not, however, approach such works as exercises in empirical observation. An indication of his continued "poetic" conception of land and seascape is suggested in the title which he gave to one of the most important of these later works. And all the Choral Waters Sang, 1902, was painted, according to Caw, entirely in the open at Machrihanish, where by then McTaggart was regularly staying during June. The title of the painting is a corruption of the line "And all the choral water sang" from the 4th verse of Swinburne's poem At a Month's End in the second series of Poems and Ballads, first published in 1878.²⁷ There is no intended reference by McTaggart to the content of the poem, which deals with the final meeting of two lovers, but there are comparisons in mood and between McTaggart's and Swinburne's imagery of the sea.

Although not the subject, the sea provides the stage for Swinburne's At a Month's End; the first seven verses in particular are an atmospheric evocation of the sight and sound of the seashore. The setting is at night, whereas McTaggart's painting shows the sea under full sunlight, but Swinburne's free use of rhythm and alliteration - for example, the "serried/ spears of the tide storming the shore" and "with chafe and change of surges chiming,/ the clashing channels rocked and rang" - parallel McTaggart's painterly description. It is not surprising that McTaggart would have been drawn to this poem in particular and to Swinburne's work in general. Swinburne represents a literary counterpart to McTaggart's pictorial fascination with the sea and, despite different standpoints, their involvement with the ocean finds common ground.

Swinburne is probably the one Victorian poet most readily associated with the sea. His love for it is repeatedly expressed in his correspondence and poetical works; and his

observation of it is intense and visual. Many passages that refer to the sea achieve the combination of direct observation and emotional response that could be regarded as underlying McTaggart's later seascapes. The work of both artist and poet was the result of close involvement with their subject matter.²⁸

Swinburne's descriptive passages frequently concern the effect of light on water. For example, in The Sunbows, from the series of poems A Midsummer Holiday, he describes,

"Dawn is wild upon the waters where we drink of dawn today:
Wide, from wave to wave rekindling in rebound through radiant air,
Flash the fires unwoven and woven again of wind that works in play,"

and "Light that leaps and runs and revels through the springing flames of spray."²⁹

Such descriptions could form a literary text for McTaggart's studies of light on the sea, such as The Wave (pl.42) of 1881, or Summer Sunlight (pl.88) of 1903 and the large late seascapes such as And all the Choral Waters Sang itself.

Swinburne refers to sunlight as "The Saviour and Leader and singer, the living and visible God," whose "Shrine is the Sea."³⁰ Similarly, Caw quotes McTaggart as referring to the sun as "the oldest and perhaps the most easily understood of religions."³¹ Although McTaggart evolved this viewpoint from within a framework of Christian belief and Swinburne primarily as an atheist, there is a similar pantheistic quality in their approach to nature.

SECTION III

LANDSCAPE TECHNIQUE

CHAPTER EIGHT

INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF TECHNIQUE

Writing in 1889, the author of an unsigned article on "Art for Art's Sake" observed that,

"We hear the principle advanced that subject counts for nothing, manner of treatment for everything; the imprint of the artist only, not of the man, is looked for in his creation; and thus the artistic interest of a picture is made to exclude the human."¹

It is an indication of the changes and state of upheaval in aesthetic values taking place in Britain in the late nineteenth century, that these remarks appeared in The Scottish Art Review, a magazine closely associated with the "New Art" of the young Glasgow artists and the formal values which the writer is questioning.

Partly through the internal development of critical discourse, stretching back through the nineteenth century, and partly in response to the New Art itself (such as that of Whistler, Degas and Monet), the new values emerging in the 1880s and '90s placed much greater emphasis upon technique and formal considerations, sometimes appearing to claim that subject-matter was solely a pretext. In his study of Velasquez, Stevenson had stated that

"Subjects, however grand in title and dignified in historical association, are valuable to the painter in proportion as they give him a pretext for making the most of what is beautiful in his own art. No subject in itself can make or mar art; subject is indifferent except for its favourable or unfavourable effect on the artist."²

The reviewer of the Standard, commenting upon Durand-Ruel's

Impressionists exhibition of 1882, whilst praising the work of the French artists and their courage in addressing "the artistic problems of our modern life, and our artificial society", concentrates upon the artists' technical achievements. Description of the subject is not simply an inventory of content as might have been found in a conservative review of an anecdotal narrative picture; it is woven into the reviewer's admiration for technical accomplishment. He observes of a work by Degas, an "astonishing picture of two fashionable young women trying on bonnets in a milliner's shop", that "Half the design is occupied by the milliner's table, on which lies a store of her finery. Silk and feathers, satin and straw, are indicated swiftly, decisively, with the most brilliant touch." Another work, it is remarked, is "devoted entirely to the play of light and shadow on the front of one opera box and in the recession of another. Every tone, every gradation, is followed with subtle skill, and the choice of theme finds justification in the success of the treatment."³ As with Stevenson, therefore, subject was important in terms of what the artist's technique could reveal.

Such ideas became widespread throughout Britain. In Scotland by the late 1880s the young artists of the Glasgow School had come to see these concerns in terms of Whistlerian aesthetics, stressing the internal harmony of form and colour. John Lavery claimed of Whistler that "we recognized in him the greatest artist of the day and thought his 'Ten o'clock' lecture as the Gospel of Art".⁴ In this lecture, delivered in 1885 and published in 1888, Whistler asserted that the subject matter of art was immaterial and, alluding to Ruskin, that it was wrong to confuse art with utility or see it as a means of moral reform. He played down the descriptive function of art, claiming that nature merely provided the basic elements of a picture.⁵

The influence of these ideas, in a tempered form, are found in a paper given in Edinburgh by the young artist W D MacKay

(1844-1924). Addressing the subject of "Traditional and Modern Methods in Oil Painting", Mackay, whose own work was influenced by that of McTaggart⁶, aligns himself with the new critical standards against what he saw as the anecdote-seeking critics. He questions "Am I making too much of mere technique"⁷ and observes,

I hope I do not undervalue that element of sentiment and pathos which has been so conspicuous in the works of some of our great moderns, but I cannot admit that it atones, in any degree, for the want of the painter's power."⁸

As will later be argued, it would be overly simplistic to assume that, as formalist criticism began to fully develop in opposition to subject-orientated conservative aesthetics, there was a pure dialectic of content and form. Nevertheless, the notion of "technique" assumed a new importance in British art, particularly as argument built up around the issue of "impressionism".

To term McTaggart as an "impressionist", as many have done, necessarily involves reference to issues of technique. In this section, therefore, the development of McTaggart's technique is studied in relation to the critical standards which became associated with the New Art and "impressionism". Key concepts of "effect" and "unity", which, although they can be traced back through British art practice and theory in the nineteenth century, became of particular relevance in the discussion of "impressionism". Colour theory also entered into the debate and ideas of colour theory which would have been available to McTaggart in the second half of the nineteenth century are also examined here. In the first instance, however, the possible exposure of McTaggart to French Impressionist art, particularly that of Monet, will be discussed.

CHAPTER NINE

McTAGGART AND IMPRESSIONISM

By the time of his death in 1910, McTaggart's name had become closely associated with the term "impressionism." From the 1880s it had been widely used as a reference point when discussing his work¹, although its application varied according to each critic's understanding of the concept.

Although the term "impressionism" is now commonly associated with the artists who emerged in France in the 1860s and who were subsequently referred to as "les impressionistes" after their first group exhibition in 1874, the potential for an "impressionist" approach to painting existed in Britain during the same period.

Thus, the examination of any apparently Impressionist influenced works, such as those of William McTaggart, occurring in England or Scotland in the second half of the nineteenth century does not rest simply upon establishing direct contacts which British artists may have had with progressive French painting. The more general artistic aims and critical attitudes which governed the production of art-works, particularly landscapes, in Britain at this time should be the basis for any such study.

As an examination of McTaggart's pictures will show, his development of what might be termed an "impressionist" technique was a gradual process, not the result of a dominant external influence. Moreover, it was absorbed within an aesthetic framework in which subject matter remained of great significance. McTaggart's approach to the "poetic landscape", as defined in Section I, provided the context in which new techniques were refined.

It is still important, however, to attempt to establish

whether McTaggart may have been influenced by seeing works by Monet and the French Impressionists. Caw deliberately presents McTaggart as an independent, claiming that it was not until the turn of the century that McTaggart actually saw a Monet.²

Since Caw, the view of McTaggart as an isolated innovator has largely been sustained. In recent years, William Hardie, for example, claims that

"If one is to speak, as some have done, of McTaggart's work as "Scottish Impressionism", the term is justified at least in the national sense that outside influences which might have operated on McTaggart seem in fact to have had very little bearing on his work: he demonstrated an almost complete indifference to contemporary developments abroad."³

As examined in Chapter Three, there are perhaps grounds for accepting such an argument. McTaggart rarely made any trips abroad or even, in the latter part of his career, outside Scotland. He spent much time, away from other artists, at his favourite painting grounds in Argyll and the Lothians. He resisted the temptation of wealth and fame to be gained by following his contemporaries Orchardson, Pettie and McWhirter down to London and election to the Royal Academy. He was also isolated in the sense that he seldom exhibited beyond the major exhibitions in Scotland, except for a succession of works at the Royal Academy between 1866 and 1875.

This does not necessarily mean, however, that McTaggart was not receptive to new artistic ideas from England or abroad. The portrayal of McTaggart as an independent has tended to block a clear assessment of where his art stands in relation to continental developments and has even obscured some aspects of the progress of his work from within a British context.

McTaggart would have had the opportunity of seeing French and continental art from early in his career. Numerous works by contemporary Dutch and French artists could be found in Scottish collections and were displayed in Scottish exhibitions from the 1860s.⁴ In London there would have been the chance to see an even more representative selection of foreign works in the commercial galleries. Notable amongst these were the French Gallery on Pall Mall and the Goupil Gallery, the Paris-based firm with a branch in the Hague as well as London. Contemporary foreign works were also being shown at the McLean Gallery and the Flemish Gallery. In the 1870s a large number of French paintings were shown by Durand-Ruel in the Society of French Artists exhibitions at 168 New Bond Street.

Given the general interest in Dutch and French painting in Scotland, it is likely that McTaggart and other Scottish artists would have visited these galleries, particularly the Durand-Ruel exhibitions in premises close to the Royal Academy. The Society of French Artists exhibitions, like the shows at Goupils and the French Gallery, were reasonably well publicised and reviewed in the art press.

At these exhibitions, landscapes often tended to be dominant; there were examples of Troyon, Rousseau, Dupre, Diaz, Corot and Courbet. Also included by Durand-Ruel in the 1870s were works by the young French Impressionists. Pissarro, for example, contributed three works to the first exhibition in 1870, nine in 1872, four in 1873, eight in 1874 and two in 1875.

Although Durand-Ruel's Society of French Artists exhibitions ceased after 1875, his successor, Deschamps, continued to show French work on the premises. Included amongst the exhibition of 1876 at the Deschamps Gallery were works by Degas, Manet, Sisley and Berthe Morisot as well as the more familiar stock of Rousseau, Corot and Bastien-Lepage.

It is questionable, however, to what extent McTaggart, if he did visit any of these exhibitions, would have seen Impressionist works as being of unique significance. Certainly, at this stage, when their paintings were mentioned in the press, no particularly strong reaction is indicated.⁵ In the context of other French works, such as those by Corot and the Barbizon School, paintings by Monet and the Impressionist group may simply at first have been viewed in terms of problems of landscape painting already familiar to a British audience.

In 1883, however, Durand Ruel renewed his attempt to introduce Impressionist paintings into London on a large scale. Again in New Bond Street, the exhibition of 65 works by the "Society of French Impressionists" was open from April to July 1883. Promoted by advertisements in The Times, it was well publicised, receiving both praise and ridicule from the critics. The type of brushwork and the use of colour were features of the paintings which drew much attention.

What McTaggart would have read in the introduction to the exhibition catalogue would have been of direct relevance to his own interests. As will be examined in a subsequent chapter, the use of colour was a fundamental concern for McTaggart and the play of light and weather conditions upon a subject were already evident in his work. The Impressionists were introduced in terms to which McTaggart would have responded.

"..new and unusual though their art may be, the connoisseur will recognize in the wonderful effects of light, the complete command of colour, and the faculty of delineating the more floating aspects to which landscape and the human figure are susceptible, a very interesting and distinctive factor in the art-work of modern times."⁶

It was certainly the colour and atmospheric effect in the

works of Monet to which other visitors reacted. In a copy of the exhibition catalogue held at the National Art Library (Victoria and Albert Museum) are a series of pencilled marginal notes, made apparently by a visitor to the exhibition. Numerous remarks are made next to the paintings by Monet. Of exhibit no.1, Bord de Falaises à Tourville (sic), it is noted "good colour and effect." Of Petit bras à Argenteuil (no.16), it is remarked "Excellent colour. Effect of light and atmosphere very well given" and of Bateaux Voiliers (no.39), "tone generally excellent. Water and reflections very well painted."⁷ Press reviews of the exhibition dwell upon the same issues.⁸

A letter to McTaggart from John Pettie, postmarked in London on June 13th 1883 indicates that McTaggart, although no longer exhibiting at the Royal Academy, was in London during the run of the Impressionist exhibition, probably for a week or so in June.⁹ George Buchanan, in one of the few attempts to refute the common denial that McTaggart was ever influenced by French painting, suggests that McTaggart, being curious about new ideas, would have visited the exhibition and reacted positively towards the works shown.¹⁰ He correlates this with Caw's statement that, in the summer of 1883, McTaggart began to work on large scale paintings out of doors. According to Caw, prior to 1883 McTaggart's larger paintings were usually begun in the studio and only worked on out of doors when considerably advanced.¹¹ Working at Carradale in August and September 1883, however, he painted large canvases such as The Storm (pl.43) and Wind and Rain, Carradale (pl.45) and Fishing in a Groundswell, Carradale (pl.51), on the spot in difficult weather conditions. This, claims Buchanan, represents the emergence of McTaggart's mature oil painting style. Without consciously applying French Impressionist principles, he found reassurance from the paintings he saw in London and proceeded to paint major works directly from nature in one session to capture a new immediacy of effect.

An attempt, however, must be made to better document McTaggart's technique and working methods in order to establish what changes did take place in his work of this period. It is very unlikely that McTaggart suddenly evolved the practice of painting large works out of doors in 1883. His painting methods throughout his career were complex and it is often difficult to establish precisely what was painted in the studio and what was done outside. By 1883, McTaggart had come to realise that open-air effect wasn't necessarily dependent upon painting in the open air. It is probable that the Carradale paintings were reworked to a large extent in the studio. It was a number of years before these pictures were publicly exhibited, and McTaggart would therefore have had the opportunity to continue to work on them over a long period of time. Direct *plein-air* painting was not a method to which McTaggart rigorously adhered in later years. His methods in the later 1880s and '90s combine a substantial amount of studio work with outdoor study. The 1890 version of The Storm, for example, would appear to be a reworking of the earlier picture completed solely in the studio.

The brushwork in The Storm (pls.43 & 43a) of 1883 is complex and does not suggest a simple direct, one session, painting method. It shows, for example, little *alla prima* brushwork. McTaggart has used fairly thin, dry strokes of paint applied in complex layers in which previous brushwork has been allowed to dry. There is a clear painting of wet over dry, seen especially in the dry scumbling in the right foreground. The ground shows through in several areas where dry paint has been scumbled onto the canvas. These areas, allowing the light canvas to show through, often establish highlights, as do a few lines scratched through the paint surface. The outlines of the figures are generally painted over the landscape but the landscape is slightly reworked in some areas to accommodate them, as for example in the mid foreground where impasto white is brought up over the boat and figures. The overall impression is that of a painting which has been extensively worked over a period of time,

adapting and altering the effects produced.

The paint structure of Wind and Rain, Carradale (pls.45 & 45a) also apparently begun in 1883, although less complex than that of The Storm, still indicates that the picture was worked in several sessions.

Although 1883 cannot be identified as the beginning of McTaggart's interest in large scale *plein air* painting, it is possible to isolate more specific changes in his technique at this time. It is in his paintings started at Carradale in 1883, most notably The Storm, that he began to build up a dense network of interwoven strokes of colour, giving a rich vibrant texture to the surface. He was already in works of the previous decade using touches of broken colour, as in The Young Fishers (pl.31) of 1876, but it is not until such a work as The Storm that he begins to fully explore the effects produced by dense overlapping strokes of colour, often contrasting hues (seen particularly in the areas of foliage).

The fact that this technique occurs in 1883 might suggest that McTaggart may have derived some inspiration from seeing Impressionist works in London. Included amongst Monet's seven works at the Durand-Ruel exhibition of 1883 was a picture listed in the catalogue as Petit bras à Argenteuil (cat. no.16). It is possible that this work is the oil painting Effet d'Automne à Argenteuil (pl.136), of 1873, now in the Courtauld Collection. Wildenstein lists the Courtauld picture as probably being that exhibited by Durand-Ruel in 1883.¹² This is substantiated by Frederick Wedmore's description of the painting in his article on the 1883 exhibition in the Fortnightly Review, where he comments that Monet's Petit bras de la Seine,

"is of palpitating light and glowing hue. The whole of one side of the canvas is filled with flame-coloured autumn trees which throw their bright reflections of a rosier

flame-colour upon a broad river-water otherwise turquoise and opal."¹³

There are few other works by Monet of the 1870s or early 1880s to which such a description would apply so well.

In the Courtauld picture Monet uses varied brush strokes to create an impastoed web of shifting colour similar to that found in McTaggart's 1883 Storm. Although Monet is attempting to portray a different quality of light, there are comparisons to be made in the way that they build up the picture surface. Like the McTaggart, Effet d'Automme has a complex paint structure.¹⁴ It is by no means a simple, even *tache* which might commonly be associated with French Impressionism.¹⁵ The quality of the paint ranges between thin dry brushwork and thick impasto. The brushstrokes in the sky are blended. In the water there are broad horizontal strokes, and shorter dabs and curls in the foliage. Diagonal scoring through the paint surface, similar to that in The Storm, can be found, most noticeably in the trees on the right but also in the main body of the trees on the left. This is not a straightforward wet upon wet technique. Like McTaggart's picture, it shows evidence of having been very extensively worked.

Given McTaggart's interest in colour¹⁶, he must, if he did see this picture, have been fascinated by the technique which Monet used to achieve his vibrant effect. The dominant light blue and golden hues are applied in a high key tone in a very narrow tonal range. A mixture of hues are interlaced, especially in the foliage. In the trees on the left are pinks, greens and yellows; in those on the right are darker blues, purples as well as yellow and ochre. The result is a bright, glowing effect of colour.¹⁷

It is this remarkable use of colour to which Wedmore referred. The Petit bras de la Seine, he claimed, "shows Monet to be not only skilled in colour...but to be a

colourist apart, a man of originality.."18 There was other critical praise for this particular work. The critic of the Standard, for example, found the Petit bras to be "one of the finest and most luminous examples of his work"¹⁹ and the critic of The Artist regarded it as "by far the finest of Monet's pictures...extraordinary in strength and delicacy, and in colour admirable."²⁰

The question of comparison between the technique of Monet and McTaggart is complicated by the fact that related techniques can be found in the works of other Edinburgh-trained artists and in colour theory available to McTaggart. This will be dealt with in a later chapter on colour theory and technique. Nevertheless, the correspondence with a work which is known to have attracted interest when exhibited and which McTaggart would have perceived as being relevant to his own line of development, suggests that this may have been a specific instance of contact. That The Storm is the most extreme example of this particular colour technique found in McTaggart's work, either before or after 1883, would tend to support this view.

This did not mean, however, that McTaggart adopted this technique throughout his work in 1883. It would be misleading to place undue emphasis upon any one instance of McTaggart being apparently influenced by French Impressionist painting. Far from using a single marked style at this point, McTaggart was at a period of intense experiment. The highly worked surface of The Storm was not carried through into all his compositions of 1883. What he may have learnt from specific works by Monet formed the basis for experimentation not the parameters of a new style.

North Wind, Kilbrannan Sound (pl.44) was also painted in 1883 and, like The Storm, but for different reasons, stands out as an unusual picture in McTaggart's *oeuvre*. Although by 1883 McTaggart was frequently using quite broad and loose brushwork, this painting is significantly coarser in handling

than other medium-sized works of the time or even later in McTaggart's career. Particularly when compared with the complex paint layer of The Storm it appears very distinctive in brushwork and colour application. It seems to have been painted mainly wet on wet with selected areas of thin underpainting and was perhaps painted mainly *alla prima* out of doors on the headland at Carradale. The brushwork varies to describe form; the strokes follow the contours and structure of the rocks and longish horizontal strokes are used to depict the sea. Colour is applied in rough daubs rather than the interweaving of colour-strokes in The Storm. Adding to the impression of crudeness is the lack of modulation of hue. Local colour stands out in three main zones - light blue sky, deep blue sea and golden brown/grey headland - in which variations of hue and tone are limited. The small boats are dashed in with quick strokes of orange pigment.

A related but less coarsely painted work is Fishing in a Groundswell, Carradale (pl.51), also begun in 1883. Here the brushstrokes are less uniformly applied and the colours somewhat more blended. Although still having the appearance of an *alla prima* painting, the work is dated 1883-86. This extended painting date possibly refers to a compositional reworking. The boat in the foreground was painted directly onto the canvas ground. The boat behind it, however, was added on top of the sea, perhaps as a compositional change at the same time the canvas was let out on each side. This reworking, however, does not resemble the extensive paint build-up of The Storm. Like North Wind, Kilbrannan Sound, the picture retains a very direct and simply constructed appearance and utilises a relatively narrow range of hues.

McTaggart continued to experiment with various techniques and by the 1890s he is often using a very loose form of brush-work in which a unifying tonality is established by large areas of bare canvas, as in The Sailing of the Emigrant Ship (pl.72) of 1895. This is quite different from

the complex layering of pigment found in the The Storm or the large strokes of colour in North Wind.

The problem, therefore, seems to be not simply a matter of establishing what direct contacts McTaggart might have had with the work of French Impressionists but in examining the more general artistic aims and critical attitudes of the time. Although specific contacts may have occurred and should not be ignored, it is the broader basis for the development of McTaggart's "impressionism", encompassing a wide range of technical approach, which is of more importance. McTaggart's painting developed within a critical context which already placed value upon the the concerns which came to be associated with "impressionism". This is seen, in particular, in the concepts of "effect" and "unity" in landscape painting.

CHAPTER TEN

EFFECT, IMPRESSION AND FINISH

INTRODUCTION

McTaggart's approach to landscape developed at a time when the aims of landscape painting in Britain were under continual review. The concepts, in particular, of "effect" and later "impression" were central to this discussion. The former term was common at the beginning of McTaggart's career but it was not until the 1880s that the "impression" or the idea of "impressionism" became familiar in Britain.

Nevertheless the discussion of "impressionism", emerging from the New Art criticism of the late century, was concerned with many of the approaches to landscape which lay behind the notion of "effect." The application of "impression" can be closely related to that of "effect", although "effect" usually had much broader implications and did not always carry the idea of transitoriness which "impression" frequently implied.

As examined here, both terms will be taken to relate to the perception and depiction of the broad or general relationships of tonal, and sometimes colour, masses in a scene. In Principles of Effect and Colour, as applicable to Landscape Painting, first published in 1838, the landscape watercolourist Giles Firman Phillips (1789-1867) defined effect as the "skilful management of the light and shade of any arrangement of objects, with a view to strengthening the character of the subject, and rendering it grateful to the feelings of the spectator."¹

In The Theory and Practice of Landscape Painting in Watercolours, 1855, George Barnard defined general effect as "The impression produced upon the mind by the sight of a picture" but distinguishes this from pictorial effect or

effects which

"we take to mean some predominating light and shade or colour in addition to those belonging to, or produced by, objects in the picture. This may influence a part or the whole of a scene, and may represent a pictorial phenomenon of nature, such as the rays of the sun darting through a cloud, or from behind a mountain at sunrise..."²

The application of such terms at the time was, however, imprecise. There was an underlying adherence to the value of what could be broadly termed a naturalistic truth to nature. But how best to achieve "effect" or "impression", whether in oil or watercolour, was not always clear.

In many instances both the terms "impression" and "effect" in British art criticism were related to a technique seen to be exclusive of high "finish". In general terms, the idea of "finish" appears to have been closely related to the prevailing work ethic of the Victorian period. For many collectors and critics a picture could only be valuable, in aesthetic or moral as well as monetary terms, if there was evidence of the work which the artist had put in. Proof of this work could readily be detected in pictures such as Frith's Derby Day (coll: Tate Gallery), 1858. Desire for evidence of the artist's labour belonged to the same attitude which espoused Samuel Smiles advocacy of self-help and Thomas Carlyle's support of work and of craftsmanship found, for example, in Past and Present (published 1843). Carlyle's definition of the value of labour could be seen to correspond in part to Ruskin's advocacy of the study of nature and the attainment of "truth". Carlyle states that, "there is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in Work," which is "in communication with Nature; the real desire to get Work done will itself lead one more and more to truth, to Nature's appointments and regulations, which are truth."³

To some extent this attitude to the value of labour in

painting was based upon, or at least found justification in, a distorted reading of Ruskin. Certainly Ruskin's advocacy of craftsmanship, both in an individual work of art and in broader social terms, could be seen as justification for the necessity of honest workmanship in a painting or a piece of architecture. Ruskin frequently admits to the positive effect that a "sense of human labour and care spent" can have upon the mind.⁴ "The delight with which we look on the fretted front of Rouen Cathedral depends in no small degree on the simple perception of time employed and labour expended in its production."⁵ Similarly, Ruskin's insistence upon the study of natural form and his support for the Pre-Raphaelites could be interpreted as the promotion of a detailed and well "finished" style of art. Such an extreme position was embodied, at least in the public's perception, in the Whistler-Ruskin trial of 1878. Ruskin had first criticised Whistler in the context of praise for a mediaeval system of craftsmanship, whereby the craftsmen were "paid for their daily work what was just, and competing with each other to supply the best article they could for the money."⁶ Such craftsmen were distinguished by "the accurate knowledge of their business in all respects," and by "the true sense of power to do everything better than it had ever been done before."⁷ In contrast to this he cites what he describes as "a daub professing to be a 'harmony in pink and white' (or some such nonsense); absolute rubbish, and which had taken about a quarter of an hour to scrawl or daub." To this, Ruskin attached the moral question of whether such a work should be priced at two hundred and fifty guineas. Whilst Ruskin was questioning what he regarded as lack of integrity of approach rather than simply "finish" (Ruskin's ideas on "finish" in painting will be discussed below), it is easy to see how the correlation between "finish" and value came to be a central issue in such debate.

In so far as it provided evidence of work, "finish" was associated with detail. In 1889 the Glasgow School artist, Alexander Roche (1861-1921), in a paper entitled Of Finish

in Art presented to the 1889 Edinburgh meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Art and Its Application to Industry, drew attention to what was still the "vexed question of finish."⁸ He states that finish can be defined as "completeness of expression" but "We see works ignorantly regarded as highly finished, which though they contain multitudes of laborious touches, have never been truly begun."⁹ He condemns the over-use of detail, as in Awake (coll:Perth Art Gallery) by J.E. Millais, exhibited at the Glasgow International of 1888. Roche perceives a false notion of finish as being popularly widespread: "largely through a mistaken idea as to what constitutes Finish, people continually surround themselves with pictures in which the cheap effects of the peep-show are the prevailing characteristic..."¹⁰ He cites George Paul Chalmers and McTaggart as artists whose work "yet even to this day...is regarded by many as 'very good in intention, but unfinished.'"¹¹

Acknowledging the moral value still attached to craftsmanship and the danger that an artist unconcerned with detail may be accused of "slipshod smudging", Roche affirms that good art is the product of the elimination of extraneous detail.¹² Artists such as Chalmers and McTaggart, were they weak enough,

"would not stop when the vital expression of their thought had been completed to the best of their ability; but they would go on, and overclothe it with an aggregation of meaningless details, in deference to current conventional notions of what constitutes Finish."¹³

That there were still artists who thought of finish in the popular terms outlined by Roche is evidenced by another monograph addressed to the Association. Under the title of French Impressionism and its Influence on English Art, W.B. Richmond ARA (1842-1921) censures the current trend for young artists of studying in France.¹⁴ With an air of disdain he

notes that "There is great applause granted to the wildest extravagances of modern French art. Impressionism is in the air, a solid fact based upon the quicksands of fashion."¹⁵ Richmond very clearly associates "modern French art" with a threat to traditional values in painting. He praises the English tradition for being "earnest, plodding and industrious."¹⁶ and upholds the example of the Pre-Raphaelites, for whom "No labour was too severe, no patience too painful."¹⁷ The modern preoccupation with *valeurs*, in Richmond's estimation, was misplaced:

"A picture being wrong in 'values' is at once pronounced bad by advanced pedants, - invention, sentiment, good drawing, and carefully-wrought details all go by the board for the sake of 'values'."¹⁸

The reception of French Impressionism in Britain was, therefore, involved with the question of "finish" and artists such as Richmond perpetuated the over-simplified contradistinction between "impressionist" daubing and detailed Ruskinian/Pre-Raphaelite finish.

McTAGGART AND FINISH

Concern with "finish" affected the reception of several of McTaggart's early works. Caw states that McTaggart's patrons, Simpson, Ritchie and Bell, whilst anxious to acquire his work, were often troubled about lack of "finish", and urged McTaggart to improve or complete certain passages of their works.¹⁹ In 1864, when Simpson's Spring (pl.14) and Autumn (pl.15) were exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy, The Daily Review had remarked of Spring that "Mr. McTaggart's greens are..kenspeckle..and withal somewhat crude and raw" and that the grassy bank on which the children are playing "looks as if it wanted nothing but a little working on to be perfect but it certainly does want

that."²⁰ Simpson appears to have taken notice of this criticism and to have asked McTaggart to carry out further work on his pictures. In April, McTaggart wrote to Simpson, "I can't say I agree with the 'Review' in its remarks upon pictures but I will be very happy to touch them a little and improve them if I can."²¹ Following the close of the RSA, the pictures, before going to Simpson, were returned to McTaggart's studio.

Simpson was not alone in his attitude to McTaggart's work. Other collectors and critics also requested greater "finish" in McTaggart's work. In 1860, Robert Craig, who purchased Past and Present (pl.8) and Impending Retribution, had written to McTaggart,

"..will you excuse me if I offer a remark which I mean in kindness. It has been generally remarked that my two pictures are deficient in *finish*, just too much like *sketches*, a feeling which has grown upon me the oftener I have seen them."²²

In 1867, the Dundee Advertiser remarked of McTaggart's The Murmur of the Shell (pl.20), exhibited in the RSA, "It is finely conceived and well arranged, but it is not quite yet finished, and will require a few touches here and there."²³ Of McTaggart's Adrift (pl.26), exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in 1870, The Art Journal remarks, "though of no ordinary ability," it has "been left little more than a 'rubbing in'."²⁴ The Art Journal again observes in 1874 of McTaggart that "there is always a fresh geniality about him that commends his pictures," but that although "he takes firm hold of his subject" he "occasionally disregards finish."²⁵

McTaggart's response to this sort of criticism can be gauged from an incident quoted by Caw. The large oil The Village Whitehouse (untraced), shown at the RA in 1875, had been purchased by an unidentified Glasgow dealer.

Writing to McTaggart, the purchaser hoped that

"...you will go through with the large picture and get it finished, as the two I have nobody will look at. They say they want to be finished. If you do something to it we can put it in the Glasgow Exhibition, as I would not like to see three of yours for sale in my shop."

McTaggart's reply was compliant but curt,

"In reply to your note of yesterday, I don't consider any of my pictures which you have 'unfinished.' Still, to please you, I am willing to go thoroughly into the Village and do what I can for it - short of spoiling it - at your risk."²⁶

The cry for greater "finish" in the works of the Scott Lauder artists in general was taken up in many quarters. In a pamphlet on Scottish Art and Artists, published in 1860, a critic under the pseudonym of *Iconoclast* had remarked that,

"..the New School stand much in need of caution and advice. They are clever young men of considerable originality, several of whom we trust yet to see highly distinguished.. ..But they are falling into affectations and vices of style which must destroy them for ever...Their pictures want finish, and are objectionable in colour."²⁷

Of works exhibited at the RSA by John Pettie, J.B. Macdonald and Alexander Leggatt in 1862, The Art Journal observed,

"like too many of their seniors, they confound breadth of touch with breadth of style, and forget that while breadth of style is one of the highest attainments, breadth of touch is the highway to mediocrity and mannerism. If they would put themselves through the crucible of

Pre-Raffaellism, without adopting its conceits, they would come out greatly purified in their art."²⁸

PRE-RAPHAELITE NATURALISM

As suggested by The Art Journal's view of the 1862 RSA and by Richmond's remarks quoted above, the technique adopted by the Pre-Raphaelite artists, although not in itself provoking the issue of "finish", helped to fuel the debate and, to some degree, set a critical standard. In the Black and White interview of 1905, McTaggart refers to himself as a Pre-Raphaelite in his early career and cites his reception by some critics in relation to such a standard: "Its a curious thing...that even when I was a Pre-Raphaelite I never painted tight enough for my critics."²⁹

The influence of these Pre-Raphaelite standards should be seen in relation to the role that Pre-Raphaelite painting played in the development of the naturalistic landscape. The desire for an ill-defined "truth to nature" and an enthusiasm for painting out of doors were well established by the mid 19th century and carried no single programme of technical procedure. The exhortation to study from nature was made by various artists and teaching manuals, offering a diverse and sometimes conflicting range of methods. However, for McTaggart and other young Scottish artists of the 1850s, the theory of Ruskin and the visual evidence of the Pre-Raphaelites, in so far as the movement during the 1850s was concerned with out-door landscape painting and attention to natural detail, would have constituted a convincing approach to the depiction of "truth" in nature.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood did not originate with any specific approach to landscape but by the mid to late 1850s a sufficiently distinctive style of landscape painting had developed to give the notion of a "Pre-Raphaelite landscape"

some significance. Pre-Raphaelite detail and colour became a point of reference in discussing landscape. Even a periodical generally hostile to the movement such as The Art Journal frequently refers to the Pre-Raphaelite contribution to and influence upon the annual Royal Academy exhibitions. In 1857, for example, it comments that "Eight or nine years ago - nay, less than that - our painters generally studied Art with too little Nature; now they study nature with too little Art." It observes the lengths to which attention to finish has been taken and notes that "everybody has eagerly sought out the Pre-Raphaelite essays in each exhibition of late years."³⁰

It has been implied by Allen Staley that the Pre-Raphaelites filled a vacuum in British landscape art in the mid century. Although, Staley has asserted, there were outstanding individual landscapists such as Turner, Cox and Palmer working in the first half of the century, no coherent school of landscape painting had emerged. Whilst Frith and other Academicians dominated genre and figure painting in the mid 1850s there was no Academy led school of landscape painting. Thus there was little strong opposition from within the Academy to the Pre-Raphaelites.³¹

The validity of such an argument remains to be sufficiently proven. The critic of The Art Journal reviewing the Royal Academy exhibition of 1856 does remarks that

"there is this year no landscape by any member of the Academy, and those landscapes which have recently been exhibited by members have been much inferior to those in other exhibitions regarded as very subordinate in comparison with the Academy. We have frequently of late years remarked this - this year our assertion is forcibly illustrated - *there is no landscape essentially so-called by an academician.*"³²

However he finds this situation to be surprising and still maintains that "Our school of landscape is superior to any

other in Europe."

Whatever the situation in England, there did exist in Scotland, a strong school of landscape painting in the mid 19th century firmly situated within the Academic establishment. Artists such as Horatio McCulloch and Sir George Harvey (1806-1876) were producing some of their most important landscapes during the 1850s, whilst slightly younger landscape artists such as Sam Bough and John Milne Donald (1819-1866) were also making a significant impact.

This did not mean, however, that the Pre-Raphaelite landscape was ignored in Scotland. The intense colour and obsessive foreground detail of Pre-Raphaelite painting made as much impression upon Scottish as on English artists and public. As already cited, important examples of Millais' work were exhibited at the RSA from 1852, with favourable reception, and Ruskin's public lectures in Edinburgh in November 1853 served to promote the tenets of Pre-Raphaelitism.

As a result, several works by Scottish artists during the 1850s and '60s exhibit emphasis upon "detail" and direct study from nature. In McTaggart's case, this can be detected in the precise foreground detail of early figure paintings such as Going to Sea (pl.5) and The Thorn in the Foot (pl.4) but appears to have been most evident in an untraced Study from Nature painted near Campbeltown during July/August 1858 and exhibited at the RSA the following year. According to Caw, this was "a Pre-Raphaelite study of the most extreme type, and nearly every day of three months was occupied in its making."³³

This type of subject seems to have been something of a test-piece for a "Pre-Raphaelite" student, derived from Ruskin's interest in geological and botanical detail. Ruskin comments, for example, in Volume I of Modern Painters (in reference to Fielding) that,

"It seems strange that to an artist of so quick feeling the details of mountain foreground should not prove irresistably attractive, and entice him to greater accuracy of study. There is not a fragment of its living rock, nor a tuft of its heathery herbage, that has not adorable manifestations of God's working thereupon."³⁴

Ruskin repeatedly states that it is necessary for the young artist to engage in a minute study of natural forms. He insists that the artist, in search of truth, should unquestioningly accept all that Nature offers. In the passage from Modern Painters that has often been quoted as of seminal importance for the Pre-Raphaelites he urges that young artists

"should go to Nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and remember her instruction, rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth."³⁵

Although landscape painting did not feature in the tuition which McTaggart received at the Trustee's Academy, Ruskin's philosophy of natural inquiry would have been compatible with McTaggart's early training. The detailed examination of form which was demanded at the Trustees, as at other academies, bears some resemblance to Ruskin's advocacy of empirical study. As advice in particular for the young artist, Ruskin's stress upon the detailed observation of nature did not radically differ from conventional teaching practice. For a student engaged upon close study of the cast and model, the application of the same diligence to landscape forms would have been a natural step. It is perhaps the fact that Ruskinian/Pre-Raphaelite principles could be so readily applied to an existing mode of study that accounts for the popularity of these principles, and resultant technique, amongst young students still within the Academic teaching

system.

In addition to Ruskin, other writers addressing the student artist stressed the importance of detailed study from nature. John Burnet, for example, in Landscape Painting in Oil Colours (1st publ. 1849), whilst remaining responsive to the broad technique of the mature artist, places great value upon recording the minutiae of nature as a basis for study. He comments that the student "must never lose sight of a dear perception of individual nature... both Titian and Rubens, for many years in the outset of their study, copied with great fidelity and minute finish anything placed before them..."³⁶

The influence of such ideals can be observed at the Royal Scottish Academy exhibitions of the late 1850s and early 1860s. Hugh Cameron later recalled of his student days

"At the time of which I write there had gone forth the call: 'Back to nature!' and many of us made essays in the unconventional, sometimes including great attention to detail. Many of these works appeared from time to time on the walls of the RSA exhibitions."³⁷

The Scotsman, reviewing the 1860 exhibition, comments that "Several of our young landscape painters exhibit this year studies of rocks, stumps of trees, and other individual objects, which are executed with the greatest minuteness and fidelity of detail," but regards that these works "are chiefly valuable as materials for embodiment in larger compositions, and the proper place for their exhibition would seem to be the artist's studio - not the walls of a gallery."³⁸

It seems therefore that although the artists attempted to put their "Pre-Raphaelite" exercises up for sale, such works still tended to be viewed primarily as of educational value. McTaggart's own Study from Nature remained unsold at the

RSA of 1859 and subsequently when, according to Caw, McTaggart learnt that it was "less a picture than a collection of carefully painted objects" he used it as an aid when working on many other compositions and lent it to other artists for the same purpose.³⁹

The twenty five watercolour studies by John McWhirter, purchased by Ruskin in about 1870,⁴⁰ also assumed an educational or preparatory role when they were used by Ruskin in teaching as the Slade Professor at Oxford. The paintings date from early in McWhirter's career and although somewhat looser than Ruskin's own botanical drawings, demonstrate a similar interest in individual plant forms. They illustrate the young artist's consideration of detail rather than concern for the composition of a "picture", and can thus be related to the initial stages of formal art tuition.

McWhirter himself later used examples of these drawings to illustrate his manual on Landscape Painting in Watercolour, first published in 1900. In this McWhirter states "...I think it most important for all landscape students to fall in love with flowers and details of nature."⁴¹ The examples of his early studies are given, he claims,

"to show the care with which students should work from nature at first - no slap dash, no blottings, but the most painstaking study of both drawing and colour. People may tell you that your work is 'tight.' Never mind: tightness is not a bad quality with work of a beginner. Looseness of execution will come of itself in time, and it will be the looseness of knowledge and not of ignorance."⁴²

It is in this spirit also that McTaggart appears to have given advice to his friend T.S. Robertson, who accompanied him on several painting excursions. Having first met in the 1860s, Robertson sketched with McTaggart at Carnoustie. Outside his duties at the RSA, this is perhaps the nearest that McTaggart came to having a pupil and Robertson has left a valuable record of McTaggart's technique. Some of the

advice which he gave to Robertson, however, should be seen in the context of a master/pupil relationship. With his own training in mind and with a knowledge of Ruskin's advice to the young artist, McTaggart would have been likely to ensure that Robertson looked very closely at nature and to have encouraged him to reflect this observation in his watercolour sketches. Robertson recalls that

"...on seeing that I could not go another step, he asked me to look at my drawing, then at Nature. 'You will', he said 'see many things in Nature which are not in your drawing. Put in one of these; don't be in a hurry, only one at a time. Look again, put in another and another, until you find that there is nothing outside that is not in your drawing.' That was the greatest lesson which I ever got in painting from Nature."⁴³

There seems in this some echo of Ruskin's recommendation that the student should go to Nature "rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing." (see above). McTaggart, however, tempered his advice with the admonition not to finish too highly or take a drawing too far in case it should be spoiled.⁴⁴

Despite the link between detailed studied and preparatory tuition, aimed specifically at students, a concern for natural detail was also carried through into larger exhibition works by several Scottish artists, including McWhirter, Cameron and McTaggart and artists of the previous generation such as McCulloch. In McCulloch's case the new trend was subsumed into the tradition of Scottish landscape. Like the younger artists, McCulloch in the 1850s began to make detailed outdoor studies of landscape foregrounds which were often incorporated into larger compositions. These contrast with the freer sketches which date from earlier in his career. McCulloch, however, was not diverted from his perception of the Scottish landscape. His attention to foreground detail does not dominate a composition in a

Pre-Raphaelite sense, such as in Millais' Ophelia (coll: Tate Gallery), 1851-2. In this respect it is perhaps significant that Scottish artists were introduced to Pre-Raphaelite technique not through pure landscape but in the landscape accompaniment to figure subjects. The Pre-Raphaelite "landscape" offered no serious challenge to established landscape tradition in Scotland. McCulloch continued to paint in the same romantic vein but with greater attention to geological and botanical accuracy.

RUSKIN AND FINISH

It has been suggested above that Ruskin, particularly in his support of the Pre-Raphaelites in the early 1850s, was often cited as providing a theoretical basis for the justification of detailed "finish". In popular terms Ruskin was frequently associated with finish or foreground detail in a painting. Of the work of Arthur Perigal, exhibited at the RSA in 1867, the critic of the Dundee Advertiser, for example, observes that,

"To look at some of the rocks in this picture, one would swear that Mr Perigal must have studied in a quarry, for they are given with a plodding fidelity to Nature which in no case rises above it - nay which seems to rest contented in it - and which would gladden Mr. Ruskin's heart. Ruskin contends that in painting rocks one must paint them as they are, for if you attempt to generalise - and idealise, I suppose he means - you lose their distinctive features."⁴⁵

For the diligent reader of Modern Painters, however, Ruskin would have given an artist a wealth of justification for the observation that "finish" did not mean detailed execution. It is easy to imagine that for McTaggart, already concerned with the problems of representing form and space, Ruskin would

have provided support and stimulus. Despite the complexities and inconsistencies of Ruskin's ideas, and the language in which they are clothed, many of his observations of the problems of art, particularly in the first volume of Modern Painters, are based upon his own experience of the process of seeing.

Whilst Ruskin believed in the necessity of sincerity in execution and the avoidance of slurred or sloppy painting (which for him was "always the sign of vice in art")⁴⁶, he did not extend this to an insistence upon detailed representation of form, although detail could be beneficial. In his discussion of finish in Volume Three of Modern Painters, he clearly associates finish with purposefulness and "the completeness of the expression of ideas."⁴⁷ There is no virtue in finishing for its own sake. True finish is dependent upon knowledge and adds greater truth to a depiction of nature. "'Finishing' means in art simply 'telling more truth'."⁴⁸

In defending Turner, Ruskin could take no other stance than attempt to explain why it was frequently necessary to leave form un-resolved.

"Turner introduced a new era in landscape art, by showing that the foreground might be sunk for the distance, and that it was possible to express immediate proximity to the spectator without giving anything like the completeness to the forms of the near objects."⁴⁹

Ruskin asserts that such incompleteness is essential for accurate representation of space. This did not mean that he believed that detail was unnecessary. Paradoxically, it was only through incompleteness that he thought detail could be properly achieved. Details are "best given by swift execution, and... individually, they cannot be given at all."⁵⁰ For Ruskin, it was Turner who had mastered this technique: "A single dusty roll of Turner's brush is more

truly expressive of the infinity of foliage, than the niggling of Hobbima could have rendered his canvas, if he had worked on it till doomsday."⁵¹ Whilst it is impossible for the landscape artist to go too far in the observation of detail, "it is equally impossible to render anything like the fulness or the space of nature, except by that mystery and obscurity of execution which she herself uses, and in which Turner only has followed her."⁵²

Ruskin also claims that style or technical individuality is directly related to the achievement of a specific "truth":
 "..that which is usually called the style or manner of an artist is, in all good art, nothing but the best means of getting at the particular truth which the artist wanted." With this in mind, he claims, there is no reason for "being offended with the loose and blotted handling of David Cox. There is no other means by which his object could be attained."⁵³

It is clear, therefore, that Ruskin didn't simply advocate an unquestioning adherence to the depiction of detail. Indeed it was precisely this aspect of Pre-Raphaelite art of which Ruskin was critical in his Edinburgh lecture of 1853. "..as landscape painters," he claims,

"their principles must, in great part, confine them to mere foreground work; and singularly enough, that they may not be tempted away from this work, they have been born with comparatively little enjoyment of those evanescent effects and distant sublimities which nothing but the memory⁵⁴ can arrest, and nothing but a daring conventionalism portray."

He recognises that it is valid for an artist to paint with "speed and power, rather than with finish, and give abstracts of truth rather than total truth."⁵⁵

EFFECT AND FINISH

The relationship between the concepts of "effect" and "finish", throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, was complex. Although "effect" was often associated with a sketch-like technique, critics did not always divorce broad effects from finish. Of James Cassie's Evening on the Forth from Orchard, Tullibody, shown at the RSA in 1867, the critic of the Dundee Advertiser comments, "it is broader, I think, in treatment and yet characterised by great delicacy and finish."⁵⁶

Artists continued to believe that a *plein-air* atmosphere and transient effect could be maintained in a work of exhibition standard, brought to a relatively high level of finish. Peter Graham, another of the Scott Lauder school, found considerable success in London with his large romantic images of the Highlands. Although not minutely detailed, these works were carefully and extensively worked and brought to a high level of completion. Nevertheless, they were still regarded as successful in conveying a sense of natural light and movement.

One example is Wandering Shadows (pl.113), exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1878. Graham's brushwork is fairly loose but cannot be described as sketch-like in the sense that such a term was applied to McTaggart's broad painting style. Nevertheless, the "effect" of natural veracity which Graham produced impressed several contemporary critics. The Art Journal, for example, remarked that Graham "..has done nothing with so much life and movement in it" and isolates as the main feature of attention Graham's depiction of the hillside and the passage across it of the cloud shadows.."so palpable in their motion, that the visitor tarries before the picture to watch them chase each other."⁵⁷ The critic of Academy Notes saw the picture as a "wonderfully truthful effect of light and shadow on a mountain pass; one of the principal landscapes in the exhibition."⁵⁸

Interest in natural, outdoor "effect" was a primary concern of much landscape painting of the second half of the 19th century. It was not confined merely to younger artists seeking to overthrow academic tradition. To a large extent, the capture of "effect" was inherent in landscape painting tradition in Scotland and was something with which McTaggart would have been familiar in the work of older established artists. Even artists working in more conventional styles were seen to be able to capture what would have been termed natural effect.

This can be found, for example, with Edmund Thornton Crawford (1810-1885) whose harbour and coastal scenes were largely derived from 17th century Dutch art. Nevertheless Crawford combined such influences with a close observation of the movement of waveforms and the effect of light upon water. The Scotsman in 1857 commented of Crawford's contribution to the RSA exhibition of that year,

"In air and tone Mr Crawford's pictures excel those of any other Scottish painter of similar subjects, and even Mr Bough's 'Port of London' looks bemuddled and opaque when contrasted with Mr Crawford's harmony and air."⁵⁹

One of Crawford's exhibits of that year was Scene on the Beach at Broughty Ferry - Ebb Tide (pl.105). Whilst The Scotsman critic preferred one of Crawford's other large pictures on show in the same exhibition, he confessed that Scene on the Beach.. had much of the same "fine tone."⁶⁰

Horatio McCulloch also evidenced an interest in landscape "effects" - particularly those of movement and changing atmospheric conditions. This is seen in the titles of paintings which he exhibited at the RSA from as early as the 1830s: in 1834 Arran from Bute: Sunshine Breaking through a rainy cloud, in 1837 Kilchurn Castle: Showery Effect, and in 1840 Edinburgh from Corstorphine Hill: Effect after

Rain. McCulloch, perhaps more than any other Scottish artist of the mid nineteenth century, used the term "effect" to complement the topographic references in his titles.

Some of McCulloch's very earliest exhibited works were described as "sketches" or "studies" from nature. In 1828 at the first West of Scotland exhibition of works of living artists organised in Glasgow by the Dilettanti Society, two of McCulloch's four works were listed as Study from Nature and Study from Nature near Cathcart. The following year he exhibited Coast Scene - a sketch and in 1830 Sketch near Cathcart. This tendency to exhibit sketches or less finished pictures was criticised by the writer John Strang (1795-1863) in a pamphlet on the Dilettanti exhibition of 1830. In this Strang, writing under the pseudonym of Geoffrey Crayon, observes,

"There are four pictures, or rather one picture and three sketches, by Mr McCULLOCH. Does this gentleman wish to hide his talents under a bushel, by sending so many sketches; or does he conceive that they are sufficiently finished for those who are likely to look at them?...The finished picture, No.138, [View on Loch Lomond] is, however, a very promising production for a young Artist. It is a well chosen point of view, the general effect is good, and the colour approaches to splendour, save in a few points of the extreme and middle distances, which are left in too positive patches. Were these faults amended, and the finishing, which is indispensable, attended to, we think Mr McCulloch destined to become even a more respectable Artist, than he is now a clever sketcher."⁶¹

McCulloch continued to produce oil sketches out of doors for most of his career, although the nature of these sketches changed over time. By the 1850s he was painting finely detailed sketches which can be related to the prevailing interest in Pre-Raphaelitism amongst Scottish artists. It is not clear how McCulloch might have regarded these later

sketches such as Castle Campbell (pl.127), 1853. The evidence they suggest of many hours of labour does not necessarily mean that McCulloch was no longer interested in achieving natural effect, but simply that the means of achievement were different.

McCulloch's interest in "effect" was not restricted to sketches. His larger exhibition paintings were also viewed in these terms. Lowland River - Sunset (pl.126), for example, a large painting of 39" x 59", was exhibited at the RSA in 1851. A much praised picture, it was described by The Scotsman as "remarkable for its unity and breadth of effect, combined with the careful finish of the various parts."⁶² Again, therefore, we find "unity and breadth of effect" (a phrase which might have equally been applied a few years later to McTaggart's broadly painted canvases) being regarded as compatible with a relatively high degree of finish.

Nevertheless, there still remained a strong school of thought in which the terms "effect" and "impression" were more closely associated with loose technique and the idea of capturing the totality of a scene in its broad relationships of tone and colour.

In part, this understanding of capturing effect developed in reaction to what were seen as the empirical principles of Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites. From the outset the potentially adverse influence of the Pre-Raphaelites on landscape painting had been observed. In 1852 The Times devoted much of its review of the RA exhibition to the topic of the Pre-Raphaelites.

"We have already remarked that the chief interest of the present exhibition is to be sought in the novelty and progressive merit of the works produced by the younger generation of artists...The tendencies of these junior artists are diametrically opposed to the traditional

merits and defects of the English school of paintings, as it has existed for the last half-century. Instead of breadth, effect, and a vague feeling of the grand and the beautiful, conveyed by a somewhat loose and random style of execution, they aim at excessive precision, minute particularity, a fidelity of detail which they cannot at present combine with general truth of vision, and a study of accessories which is not easily allied to deep interest or poetic feeling. They have applied themselves to remedy an undoubted defect in their predecessors. They are more correct in their drawing, more close in their adherence to natural objects, and less disposed to slur over what they cannot imitate. As studies or efforts at self-improvement such practices would be laudable; but in the production of pictures they have not risen beyond what Fuseli termed 'the elaborate anguish of missal-painting.'⁶³

These remarks, claims The Times, are not addressed exclusively at the artists painting in an antiquated style of historical or dramatic art, but equally to landscape; works such as Collins' May, in the Regent's Park and Inchbold's Study of a Stump are quoted as examples. "...this mode of treatment", it is remarked, "gives an air of extreme effort, not unattended by confusion, to what should be plain and simple."⁶⁴ The Pre-Raphaelites were therefore being criticised for putting restraints upon an already well established style of landscape painting in which "breadth, effect, and a vague feeling of the grand and the beautiful" were conveyed with a "somewhat loose and random style of execution."

The perceived contradiction between effect and finish is illustrated in correspondence between John Smart, a colleague of McTaggart, and George Simpson. In this case it is used by Smart to defend his work upon a painting of a Welsh castle (untraced) which had been commissioned by Simpson. When he received the painting in 1865, Simpson was evidently dissatisfied and Smart writes in reply,

"I can safely say the picture is in no way changed since you last saw it and liked it so much, except by the finishing of the foreground which you know you wished to be finished up as highly as possible and must know that by high finish, effect must to a certain extent be sacrificed."

Smart goes on to say that he had visited his friend, the artist George Paul Chalmers,

"and told him or rather showed him your letter as he had seen the picture. He said that if the picture was weak in effect it is not caused by any carelessness but by over-finish and that he is sure I can quite remedy it."⁶⁵

The contrast between detailed representation and the overall "effect" of a natural scene is repeatedly found in critical writing throughout the second half of the 19th century. Well before the 1880s, when the notion of "impressionism" began to be more widely discussed, it was already an established critical value. In Thoughts about Art (1873, quoting an article dated 1865), P.G. Hamerton had questioned the traditional notion of "finish". He observes that,

"Corot, [like Turner], is reckless of much that a less sensitive artist would strive for. When he gets the right relative tone on any part of his canvas, he dares not meddle with it, dares not put detail in...is far too prudent to attempt what we call 'finish'. For finish in landscape-painting is generally false, because true finish is so infinitely difficult. When a third-rate artist industriously dots over his trees with little regular lumps of paint, he calls that 'finish'. No sensitive painter could endure to do that; he would rather splash like Constable, daub like Daubigny, blur and rub like Corot, blot and wash like Cox."⁶⁶

Over-attention to detail was frequently seen as detrimental to what should have been the broader aims of landscape painting, and was applied both to Scottish and English artists. Reviewing the RSA exhibition of 1862, The Scotsman suggests of Hugh Cameron's work that it bears

"unmistakable proof of careful and conscientious study. Every object seems to be faithfully painted from nature, but he has not yet acquired the art to hide art, and consequently, though excellent in detail, the general effect of his large pictures is sometimes feeble. He thinks too much of detail and not enough of general effect."⁶⁷

Similarly, The Graphic, reviewing John Brett's Mount Bay at the Royal Academy of 1877, remarks that it is

"A wonderful work of minute observation and exact record, in which, however, the writer for his own part feels an absolute inability to take *such an impression of the whole* as he would from the real scene - in which he seems to feel the laborious hand of the painter holding him back at every step..."⁶⁸

The use of the term "impression" here suggests that it developed in British art criticism independently of the concept of "impressionism" as applied in relation to French art. It is used in a similar context in an assessment of McTaggart's Through Wind and Rain (pl.29), exhibited at the RSA in 1875. By this time McTaggart's works were clearly being associated with the aim of capturing transient effects of light and atmosphere within a unified image. To gain an "impression" of the broad effects of a scene was already a critical standard for the naturalistic landscape. The Scotsman remarks,

"Among the most notable pictures in the Exhibition must

undoubtedly be ranked the large sea piece by William McTaggart, an artist who for some years past has cultivated a broad style, presenting what may be called a contrast to the finish of his earlier work. The rendering of general effect in landscape ought, of course, to be the painter's controlling aim, and for the student of pictures a great point of interest lies in observing with how much or how little of imitative detail this is successfully achieved. To understand such pictures as Mr. McTaggart has been painting for some years past, one must try to get into the artist's point of view, and look not so much for exact reproduction of the shape and texture of objects as for general impression of form and colour as seen under the influence of light and weather."⁶⁹

As in France, the practice of sketching from nature was instrumental in the development of these values. Discussing this subject in the annotated edition of his Thoughts about Art (1873), P.G. Hammerton advocates oil sketches made out of doors "...leaving each study where Nature, in her transience, leaves the Artist, or at the most carrying it forward only just so long as his memory of the effect remains quite clear and vivid."⁷⁰ The idea of the "effect" was largely inherent in the student practice of sketching from nature.

From the early years of his career, studying from nature was an essential element in McTaggart's painting procedure. His correspondence of the the 1860s with George Simpson reveals his enthusiasm for working outdoors.⁷¹

In this McTaggart was not unusual. It was, and had been, common practice for Scottish landscape artists to make frequent trips into the country to execute sketches directly from nature. As we have seen, Horatio McCulloch, a generation older than McTaggart, worked on numerous sketches and studies out of doors. In the early part of his career especially, these sketches were usually painted within a short space of

time; several freely painted canvases are dated to a specific day. These contrast with the more elaborate and finished studies of the 1850s and '60s. Whereas in the 1840s McCulloch completed a sketch in one or two days, in the late 1850s and '60s he could spend at least a month on a single small sketch such as Castle Campbell (pl.127). Many of these later works were, in a sense, finished paintings, although subsequently used as aids for painting large studio landscapes. In a letter of 1863 McCulloch talks of "finishing" his studies to make them "good pictures" for sale at high prices.⁷²

In the 1860s, and possibly also later in his career, McTaggart "finished" sketches for sale. This was, for example, the case with the sketch for Spring, which was approximately half the size of the original and, according to McTaggart, was painted from nature although subsequently further worked in the studio. In the earlier part of his career at least, McTaggart also deliberately produced finished sketches which were not related to larger oils. The Study from Nature, for example, exhibited at the RSA in 1859, does not initially appear to have been related to a larger composition.

By the 1870s, however, the idea of "finishing" a sketch intended for exhibition was becoming less important. The "sketch-like impression" was developing as a standard by which to judge exhibition works. What might have previously been considered simply as rough studies were being offered for sale. This is seen particularly in relation to watercolour painting, which had a long tradition of association with landscape study or sketching. The Saturday Review, assessing the work of an exhibition by the Institute of Water-Colourists of 1874, condemns the practice of creating highly finished sketches for sale. "A drawing doctored in the studio," it is observed, "...is naturally more dressy and presentable than a thought roughly noted down at the time of inspiration: yet one such impulsive product, instinct with intention, is worthy of a whole gallery of

mediocre drawings done drowsily between wake and sleep."⁷³

It is notable also that McTaggart would have had the opportunity to see Constable's full size oil studies for The Leaping Horse and The Hay Wain (both coll: Victoria and Albert Museum) exhibited at the Edinburgh International of 1886. In these, broad handling and sketch-like effects were seen on a very large scale, normally associated with exhibition works. Although painted as studies, their display in the the context of other "finished" gallery pictures in the 1886 exhibition must have had an impact upon an artist such as McTaggart. The brushwork of The Hay Wain study in particular, which ranges from thin dry scumbling to rich impasto and interplays with the canvas ground and thin underpainting, can be compared with McTaggart's mature oil technique seen, for example, in the second version of The Emigrants (pl.67).⁷⁴

EN PLEIN AIR

Painting the final canvas on the spot, rather than simply preliminary sketches, was often regarded as important in achieving the appearance of nature. From McTaggart's correspondence with Simpson it is apparent that McTaggart was painting at least some stages of his canvases out of doors.⁷⁵

It is difficult to establish, however, at exactly what date, if at all, McTaggart began to wholly complete large-scale canvases *en plein air*. Caw identifies 1883 as the turning point, suggesting that large canvases such as The Storm (pl.43) were painted on the spot.⁷⁶ Earlier works had only been taken from the studio to finish out of doors when well advanced. It is doubtful, however, that such a clear-cut change in McTaggart's working methods took place. As examined in Chapter Nine, it is very unlikely that The Storm was

entirely painted out of doors. Despite the apparent simplicity and *premier coup* appearance of many of McTaggart's works from the early 1880s onwards, closer examination reveals a relatively complex paint structure. This is true even of a very late work such as The White Surf (pl.93) of 1908, where McTaggart uses a wide range of brushstrokes varying from thin underpainting to areas of thick impasto. There is some wet on wet painting (various colours are dragged together such as the touches of brown, blue and orange in the centre of the picture) but in other parts he is also painting on top of a more or less dry under-layer. Although it is possible that such a work was painted in front of the subject on more than one session, it is more likely that McTaggart, whilst perhaps executing some work out of doors, also worked extensively in his studio. Some pictures, such as one of the large St Columba canvases, remained on his easel in the studio for several years. We also know that McTaggart did not necessarily believe that natural "effect" depended upon working directly from the subject out of doors. The reworking of The Storm (pl.59) in 1890, which since it was painted from the earlier work was almost certainly executed in the studio, retains - if not heightens - the sense of natural effect.

McTaggart devoted much attention to the construction of a new gallery/ studio in his garden at Broomieknowe. His first studio, built soon after moving out of Edinburgh in 1889, was wooden and according to Caw "some 23 feet by 16, with windows in all four sides as well as in the roof."⁷⁷ However, the second garden studio, built in 1895, was more substantial (see pl.156). Almost twice the size, it was built of yellow fire bricks with a barrel roof. Although it had originally been intended more as a gallery than a studio, McTaggart appears to have regularly used it for painting. Interior photographs indicate that it was a working environment, allowing McTaggart to work under good conditions of natural light without the necessity of painting out of doors (see pl.157). The popular image of McTaggart in the 1890s and

1900s, feet astride, working on a large canvas weighted down with rocks to stop it flying away with the sea breeze (see pls.151 and 152) should be moderated by the knowledge that he had also had an excellent studio in which to paint.

If earlier in his career McTaggart had taken an interest in other artists painting *en plein air*, he would have had a variety of examples from which to learn. Their lessons, however, would by no means have been consistent.

It is likely, for example, that McTaggart would have been fully aware of the Pre-Raphaelite practice of painting large-scale canvases out of doors. This practice was widely recorded in critical reviews and Ruskin, in his Edinburgh lecture of 1853, had been at pains to elucidate Pre-Raphaelite methods.

"Pre-Raphaelitism has but one principle, that of absolute, uncompromising truth in all that it does, obtained by working everything, down to the most minute detail, from nature, and from nature only. Every Pre-Raphaelite landscape background is painted to the last touch, in the open air, from the thing itself."⁷⁸

In 1870 McTaggart also came in direct contact with an artist for whom, at the time, *plein air* execution was of particular importance. It was in this year that he spent two or three months in South Shields, painting portraits of the children of J.C. Stevenson, MP for Newcastle-upon-Tyne.⁷⁹ Caw states that during this period McTaggart met Frederick Walker (1840-1875) and other local artists at the house of Stevenson's brother, who was a friend of Chalmers and Pettie. McTaggart's previous knowledge of Walker is uncertain. Although Walker had made excursions to Scotland in the late 1860s they were primarily fishing trips and he appears to have had little contact with Scottish artists on these occasions. However, by 1868 he was well acquainted with W.Q. Orchardson, who although in London since 1862, still

maintained links with his fellow Scott Lauder students. McTaggart would have had the opportunity to see important oils by Walker at the Royal Academy between 1867 and 1870, when McTaggart himself was exhibiting there. In reporting the Royal Academy exhibition of 1868 in a letter to George Simpson, McTaggart remarked "Fred Walker has a fine picture - very much admired by the Londoners. Gypsy Vagrants - lovely effect of sky."⁸⁰

Walker's Royal Academy exhibit of 1870 was The Plough (coll: Tate Gallery), the painting of which is well documented in his correspondence. It was mainly painted over the winter of 1869-70 at Woolstone, Berkshire. In January 1870 he records, "I have today arranged with a farmer about the horses and everything, even to their standing on ploughed ground while I work from them." And a few days later, "It's astonishing how we all wish the cold cheerless weather over, and yet how precious it is...There's a lot of ploughing going on, and I am in the thick of it." The following month he writes, "Got on capitally with work to-day, and have found a fresh place for the foreground..."⁸¹

It is apparent from this account, and from the finished picture itself, that Walker's approach was not that of a spontaneous attempt to capture "effect". His method was carefully planned, with painstaking attention to detail. In the posing of elements such as the horse and plough, which are stylised to the point of similarity with a medieval Book of Hours, and the use of different locations to form a composite picture, he is close to the Pre-Raphaelite method found, for example, in Millais' Spring (Apple Blossom).

Plein air painting, therefore, did not necessarily mean that an artist was concerned primarily with fleeting atmospheric effects. By the same token, the fact that a painting may have been executed in the studio does not in itself indicate that "effect" could not be achieved away from the natural scene.

There was a critical basis of support for "naturalistic" landscape painting in the studio. Whilst accepting the practice of sketching out of doors, P.G. Hamerton, for example, recommended the use of memoranda. In an article dated 1861 he confirms that many younger artists were completing paintings out of doors. In doing so, these artists believed that the practice of painting from memoranda was dead. However, the use of memoranda, states Hamerton, may be "truer in effect" and lead to a better technical and intellectual end product. "to a great artist the imaginative faculty is the most precious of all gifts" and the landscape painter can focus better on the impression he requires in the studio.⁸²

For Hamerton, the studio is vital for achieving sound technique; "in a school like ours, where the custom of working from nature is extremely prevalent, the artist's craft is in some degree of being neglected."⁸³ He cites Turner's system of working from memoranda as better suited to dealing with sudden effects of light than elaborate and detailed painting from nature. In this context, evidently conceived as a warning against Pre-Raphaelite technique, he also advocates the use of photographs and stresses the importance of memory.⁸⁴

When these comments appeared in print again over ten years later, Hamerton added a few revised observations:

"My present opinion about the practice of landscape, founded upon the observation of methods used by the most able artists known to me, is that all pictures of landscape ought to be painted systematically from memoranda, *never* from nature; but that landscape-painters ought to do a great deal of sincere study from nature in oil-colour in careful broad daubing for tint and tone, with just so much detail as can be got without sacrificing the truth of large relations."⁸⁵

McTaggart's work, not only of the 1870s but from throughout his career, followed such a prescription, combining an interest in out-door study and the achievement of natural "effect" with more fundamental concerns of picture making.

EFFECT, TONE AND COLOUR

Another question to consider in relation to "effect" is how the relative value of tone and colour was discussed. G.F. Phillips had defined "effect" as the "skillful management of the light and shade of any arrangement of objects."⁸⁶ His recipe for successful effect emphasises broad pictorial composition in tonal terms; effect is achieved through the artist's grasp of the broad tonal relationships of a scene. This is the essence of a landscape to which all other aspects of technique are subordinate.

Barnard also stresses that the starting point for studying nature should be the balance of light, shade and form, to which colour is subordinate. An artist achieves pictorial effect by examining a natural scene "with a view of representing those lights and shades calculated to express the sentiment he wishes to convey."⁸⁷

Barnard recommends that the student should make a careful study of natural effects and suggests that he will be aided by Reynold's practice of copying paintings on a small scale solely in terms of light and shade.

The idea of colour as a first principle, however, was taken up by other writers, stressing the importance of colour in achieving effect. Much of this, not surprisingly, occurs in manuals on colour theory and technique. James Bacon, for example, in The Theory of Colouring⁸⁸, emphasises colour, with integral light and darks tints, as the basis of

a composition. He recommends the study in terms of colour of works by other artists and of nature. In studying colour from nature, he suggests that the artist divide the subject into foreground, middle distance and full distance and observe the prevailing colour of each of these and how they are connected.⁸⁹ Whilst for the primary sketch Bacon advises that the artist outline the main masses before adding colour, he also suggests rapidly noting fugitive effects in a book, along with colour notes.⁹⁰

To some extent McTaggart's technique seems to support the importance of tone to establish the basis of a picture. We have an account of McTaggart's watercolour sketching technique from T.S. Robertson. Whilst sketching alongside McTaggart at Carnoustie (mainly in the 1870s and '80s), Robertson remarks, McTaggart taught him the value of "fixing before beginning on where light things and dark things should be, as these so often change places in Nature during the execution of a drawing."⁹¹

In a letter to Caw, Robertson again observed of McTaggart's technique that,

"After looking at the subject in Nature he occasionally sketched the design of his picture, to a very small scale, on the upper left hand corner of the paper. The first touches in colour of a brownish tint were put on the distinct and shady parts of the picture and then touched with another brush which contained only pure water."⁹²

This would appear, in part, to be an application of the text-book methods recommended by writers such as Phillips or Barnard. McTaggart applied a brownish tint to establish the broad masses of light and shade.

A similar technique can be detected in some oil paintings. A late work The Sea, Machrihanish (pl.94) provides an indication of this process. In this unfinished canvas

McTaggart has used dry touches of paint to establish the basic tonal areas throughout the composition.

The consideration of the relative utility of tone and colour assumed a further significance through the influence of recent and contemporary French and Dutch painting in Britain. The artists of the Hague and Barbizon schools were recognised as having fostered a new emphasis upon tonal values.

This is revealed, for example, in a letter of 1869 from McTaggart to George Simpson, in which McTaggart records,

"There was a french artist Arts (sic) by name who visited us when I was at Broughty with whom they were all delighted. They had great disputes with him regarding first principles. He being all for tonality they of course maintaining it was not everything though one of the essentials.."93

The stress on *valeurs* remained throughout the century, with the continuing influence of French and Dutch painting. W.D. McKay's address to the 1889 meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Art and Its Application to Industry comments upon the importance of *valeurs* or relative tone in the French *atelier* system.

"When in Paris two years ago, I had the occasion to verify this. Compared with what I had been accustomed to in our own life schools, the general impression was that the studies were more monochromatic, and in a certain sense they were, in this respect, liker the living model before them - the tendency, with us, being rather to over-pronounce the colour."94

Already important in some of the chiaroscuro paintings of McTaggart's contemporaries, such as Chalmers' cottage interiors, the idea of valeurs became more firmly embodied in the early work of the Glasgow school in the 1880s. In such

pictures as James Guthrie's A Hind's Daughter (pl.114), 1883, the principles which the Glasgow artists had seen in the work of French artists such as Jules Bastien-Lepage were translated into a comparable idiom.

Nevertheless, in a specifically Scottish context, colour was still seen to be a very important part of artistic tradition. As will be discussed in Chapter Twelve, there were colour theories available to artists such as McTaggart which could be applied to their own work and used to make sense of other strands of continental import, such as that of Monet and the Impressionists.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

UNITY AND BREADTH OF EFFECT

PICTORIAL UNITY AS A CRITICAL STANDARD

The importance of a unified pictorial field was an aspect of McTaggart's work which was increasingly commented upon in the 1870s and '80s. By 1889 J.M. Gray could observe that McTaggart conveys in his work "...the totality of a scene, in its broad relations as a harmonious whole." - an achievement which Gray equates with his own definition of "impressionism."¹

The idea of achieving a broad, unifying atmosphere in a picture underlies much of the critical advocacy of "effect" and for many critics was a positive and desirable attribute associated with "impressionism". It can, for example, be seen as one of the central notions in R.A.M. Stevenson's appreciation of Corot. For Stevenson, Corot's "impressions are consonant with the vision of all those who take a large view of nature."² Stevenson refers to the "unity" in Corot's works and claims that "A great part of this unity, this harmony, comes from his logical and consistent rendering of atmosphere, the result of his most unusually complete grasp of the field of vision as a whole."³

This argument is also developed by Stevenson in his study of Velasquez. Here he criticizes the old masters for their organization of picture space built with a "swirl of flowing lines" or as "a monument with blocks of balanced colour." Stevenson argues that such methods lead to the artist considering each area of the composition in isolation: "such preoccupations hamper the attainment of any unity except of line, of artificial harmony between darks and lights, of decorative contrast between colours."⁴ For Stevenson, Velasquez had the ability to express "the more subtle

mysteries of real light or to render an impression of the whole aspect of an actual scene upon a painter's eye."⁵

The diversity of art to which the concept of "unity" or "harmony" was applied - ranging from Corot to French Impressionism - indicates that, as with "effect" or "impression", there was no single prescribed system by which it could be attained. However, similarities of approach, which linked together such artists as Monet and Velasquez in the mind of a critic such as R.A.M. Stevenson, were identified.

As with the concept of "effect" the idea of "unity" can be seen, to some extent, to have been opposed to "finish". Stevenson asserts,

"Many people, some of them painters, accuse Corot of want of finish. Probably they are unattracted by the charm of his style...By study of Corot's pictures from that point of view, these censors might find themselves dealing with a broader and larger vision than their own. They would find him admirably conscientious in his purpose of modelling the large masses perfectly, and of suggesting the smaller detail only so far as he could do it without sacrifice of what is greater."⁶

Speaking in more general terms Stevenson affirms, "the facts cannot be big ones, such as come from air, space, and the play of large masses, and yet the treatment be (without grave and damaging contradiction) small, mean, and full of careful preoccupation."⁷

A similar aim of "unity", and the technique which that entailed, was also identified in the work of the young Glasgow artists. The critic of The Scottish Art Review saw for Walton, Guthrie, Lavery and the other Glasgow Boys, the necessity of "the intelligent sacrifice of small things in nature if the great truths of structure, atmosphere, and

dignity of presentation be obtained."⁸

One of the Glasgow School, Alexander Roche, used this argument himself in his paper on the subject Of Finish in Art. Here he criticises the work of Noel Paton for a mistaken idea of finish and who,

"instead of presenting to us an artistic idea, conceived as a unity, and the expression of it pervaded by sympathy, .. gives to us his details in those 'highly finished' pictures in such a manner as to suggest a botanist who had arranged his specimens side by side."⁹

Again such ideas can be related back to typical text-book discussion of breadth of effect. As we have seen, G.F. Phillips stated that the main qualities of a picture in relation to effect were breadth, opposition and harmony, where the artist looks at a scene in terms of broad masses of light and shade.¹⁰ Burnet also advises that the artist be aware of the "necessity of counselling a proper balance between minute detail and broad general principles..."¹¹

The idea of overall unity and broad treatment therefore was not new. It was, however, given added impetus in the second half of the 19th century and for many artists and critics, from the 1860s onwards, was becoming a primary aim. Partly underlying this was the surviving legacy of Pre-Raphaelitism. In 1864 P.G. Hamerton had written about The Reaction from Pre-Raphaelitism, suggesting that the progenitors of modern Pre-Raphaelite practice were modern literary thought and the scientific investigation of nature. Analysis had become the key issue. He suggests, however, that now the pendulum was swinging back towards the idea of synthesis and the search for unity. As an example of this new trend he cites Whistler, who "has the rare faculty of true oil sketching, selecting, with certainty, the most essential truths."¹²

Involved in this issue was discussion of the role which

accurate delineation of form should have in landscape painting. Ruskin had justified the lack of solidity of form in the foreground of Turner's pictures by reference to what he defined as the "truth of space", the harmony of the spatial composition. Although he did not condone bad drawing in a landscape artist, he claimed that it was "possible to express immediate proximity to the spectator, without giving anything like completeness to the forms of the near objects."¹³ This asserts Ruskin, is part of the reason for the "vigour and wholeness of the effect of Turner's works at any distance; while those of almost all other artists are sure to lose space as soon as we lose sight of the details."¹⁴

Increasingly, McTaggart introduced very broad, sketchy brushwork into the foreground of his pictures, deliberately emphasising the lack of focus. In The Emigrants (pl.67) of 1891-4, for example, the foreground is painted over with a scumble of high-key paint. A similar technique is adopted in The Preaching of St. Columba (pl.80), 1897, where white impasto has been scumbled in the foreground, and in Hayfield, Broomieknowe (pl.55), 1889, where he uses a cool mauve hue along the bottom edge and slightly up the sides of the canvas, softening the effect of the quite harsh yellowish green of the field in the foreground. This has the effect of producing an area of "soft-focus" in the immediate foreground of the picture.¹⁵

Criticism of lack of form was frequently levelled at McTaggart's work, even by critics sympathetic to his work. Edward Pinnington observed that McTaggart's "realisation of form often seems undecided" but excuses this by defending the artist's "subtle management of *chiaroscuro*" by which he "gives the effect of form without disturbing unity of impression."¹⁶

McTaggart's approach to form was inevitably closely allied to the development of brushwork and colour technique in his

work. This is seen, for example, in The Sailing of the Emigrant Ship (pl.72), 1898, in which there is very little chiaroscuro handling of form. The landscape forms are broken and treated primarily as inter-linked colour masses. The eye is not overly distracted by the foreground but allowed to take in a broader sweep of the composition.

An aspect of McTaggart's art to which Peter McOmish Dott points in relation to pictorial unity is what he describes as the "liberation or enlargement of the focus of interest." He claims that McTaggart does not

"compel us, by a well-constructed chain of line, light and shade and colour, to look at and ultimately dwell on some one point of greatest interest in his picture - the focal summing up of design. On the contrary, he allows the eye to travel with freedom over the whole surface and parts of his picture, never inviting it to remain unduly fixed on one point. By this method he compels us to regard that *total* rather than the *focal* unity of his picture."¹⁷

When compared with the chiaroscuro landscape compositions of the older generation of landscape artists such claims for McTaggart might seem justified. In a work such as Machrihanish, Bay Voyach (pl.68), 1894, the wide angle of view, the lack of emphasis upon aerial perspective, the broad handling of the paint surface across the canvas, the repetition of colour notes throughout the picture to some extent militate against a single focal point.

FIGURES AND COMPOSITIONAL STRUCTURE

Nevertheless, despite his concern for pictorial unity, some interest in more conventional compositional structure can be detected in many of McTaggart's works from throughout his career.

Early figurative pictures, in which the direction of attention towards facial expression was important, were clearly based by McTaggart on conscious architectonic structures. In The Murmur of the Shell (pl.20) of 1867, for example, he arranges the figures in a pyramidal form, centering on the head of the young girl listening to the sound of the shell and the face of the elder girl behind her. This formula is repeated in Dora (pl.23) of the following year, where the focal point again falls more or less in the centre of the picture on the faces of the woman and child. In both these works McTaggart relies upon tonal contrasts to build up the structure of the primary compositional feature. In each work the larger figure forms a basic dark shape silhouetted against a light background. The smaller figure is subsumed within this form but stands out against it by being lighter in tone. McTaggart might have taken his model for this type of figure grouping and compositional structure from numerous renaissance madonna and child compositions.

The figure group in Something out of the Sea (pl.27) of c.1873 is also very consciously posed. There is still here a "well-constructed chain of line, light and shade, and colour" which Dott associated with more traditional compositional arrangements. Even with later, more apparently casual compositions, such as The Bait Gatherers (pl.40) of 1879, there is a reliance upon a careful arrangement of elements and a tendency to specific focal points.

In general, the placing of figures in McTaggart's work was often a matter of compositional harmony. This applies as much to his later pictures as to the ostensible figure compositions of the 1860s and '70s. In Winter, Broomieknowe (pl.79) of 1896 the figures of the children are mere suggestions painted in black outline and a few strokes of solid colour between which the landscape underneath shows through. However, they are carefully grouped to create a series of accents across the foreground of the picture,

balancing the strong focal area which the vividly painted sun creates in the upper half of the composition. In the absence of any marked landscape features and his eschewal of traditional linear perspective techniques, McTaggart uses the figures to draw the eye across the canvas. The dabs of opaque pink pigment, which suggest the children's faces, mark a line of focus from which the viewer can explore the rest of the painting. The figures on the extreme left and right are also used to contain the composition. They look in towards the centre of the canvas and lead attention back into the picture. The figures, therefore, are clearly not incidental - they are essential to the structural framework of the picture. They are not simply placed in an "impressionistic" snapshot sense. Without them the composition would lose its coherence. In this respect, figures perhaps provided McTaggart with a means of completing a picture by giving it a structure which he had not found, nor was willing to introduce, in the landscape itself. In Winter, Broomieknowe he had chosen a viewpoint in which the landscape features are parallel to the horizon and which takes in a large foreground expanse of snow covered field. Without figures the composition would have been stark and uninteresting. It is likely with such a picture as this that, although the figures are painted over the landscape, they were intended to be an integral part of the composition from the outset.

The importance of figure arrangement to McTaggart is maintained by T.S. Robertson in his description of McTaggart at work on watercolour.

"While he was sketching a landscape, there came into view behind a hedge, a man building a stack of grain...After he had finished I said you have left out the figures at the stack. Yes, he replied, but their place has been left for them. It was customary for him after having made up his mind that certain figures were to form part of a picture, and he had fixed the places they were to occupy, to leave a part of the white paper untouched for their

reception."¹⁸

In his oil paintings also it was common for McTaggart, from early in his career, to bring a landscape background to completion before the addition of figures. This in part reflected the practice of painting from nature during the summer months and the return to the studio, with the hire of models, in order to work up a picture for the RSA the following February.¹⁹ Although the figure content of some paintings, particularly commissioned works, appears to have been carefully planned from the outset²⁰, several landscape backgrounds were produced before any specific composition had been determined. In a letter of December 1863 McTaggart writes to Simpson, "I have not fixed what kind of figures to put into the landscape study from nature.." and mentions that "I thought I might have my large background of a village ready for our exhibition. I mean with a subject painted in it as it is very suitable for figures.." ²¹

The technique which McTaggart used to establish his figures deserves particular attention. His broad handling readily absorbs each element of the landscape into an overall network of colour. Already in early works such as The Old Pathway (pl.10) and Spring (pl.14), McTaggart's figures are treated as components of the landscape rather than discrete forms. In later works this evolves into a process of dissolution of the solidity of form whilst retaining the basic volume.

By the mid 1870s McTaggart was beginning to use short linear strokes in building up the body of a figure, as in The Young Fishers (pl.31), and by the late 1870s it becomes more apparent that figures are painted on top of the background. In the Bait Gatherers (pl.40), 1879, the greens of the sea are allowed to remain visible between the brushstrokes which make up the body of the standing boy. With the adoption of a more complex technique in works of the early 1880s, such as The Storm (pl.43), 1883, McTaggart's figures begin to take on a less coherent structure. The two reclining figures in

the foreground, although still modelled in terms of light and shade, are built up from a fabric of swirling linear strokes, which in subsequent works is gradually opened up creating McTaggart's characteristic "ghost" figures. Noontide, Jovie's Neuk (pl.69) of 1894 clearly illustrates this development. Here, chiaroscuro modelling has been almost completely eliminated, the volume and structure of the figures suggested simply by the direction of the brushstrokes. Although some broader patches of opaque pigment are used for fleshtones, the general impression conveyed by the linear outline is that of transparency.

In other pictures, particularly those such as the second version of the Emigrants (pl.67) which were derived from existing compositions, figures appear to have been added in at a relatively early stage of painting and were not simply painted on top of an existent landscape. However, they still take their tone and colour from the underlying stratum, whether the buff ground or a subsequent paint layer. Similarly, in what is perhaps an "unfinished" work such as Autumn Evening, Broomieknowe (pl.90) of 1905, although the figures have already been positioned, their transparent quality is comparable to that of the figures in The White Surf (pl.93), 1904-8, where the figures, according to Caw, were introduced "A few years" after the completion of the background.²² It appears that at whatever stage McTaggart added the figure element to his work, he aimed to fully absorb it into the paint structure, avoiding any detraction from the "unity" of the composition.

McTaggart's loose, broad handling of his figures can be compared with the sketchy drawing which Ruskin observed in the foreground figures of Turner's landscapes. Ruskin offered justification for this apparent "want of drawing" in Turner's figures which might be equally applicable to McTaggart:

"now we see the reason for the singular, and to the ignorant in art, the offensive execution of Turner's

figures. I do not mean to assert that there is any reason whatsoever, for *bad* drawing, (though in landscape it matters exceedingly little;) but that there is both reason and necessity for that *want* of drawing which gives even the nearest figures round balls with pink spots in them instead of faces, and four dashes of the brush instead of hands and feet; for it is totally impossible that if the eye be adapted to receive rays proceeding from the utmost distance, and some partial impression from all the distances, it should be capable of perceiving more of the forms and features of near figures than Turner gives."²³

THE CLASSICAL COMPOSITION

The use of figure incident as found in Winter, Broomieknowe (pl.79) was one solution to the control of pictorial composition in a large canvas. In other works, particularly large seascapes, McTaggart seems to have turned to what could be described as a "classical" form of composition.

The Storm (pl.43) of 1883 signified a new approach to landscape in McTaggart's work. As suggested in Chapter Seven, the wide angle of view and the smaller scale of figures in relation to landscape was a new development.

This new type of composition was perhaps partly a function of scale. Whereas a more casual composition was appropriate for smaller domestic works, a larger picture required a more rigid framework.²⁴ McTaggart's problem with large landscape or seascape pictures, which he began to paint more frequently from the 1880s onwards, was still to find a means of structuring the composition in the absence of chiaroscuro landscape techniques. When using a high toned palette to suggest daylight, and playing down the opposition of broad tonal masses, the problem of composition would have been greater in a larger work. Organisation of the picture purely

in terms of the juxtaposition of warm and cold hue appears not to have provided a total solution. It is perhaps not surprising therefore to find McTaggart sometimes falling back on a diluted form of classical compositional idiom.

In a work such as Away O'er the Sea - Hope's Whisper (pl.56), 1889, McTaggart orders the composition into a diagonally arranged foreground, cut off from the middle-ground which gently stretches out to the far horizon. Whilst McTaggart clearly had no intention of introducing trees into a work such as this and had developed his own approach to hue and tonal arrangement - which were very different from the typical classical structure²⁵ - there is still some resemblance to a Claudian type of composition, such as Jacob More's Bonnington Linn (pl.138). In McTaggart's, as in More's, work, the viewer looks down upon the figures placed on the foreground bank. This angle of view helps to subsume the *repoussoir* figure group within the landscape. Like More, McTaggart uses the figures to form a point of initial contact with the scene leading the eye into the broad expanse of landscape beyond.

There is also a comparison in the mannerist distortion of the foreground figures. Distortion and elongation of figures can be found throughout neo-classical landscapes, including those of artists working in Scotland such as More and Alexander Nasmyth. In many of McTaggart's works this distortion appears to fulfil the function of absorbing the figure more fully within the overall rhythm of the landscape. The postures of the figures echo the forms of the landscape. They frequently appear to be adapted to the broader structure of their setting rather than their own internal structure. In The Coming of St.Columba (pl.71), 1898, for example, the reclining figures on the hillside are extended and flattened, strengthening their contact with the ground. In The White Surf (pl.93), 1904-8, the awkward, angular contours of the figures conform to the shapes of the rocks against which they are set. Very rarely do such figures break above the horizon;

a high viewpoint ensures that they are absorbed into the spread of the landscape. The technique of McTaggart's figure drawing, as examined above, also contributes to this sense of integration.

A possible reference point for McTaggart's adoption of a classical form of composition would have been Turner. In a work such as Falls of the Clyde (pl.145), c.1840-50, which McTaggart would have seen exhibited at the Glasgow International Exhibition of 1888, Turner retains a vestige of the classical landscape idiom found in earlier work, such as Thomson's Aeolian Harp (coll: Manchester City Art Gallery), of c.1809, whilst raising the overall tonality and restricting the tonal range of the painting. In Falls of the Clyde, the foreground promontory with figure group is a key compositional element, providing structure and a sense of depth to the broad colour masses of the middle ground and distance. McTaggart adopts a similar solution in pictures such as Away O'er the Sea..., again of limited tonal range and of an even higher key.

CANVAS EXTENSIONS

Many of McTaggart's late works were enlarged by the artist, either by adding extra strips of canvas or by letting out spare canvas. The majority of these canvas extensions occur in the 1890s and 1900s. Underlying these numerous and very distinctive alterations seems to have been the contemporary attitude to pictorial unity and expansive vision outlined above.

McTaggart had perhaps read Stevenson's account of Velasquez's use of additional canvas. Stevenson criticizes what he regarded as the space-filling technique of the old masters.

"The old masters' drawings, their numerous and careful

cartoons, their very few notes of general effect, show their inborn love of space-filling by lines and definitely woven patterns. Their problem always being to fit the given space, they seldom sew pieces on to their canvases as Velasquez had done in so many of his best pictures."²⁶

Stevenson interprets this as an indication of a fundamental difference of approach to composition. Instead of a composition being planned to fill a given space, he believed that Velasquez conceived of a picture "rather as an ensemble of tone than as a pattern of lines and tints."²⁷ Working out from the initial impression, Velasquez then found that the composition as a whole required more space.

Considering that McTaggart began to experiment with canvas extensions from at least the early 1880s onwards, it cannot be claimed that Stevenson's explanation of Velasquez's method had a direct influence upon McTaggart. However, whilst Stevenson's interpretation of these canvas extensions in the specific case of Velasquez may be questionable²⁸, it offers a useful indication of what seems to have been McTaggart's own motivation in enlarging his canvases. The explanation which Stevenson attempts to impose upon the reading of Velasquez is perhaps more applicable to an artist of his own generation such as McTaggart. The question of availability of appropriate canvas widths and the adaptation of pictures to form pairs or to fit architectural settings, which must be considered in the case of Velasquez, are not generally relevant to McTaggart. The majority of canvas alterations which McTaggart made would appear to have been the result of the artist's requirement for a sense of compositional space. They are consonant with his clearly experimental method of working and willingness to rethink his approach to a subject, as in the Storm and Emigrant pictures, over a period of time.

One of McTaggart's first experiments with canvas enlargement

appears to have been Through Wind and Rain (pl.29) of 1875. The canvas here was possibly let out on the right side. The main body of painting in the sea has a substantial layer of underpainting which does not appear in a strip approximately three inches wide down the right hand side of the canvas. As with most of McTaggart's canvas additions it is very difficult to establish at what stage this extension might have been made. In this instance, since the colour match is quite good and the brushwork well integrated, it is possible that it was added not long after the original phase of painting.

However, given that McTaggart would often keep pictures in his studio over a long period of time, it is possible that some canvases were extended at a much later date, after the artist came back to them with a fresh eye. Fishing in a Ground Swell (pl.51), for example, is dated by the artist 1883-6. Much of the picture is painted wet on wet and was probably completed within a short period in 1883. It seems that McTaggart subsequently came back to the work (possibly as late as 1886) letting out about three inches along both the left and right edges. In these strips the paint surface is less densely worked with less use of underpainting.

The various versions of both the Storm and the Emigrants chart a number of compositional alterations. In the 1883 Storm (pl.43) strips of canvas about five inches wide have been let out on the left and right hand sides and along the bottom of the picture. These strips appear to have been left unprimed and there is some discontinuity in the paint layer across the "joins". It is possible that the additions postdate the painting of the figure group on the foreground knowe. Without the new canvas along the bottom and left hand side these figures would have been somewhat cramped in the corner of the composition. The possible motive for addition on the right of the picture, however, is less obvious - it simply extends the horizontal format of the picture, creating a more expansive field of view.

The larger 1890 version of the Storm (pl.59) in comparison to the 1883 picture adds further space to the bottom of the picture but takes the figures further in again to the left hand edge. There appear to have been narrow canvas additions to both sides but these are less evident than in the 1883 picture and were probably made at an earlier stage of painting.

The first version of the Emigrants (pl.58) was also substantially altered by canvas additions. Approximately two to three inches of canvas have been let out on either side with a further one inch stitched on to the right. Around two inches has been sewn on to the bottom of the picture. The colour match of these additions is not very accurate, especially on the right hand side. It is possible that these strips were added when the figures and boats were introduced into the composition, again giving greater space to accommodate the group. In particular, the boat to the right of the headland would have been very cramped against the edge of the picture without the addition of extra canvas.

When painting the second main canvas in the series of 1891-4 (pl.67) McTaggart was still not satisfied with the format and again found it necessary to enlarge his composition after starting the work. Around two inches have been let out on both the left and right with a further three to four inches stitched on each side. A similar amount has also been sewn onto the top and bottom of the canvas. That the composition existed for some length of time in a narrower horizontal format is suggested by a smaller version which appears to have been a replica of the main 1891-4 canvas before the extension to top and bottom.²⁹

McTaggart continued to experiment with the basic composition in the final Emigrants picture of 1895 (pl.72). Here the format is much more upright with the horizon lowered and a far greater emphasis upon the sky. Again McTaggart found it

necessary to extend the picture space by letting out the canvas about one inch all round. As in several other pictures, the tack holes from the initial pinning of the canvas which have now been brought around to the surface of the picture remain visible.

In The Coming of St. Columba (pl.71), McTaggart's process of canvas enlargement has been partly documented. With this painting there is some evidence for the assumption that extra picture space was sometimes created to accommodate the addition of figure incident to a landscape background. There exists in the McTaggart family collection a photograph of the painting before the addition of the figures and boat. The canvas has clearly been taken off the stretcher (tack holes can be seen around the edge of the canvas) and the position of the figures and boat, roughly as they appear in the final painting, have been chalked in. The indicated position of the figures on the foreground knove is very tight up against the right hand edge of the canvas. It was perhaps partly because of this that McTaggart was prompted to let out further canvas. This, however, was not just on the right edge - in the final painting the canvas has been extended about three to four inches left and probably around two inches on the top and bottom.

Other major large canvases from the 1890s show evidence of enlargement. Consider the Lilies (pl.81), 1898, has been extended on the left, right, top and possibly bottom. In the The Soldier's Return (pl.83), 1898, tack holes are visible on the left, right and top edges of the canvas. In the 1900s McTaggart seems to have been less willing to extend his large canvases. Although some pictures, such as Paps of Jura (pl.86), 1902, do appear to have been enlarged, many of his important land and seascapes such as And All the Choral Waters Sang (pl.87), 1902, and September's Silver and Gold (Private Collection) are probably of their original dimensions. McTaggart had perhaps in these later pictures become more confident with the breadth of vision which he

seems to have wished to convey.

This complex history of picture enlargement in McTaggart's *oeuvre*, sometimes without any immediately obvious impact upon the composition of a work, indicates that McTaggart took a great deal of trouble to arrive at what he considered a successful image. His idea of completion does indeed appear to correspond with Stevenson's interpretation of Velasquez's method. Rather than paint a composition to fill a given space, McTaggart appears frequently to have adapted the space to satisfy his own developing concept of the work. This is indicative of McTaggart's general approach to painting. Experimentation and adaptation take precedence over the idea of producing a highly finished or crafted artwork. Frequently McTaggart's technique might appear careless or lacking in finesse, even within the terms of his broad handling, but it is always geared towards achieving the type of pictorial unity which, as suggested above, was an important critical standard from Ruskin through to R.A.M. Stevenson.

CHAPTER TWELVE

COLOUR THEORY AND TECHNIQUE

INTRODUCTION

The impression derived from Caw's description of McTaggart's technique and from McTaggart's own correspondence is of the artist's intuitive approach to colour. Caw, for example, contrasts McTaggart's emotional response with what he saw as the scientific theory of the French Impressionists.¹ McTaggart's correspondence with Simpson, as Errington points out², reveals his direct and emotive attitude to colour. Describing pictures at the Royal Academy, it is frequently to colour which McTaggart's interest is drawn. In 1869, for example, he pronounces Peter Graham's Autumnal Showers "awfully fine in colour" and of Millais' Gambler's Wife, he remarks "the colour is like mother of pearl."³ Whilst individually such remarks appear little different from what many artists might have observed, collectively they provide an indication of McTaggart's enthusiastic appreciation of colour in art.

There is no written evidence nor any indication from his paintings that McTaggart developed a clearly defined theoretical premise for his colour technique. The approaches to colour which McTaggart might have come into contact with are varied. One of the most important colour theorists in Scotland in the mid 19th century had been David Ramsay Hay (1789-1866), whose Laws of Harmonious Colouring (first published in 1828) examined principles regulating the combination of colours.⁴ George Field (1777-1854) offered the main challenge to Hay as the artist's colour theorist; his own studies had contributed to the third, revised edition of Hay's Laws.. (published 1836). Both Hay and Field explored the harmony of colour with reference to systematic numerical proportions.⁵

Various colour theories, however, can also be found in the works of writers such as John Burnet (1784-1868), whose less rigid views, founded more upon observation of practical application than scientific theory, was expounded in a number of volumes, including his study of Turner (1852). The books in the RSA library in 1878 give some idea of the variety of treatises on colour theory and the manuals offering practical advice on colour technique which were available.⁶ These ranged back through the nineteenth century, including Edward Bancroft's Experimental Researches concerning the Philosophy of Permanent Colours (1813), John Burnet's Practical Hints on Colour in Painting (1828), C.R. Leslie's A Handbook for Young Painters (1855) containing a section on colour, and P.F. Tingry's The Painter's and Colourman's Complete Guide, being a Practical and Theoretical Treatise on the Preparation of Colours and their application to the different kinds of Painting (1830). There was also a copy of M.E. Chevreul's The Laws of Contrast of Colour, in a colour-illustrated edition of 1859 translated from the French.

An article on The Philosophy of Colour was published in the Edinburgh Review in October 1879. This contained a discussion of some of the most recent and significant colour theories ranging from J. Clerk Maxwell and Helmholtz to Ogden Rood's Modern Chromatics, newly published in 1879 by Kegan Paul. The article first outlines what the author suggests is the "colour painting of Nature."⁷, that colour is an attribute of light and not inherent in objects themselves. The difference between optical and pigmental colour mixing is explored⁸, culminating in a review of Modern Chromatics. The chief value of Rood's work, it is observed "is to be attributed to the fact that he is, himself, an accomplished artist, as well as an authoritative expounder of science. He accordingly dwells most fully upon the artist's side of the question."⁹. As the reviewer notes, the book deals with aspects of colour of particular interest to the artist: the

mixture and the complementary effects of colours, luminosity, contrast and gradation.

Any attempt to interpret McTaggart's work in terms of nineteenth century colour theory must remain tentative. It is unlikely that he would have relied upon any one particular theorist. His largely experimental and changing technique implies a manifold source of ideas. He perhaps avoided the more overtly scientific formulations, such as those of David Hay, preferring general principles which could be subsumed within a broadly intuitive approach. Nevertheless, his oil paintings, particularly from the 1880s onwards, display a very sophisticated appreciation of the use of colour, which can be related to some aspects of contemporary colour theory. His approach to colour mixing, his use of contrasting warm and cold hues, and the lightening of his palette should be seen against the background of ideas discussed in the literature upon colour.

COLOUR AND THE SCOTT LAUDER SCHOOL

McTaggart's colour technique will be examined in more detail below, but first it is useful to refer to the other Scott Lauder artists. McTaggart's early training at the Trustee's Academy would have been an important formative influence upon his attitude to colour. Robert Scott Lauder is known to have placed emphasis upon the student's acquisition of knowledge about colour. When responsibility for the teaching of the life class was transferred to the RSA in 1859, John Pettie wrote to McTaggart stating that Lauder,

"...is wild at the new system which they (Drummond, Paton, Archer) are going to begin at the Life Class, open after the New Year. He feels that their rigorous drawing and inattention in the meantime to colour imply that his system has been all wrong."¹⁰

The study of colour, however, came only towards the end of the system of academic training. This is seen in McTaggart's own portfolio of student drawings, which still reflect, despite Lauder's individual influence, an education where sound draughtsmanship was the primary aim. Martin Hardie quotes Pettie as having remarked of his early training, "I felt about colour then, like a boy looking at all the bright bottles in a sweetie-shop window, that it was something to be bought when I had saved up a pennyworth of drawing."¹¹

However, the works of the Scott Lauder artists began to attract attention partly for their use of colour. In seeking a group identity for McTaggart and his contemporaries at the Trustee's Academy it is perhaps justifiable to refer to their reputation as "colourists", their interest in colour encouraged by the influence of Robert Scott Lauder.

Writing the commentary to the McTaggart exhibition of 1901, Peter McOmish Dott singled out a form of optical colour mixing as an aspect of technique which linked the Scott Lauder artists in their early years. He remarks that,

"'Quality' of colour, which is still the dominant note of distinction in Scottish art, was also established as a technical trait by the Scott Lauderites, though not invented by them. Their mode of effecting wealth and luminosity in colour was by breaking the purer elements of a given tint separately against and through one another, instead of mixing them into a general tint on the palette before applying it - a sort of hatching and interlacing."¹²

Dott interprets this technique as being closely associated with a fine, detailed form of brushwork which has its origin in the early work of the Scott Lauder artists and which was utilised, to varying degrees by Orchardson, McTaggart, Pettie and Chalmers. "This process, followed rigidly by Orchardson,

and *qua* colour, with beautiful results, is certainly against attaining breadth of handling."¹³

Something of what Dott means by this "quality" of colour can perhaps be identified in McTaggart's early work, when there is less divergence between his technique and that of the other Scott Lauder artists. In The Wreck of the Hesperus (pl.9), for example, the sea is painted with a quite complex network of fine, short linear brushstrokes. Touches of white and blue are painted on top of a thin brown underpainting which shows through the overlying web of colour. The skirt of the younger girl in The Past and the Present (pl.8) is again very finely painted, weaving together thin strokes of red and blue hue. Similarly, touches of red and blue are introduced into the light brown of the wall behind the figures in Puir Weans (pl.12), where the colour is very thinly applied over a light ground. This form of colour mixing at this point in McTaggart's career quite closely resembles Orchardson's technique.

Using fine linear strokes of quite dilute paint, Orchardson laced together what are often low-toned and usually closely related hues. This is seen, for example, in Winding Her Skein (pl.140) where strokes of brown and green are blended together in the panelling behind the standing girl. However, whilst Orchardson frequently used this type of technique throughout his career, McTaggart, in works such as The Storm (pl.43), had begun to use a quite different type of colour mixing, employing stronger opaque brushstrokes of contrasting colour.

Comparisons can be made between McTaggart's later technique and that of other Scott Lauder artists. John Pettie's use of colour, for example, does at times resemble McTaggart's, although a distinction in each artist's general approach to colour should be made. Whereas McTaggart's colour technique developed largely through a concern for natural light, Pettie's colouring was often, in conception at least,

artificial and decorative. According to Briton Riviere, who first met Pettie in 1867, Pettie had stated

"'there's only one thing valuable and lasting in art, and that is colour'...This was his creed...He told me that in thinking out a picture he first evolved a combination of colour, say black and red (he had an absolute passion for red in all its tones), and as soon as he had made this scheme plain to himself, he then thought out and built up his subject upon it."¹⁴

Nevertheless, there are some similarities of colour technique and brushwork between Pettie and McTaggart. Pettie's To the Fields he Carried her Milking Pail (pl.141), of 1872-3, is painted in a high key within a narrow tonal range. The effect is a quite successful impression of outdoor light but the poorly observed masses suggest that Pettie had achieved a formula for painting superficially naturalistic landscape backgrounds for his figure subjects without the necessity of studying from nature. His The World Went Very Well Then (pl.142) of 1890 is painted with a high, even light, with little use of saturated hue except in the dress of the girl in the foreground. As we will see with McTaggart's mature work, Pettie has used a high proportion of white in the hues depicting the pathway, blending in touches of blue, brown and yellow pigment with a broad handling. Blue and yellow are used juxtaposed in short strokes in the left foreground.

Some landscapes by Hugh Cameron such as Haymaking (pl.103), of 1884, are again similar in colour technique. White pigment is used to raise tonal values and strands of blue, green, yellow and brown are laced together - again giving substance to Dott's observation of the Scott Lauder method of effecting "quality" to colour.

The work of John McWhirter, who continued to practice a modified Pre-Raphaelite style, was also often quite highly pitched in value. In particular, some of McWhirter's woodland

scenes such as A Lonely Birch (pl.132) have an atmospheric "blond" quality, which although not directly comparable to McTaggart's colour technique, indicate the general acceptance of raised tonal value in the latter part of the 19th century.

Whilst this tendency towards high-key is seen in the several works by the Scott Lauder artists, it is McTaggart who takes it the furthest in the 1890s with pictures such as the revised versions of The Storm (pl.59) and The Coming of St. Columba (pl.71).

TRADITIONAL AND MODERN METHODS

In broad terms, the development of the colour technique of McTaggart and the other Scott Lauder artists would have owed something to the example of the Pre-Raphaelites, who had already established a connection between outdoor painting and high-key colour. Although the truth to nature of their "bright" colour was sometimes questioned¹⁵, critics commonly associated Pre-Raphaelite landscape with light, high-key effects.

In his paper "Traditional and Modern Methods in Oil Painting", given to the 1889 Edinburgh meeting of the National Association for the Advancement of Art and Its Application to Industry, W.D. McKay identifies the Pre-Raphaelites as "a main factor" in a change of technique in English painting.

"The influence of this movement extended far beyond the seven or eight members of the brotherhood, and in the course of a very few years, the brown trees, so much affected by Sir George Beaumont and his school, had disappeared from our exhibitions."¹⁶

McTaggart, however, did not rely to the same extent upon the

Pre-Raphaelites use of saturated colour applied over a white ground found, for example, in a work such as Millais' Ophelia (coll: Tate Gallery). Here, as in The Blind Girl, there is a sense of heightened nature, a jewel-like effect which goes beyond careful observation of nature. The colour is given luminosity by thin application over the white ground. Hues, particularly green, are applied relatively pure in many areas. They are modulated by varying their opacity over the white ground whilst a relatively narrow tonal range is maintained.¹⁷

In his early works such as The Past and the Present and Spring, McTaggart did make use of a white ground (although not painted on whilst wet) to effect luminosity. However, he applied this technique primarily in shadows, with the use of thin brown pigment. The Scott Lauder artists used thin browns over a light-coloured ground as an effective means of conveying light within areas of shadow. The use of thinly painted earth colours, was essentially a well established painting practice, resulting from the technical restrictions of pigment characteristics, and can be associated with the traditional methods which McKay had claimed the Pre-Raphaelites had helped to overcome.

McKay identifies this traditional method as being particularly distinctive of the Scottish school. He also observes that "When one happens to come across the early work of the pupils of Robert Scott Lauder and the artists who immediately preceded them, it is wonderful how similar they are in technique."¹⁸

He did, however, recognise the advantages associated with their technique. In defining "traditional" technique, he discusses an analysis of Rubens' methods, referring to "that transparency of pigment and fineness of surface in the darker parts" which contribute to Rubens' mastery. The most valuable aspect of such a technique, he asserts, is

"the variety of surface given by the contrasted transparency, semi-transparency, and opacity of the shadows, half-tones and lights of the picture [which], as it were, give vibration and suppleness to the whole composition."¹⁹

McKay further examines the breakdown of traditional oil painting methods. He observes a wide variety of techniques emerging in Britain and France. The difference between the two being that in Britain there was no definite method whilst in France "The Parisian student has, during the last twenty or twenty-five years, been trained in a method precise and definite."²⁰ This he identifies as being the principle of *valeurs* in which approximation to observed tones was the primary aim, and that with this method,

"we had not a vestige left of the transparency and semi-transparency which we have spoken of as characterising the traditional method; the limpid pigment and fine surfaces of the older painters were nowhere to be seen, but everywhere a thick impasto, clotted and loaded, alike in shadow and light."²¹

Although acknowledging the importance of these new techniques, McKay observes that the lack of variety in the use of materials led to a sense of mechanical process - "the tones may be relatively right, but they lack that vital element of vibration" - and that the over-attention to values led to the neglect of dexterity of handling, which had been characteristic of Scottish artists working in traditional methods. The new realism, he observes, must be integrated with what has already been learnt from traditional techniques.

Dott observes that McTaggart used the technique of thin darks and solid lights less and less until it is almost abandoned completely in his later work. Certainly in pictures of the 1880s and 1890s, there is less extensive use of the

technique. The principles of effect which it achieved were not, however, completely abandoned. Although in his later work McTaggart rarely uses the same thin, fluid browns found in such works as The Past and the Present, he achieves a comparable effect with thin scumbles of darker paint. The Wind on The Heath (detail pl.91) of c.1905, for example, gives the appearance of a simple *alla prima* painting. In some areas of the work, however, McTaggart is still painting essentially from thinner, darker, underlayers to impasto lights, achieving a variety of surface texture. Although the paint in the underlayers is itself quite dry and opaque, it is broken up and modulated by scumbling and letting the white ground of the canvas show through. Caw asserts that McTaggart was very insistent "upon the great influence which the consistency of the paint and the character of the brush-work had upon the quality of colour and upon its power of suggesting the light and bloom of nature."²² The principle of varying the consistency of the paint texture over the canvas remained essential to McTaggart's technique throughout his career.

COLOUR MIXING

Although in the terms outlined by McKay and Dott, McTaggart's colour technique could be regarded as "traditional" - at least in his early works - aspects of his technique can be related to contemporary colour theory.

The Edinburgh Review article of 1879, cited above, offers an indication of the relevance of such theory to the problems of landscape painting at a critical stage in McTaggart's career. Taking up the precepts of Rood's Modern Chromatics, the review offered a direct challenge to landscape artists. It asserted that the "power of contiguous colours [as demonstrated by Rood] to modify the specific impression which each makes upon the eye is one of the difficulties which

landscape painters have to study and meet."²³ An artist should not simply paint the colours which at first might seem to be the most obvious.

"The true colours of the different parts of a landscape can only be correctly appreciated when each is dissociated from its companionship with the rest...The colours used in the composition of a picture require to be so selected and grouped that they help each other both by the influence of sympathy and contrast. Professor Rood remarks that what an artist has to do is to seize upon colour-melodies as they occur in nature, and to reproduce them upon canvas with such modifications as his own instincts compel him to make."²⁴

The basics of Rood's theory of colour application in painting were thus presented. Although there is no evidence that McTaggart read Modern Chromatics, Rood developed his colour theory, and applied it to discussion of practical painting technique, in a way which would have had relevance to McTaggart. Rood's stress upon the need for an optical mix of colour on the canvas rather than a pigment mix on the palette to some extent parallels McTaggart's own colour technique. McTaggart would also no doubt have sympathised with Rood's allowance for the intuitive "modifications" of the artist.

The imperfect blending of colours, claims Rood, is a natural process. As an example, he cites the appearance of a distant sea under a bright blue sky, in which the waves are green and the spaces between them are blue; "these colours then blend into a sparkling greenish-blue, which cannot be imitated with a simple mixed pigment." He also observes that grass exhibits "yellowish-green, bluish-green, reddish, purplish and brown tints, and the glancing lights, blend more or less together, and produce an effect which cannot be reproduced in a single sweep of the brush."²⁵

Rood's treatise, although clearly recognised by the

Edinburgh Review as being of particular importance, would not have been the first opportunity for McTaggart to become familiar with some of the basic ideas of colour opposition. The third edition of Phillips' Principles of Effect and Colour, found in the library of McTaggart's friend Sam Bough, contains a basic colour wheel. Still dealing with subtractive rather than the additive primaries (red, green and blue), Phillips sets out the colours red, yellow and blue with green, purple and orange as their opposing derivatives. The harmonious opposition, it is observed, of red with green, yellow with purple and blue with orange gives brilliancy to the opposing colours.²⁶ George Field likewise points to how

"dapplings of two or more colours produce effects in painting so much more clear and brilliant than uniform tints produced by compounding the same colours; and why hatchings, or a touch of their contrasts thrown as it were by accident upon local tints have the same effect."²⁷

Consideration of how Turner's use of colour was interpreted in the mid to late 19th century is also appropriate in this context. As well as having the opportunity to see various works by Turner in such exhibitions as the Manchester Art Treasures of 1857 and the Glasgow International of 1888, McTaggart would have been aware of how Turner's colour technique was frequently described in various art critical and theoretical literature of the period.

In The Theory of Colouring J. Bacon comments that,

"The effect of palpitation or alternate appearance and disappearance of colours in the depth of space is beautifully rendered by Turner. It gives his works the charm of endless variety and almost defies the naming of pigments he has used in any particular effect. It is produced seemingly by placing colours together wet, allowing them to mingle forming an almost imperceptible mottling of coloured space."²⁸

John Burnet stresses the importance of Turner's mixing of colour on the canvas through glazing and scumbling. "His pearly tints are the result of much scumbling, with lighter colours. This gives his works a greater look of atmosphere than those of other artists who mix up their colours more solid."²⁹ In more general terms, Burnet observes that "the best colouring possesses those tints difficult to imitate, and combined of many broken colours."³⁰

Ruskin insists upon Turner's mastery of subdued colour and the range of tints within an undercurrent of grey which pervades his work. However, this does not result in a dull monotonous picture surface.

"In one deep reflection of his distant sea, we catch a trace of the purest blue, but all the rest is palpitating with a varied and delicate gradation of harmonized tint, which indeed looks vivid blue as a mass but is only so by opposition."³¹

Observing the variety of hue and tone in a natural object or scene, Ruskin asserts that of old and modern masters

"Turner only would give the uncertainty - the palpitating, perpetual change... And I wish to insist on this the more particularly, because it is one of the eternal principles of nature, that she will not have one line nor colour, nor one portion nor atom of space without a change in it...There is not a leaf in the world which has the *same colour* visible over its whole surface... Pick up a common flint from the roadside, and count, if you can, its changes and hues of colour."³²

McTaggart's colleague Chalmers, upon seeing a watercolour of Lucerne by Turner in 1878, reiterates Ruskin's analysis of Turner's colour technique.

"Look at Turner's greys, at the distance of a yard the sky and water look simply grey, but go closer and see how that effect is produced. It is by blending in the most mysterious way the lights and shadows, and working into them touches of colour from the neighbouring masses, that influence the scheme of colour. You cannot tell why he added these touches, but you feel that without them the effect would be poverty stricken."³³

As we have already seen with reference to the possible influence of Monet, colour blending on the canvas becomes particularly evident in McTaggart's works of 1883, particularly the Storm (pl.43). In earlier works such as The Old Pump Well (pl.11) of 1862, although McTaggart is already interested in the study of reflected light in shadows (as seen in his use of the light ground to play a positive role in the area of shadow around the pump in the central foreground) this does not extend to a significant use of colour mixing on the canvas. Similarly in works of the early 1870s, such as On the White Sands (pl.25), 1870, and Two Boys and a Dog in a Boat (pl.28), c.1871, McTaggart still uses broad areas of local colour. In works of the later 1870s, such as The Bait Gatherers (pl.40), 1879, a more complex colour technique is beginning to evolve with small touches of blue, yellow and red enlivening the basic local hue. This type of colour technique also begins to develop in his watercolours of the mid to late 1870s.³⁴

In The Storm (pl.43) of 1883 areas of foliage are shot through with a variety of hue creating an active, shifting effect. In the grass and bushes to the left of the picture can be found a complex network of reds, greens, blues, browns, yellows and orange. Whilst part of the impetus for this technique may have come from seeing works by Monet, it would also have found justification in colour theory available to McTaggart.

The 1883 Wind and Rain, Carradale (pls.45 & 45a), although

at first dull and grey in appearance in keeping with the subject matter of the picture, also makes sophisticated use of colour. Although less emphatic than in the Storm, there are touches of crimson, yellow and blue in the grass of the knowe. There are also characteristic streaks of blue and red, as along the edge of the feint path to the right of the knowe. Colour is a key feature in the composition of this work. McTaggart uses a triangle of quasi-primary colours in the focal point of the composition. These larger patches of purer and more saturated hue are found in the reddish orange cap and blue shirt of the woman and the greenish yellow hair of the child who are situated on approximately the intersecting third divisions of the composition. The work radiates out from this focal point with slight echoes of these colours fading out towards a more neutral periphery.

After 1883, the type of colour mix using a dense network of varied hues, as found in the Storm, is less frequently or so prominently employed by McTaggart. Remaining experimental however, he adapts and modifies his technique in a number of paintings. In Corn in the Ear (pl.54) of 1887, McTaggart uses vertical linear strokes of red, orange, green and yellow to enrich the basic local hue of the cornfield. Touches of mauve, blue, yellow and green, keyed up to a pastel tonality, are added in the foreground. There is no strict application of a system of contrasting or complementary hues but McTaggart is evidently aware of the value of using a mixture of varied hue to strengthen the colour effect. In The Harvest Moon (pl.84) of 1899, he adopts a similar approach. The basic golden yellow hue of the field and the green of the sky are modulated by streaks of crimson, blue and yellow throughout the composition.

In The Preaching of St. Columba of 1898 (pl.80), the areas of grass, which appear as a strong local hue, are formed from varied hues which blend together (pl.80a); light buff, dark green and light green are used throughout. In the foreground, McTaggart blends in striations of stronger hue, such as

crimson, purple, orange, blue and yellow. Touches of orange and blue are juxtaposed in the mid and left foreground.

Some of McTaggart's most important works of this period are his snow scenes. These date mainly from the 1890s and are of particular interest in relation to McTaggart's colour technique.

It is possible that McTaggart would have read in Velasquez (1895), R.A.M. Stevenson's description of colour in snow. Stevenson remarks that

"When we see a quite white world after a heavy fall of snow, we do not see a monochrome but the chromatic hues of a coloured atmospheric effect. Sometimes it is a tissue of rose, blue and yellow all in a high fairy-like key, or again it is a harmony of brown and silver; but, whatever it may be, it goes far to disprove the theory that a shadow is only a darker shade of a light. The shapes of this equally white ground are revealed by the various inclination of their slopes to the light, yet this light is yellow on one slope, blue on another, and by no means merely darker or brighter shades of one tint."³⁵

It is tempting to believe that McTaggart may have responded to this passage with a renewed bid in the second half of the 1890s to convey the chromatic range of a snow scene. Although McTaggart painted a few snow pictures prior to 1895 (most significantly April Snow which appears to have been started in 1892), his main attempt to tackle the possibilities of the subject was between 1896 and 1898. There are at least two major snow canvasses which Caw dates to 1896: Winter, Broomieknowe (pl.79) and Snow-clad Fields (with Artist's Trustees 1917). It is possible that Snow Scene near Sandy Dean (Private Collection), stylistically very similar to Winter Broomieknowe, can also be dated to around this period. Christmas Day (pl.82) is dated 1898. It is significant also that April Snow (untraced) is recorded by

Caw as having been dated 1892-7, indicating that McTaggart probably reworked the canvas when painting the new snow scenes from 1896.

Whether or not Stevenson's description did provide any sort of stimulus for McTaggart, it does afford an indication of how an artist could tackle a potentially very difficult subject. McTaggart approaches the snow-covered landscape as a colour harmony. In Winter, Broomieknowe (pl.79), for example, he doesn't attempt to depict the surface of the snow field simply in terms of white or shades of grey but through the interplay of blue and yellow hues, which reflect the dominant colours he has used in the sky. The dark line of trees and hedges along the horizon appear to have been established first, with the sky and field painted up around them. Much of the off-white ground remains visible. A similar technique is used in Christmas Day (pl.82), although the tonality here is generally brighter with a slightly lighter ground colour and a greater use of white in the colour mix.

The seascape And All the Choral Waters Sang (pls.87, 87a, & 87b), of 1902, also demonstrates an accomplished colour technique. McTaggart makes extensive use of streaks of crimson throughout, as well as touches of yellow, orange, red, green and violet, particularly in the foreground waves. Evident only close to the picture, there are also a few slight touches of crimson edging the strokes of deep blue near the horizon. These strengthen the blue without taking on character as strokes of colour in their own right.

Allied to this aspect of McTaggart's colour technique is the imprecise, shifting effect which he obtains in his land and seascapes. The Edinburgh Review article also discusses Rood's observation of the principle of after-images, both positive (the immediate after-image, of the same hue as the original object) and negative (the secondary image, of the complementary hue). Negative after-images, it is observed, are important in modifying our perception of colour. Positive

after-images are also important, particularly when observing objects in motion.

"The appearances characterising water in motion depend upon them to a considerable extent. The images perceived are really made up of an unconscious combination of successive pictures left upon the nerves. The elongated streaks noticed in waves dancing in sunlight are really not streaks, but successions of round images of the sun lengthened out in consequence of their motion. Instantaneous photographs, for this reason, are by no means such true transcripts of nature as they pretend to be...The visual image is made up of different views rapidly succeeding each other, and fusing themselves together into one compound impression in the eye."³⁶

This observation can be compared to McTaggart's use of a broad shifting technique found in such pictures as the Storm and All the Choral Waters... It would have helped support and define the artist's already growing interest in what constituted "truth to nature" and how this could be achieved through technique.

WARM AND COOL HUE

Numerous writers classified colour in terms of warm and cool hue. In Phillips' Principles of Effect and Colour, for example, warm colours are listed as purple, red, orange and yellow whilst the cool are green, blue and violet. Phillips reiterates that the qualities of colour are shown by their harmonious opposition. Whilst close observation of nature, he suggests, acquaints the artist with the local colour of objects, the result, although pervaded by the look of nature and truth, is perhaps less pleasing than colour effects based upon principles of harmony. It is therefore necessary to study nature "when the combinations of colour are in the most

perfect harmony; or when by a powerful opposition, the same acquires a greater interest and increased splendour, from the broad masses of warm and cool colour."³⁷

"observe the proportion of warm and cool colour under the various effects; how, by gradating into each other, an harmonious character is maintained, or, by the powerful opposition of a small but positive bit of colour, in one part of the scene, the whole arrangement becomes balanced."³⁸

In Phillips' terms, a distribution of warm and cool hues is as necessary to the balance of a picture as the distribution of light and dark. Harmony

"is the result of the introduction of such broken tones of colour as bear a partial affinity to the warm and cold, as purples, greens, browns, and greys; the greens harmonising with the red, the purples with the yellow, the browns with the blue, and the greys with either and all of the primitive colours."³⁹

This can again be compared to how colour technique in Turner's later work was interpreted. Burnet comments that the change in Turner's pictures resulted from the transition "from dullness of tone to brilliancy of colour, and a marshalling of his tints into hot and cold colour arrangements."⁴⁰ and that, as in Turner's use of light and shade, so also

"In his principles of colour we perceive the same regulation in the management of hot and cold hues. Their proper situations are assigned them, and touches of each, or small portions, change places, for the purpose of uniting the two extremes, and giving harmony to the whole work."⁴¹

Much of McTaggart's use of colour depends upon careful

balance of warm and cool hue. This can be seen in very broad compositional terms in such a work as Hayfield Broomieknowe (pl.55) of 1889 where McTaggart has introduced an area of cool violet/ blue hue in the foreground, echoing the strokes of purple in the sky and balancing the yellow/green of the fields. Similarly in The Soldier's Return (pl.83) of 1898, the foreground is cooled with a scumble of a mauve lightened with white. In Harvest Moon, Broomieknowe (pl.95), the composition is largely organised upon alternating bands of warm orange brown and cool blue. Important accents of darker tone are introduced, particularly along the horizon, but the tonal contrast between the basic warm and cool hues is minimal.

On a smaller scale McTaggart frequently juxtaposes individual strokes of warm and cool hue, such as the touches of orange and blue found in paintings ranging from the Storm (pl.43 & 43a) of 1883 to White Surf (detail pl.93 & 93a) of 1904-8, where it is seen in the rock to the mid right of the composition. Such juxtapositions of warm and cool can also be seen in terms of complementary or near complementary colours.

In many works McTaggart uses touches of warm colour within an area of cool hue or vice versa. This, as both Phillips and Burnet observe, is a valuable means of harmonising a work, and is a substitute for the introduction of touches of highlight in areas of deep shadow or pockets of low tone within a light mass which could be found in a chiaroscuro structure. It is seen in McTaggart's Corn in the Ear (pl.54) of 1887, where small strokes of high toned violet break up the mass of warm hues which extend throughout the foreground of the picture and provide a link with the cool pale blue of the sky. Similarly in the small preparatory panel for The Emigrants (pl.63) of 1891, touches of blue are introduced into the warm hues of the headland, helping to link this area with the blue of the sea beyond. A few touches of warm colour are also introduced into the cool hues of the sky.⁴²

HIGH-KEY TONALITY

In 1901, Peter McOmish Dott emphasised McTaggart's increasing use of keyed-up hues. "The history of progress in landscape painting," he asserted, "has been mainly the record of advance from darkness into light."⁴³ This, Dott recognised, was closely allied to McTaggart's use of broken colour. "McTaggart's success in raising the pitch of illumination, increasing the movement, fulness, and variety of colour, and in establishing pictorial unity mainly on these elements, is a notable triumph."⁴⁴ This could be seen as a point of comparison with French Impressionism and the basic colour theory which was usually associated with Impressionism by most British critics.⁴⁵ It is interesting that Dott was keen to take the 1901 exhibition of McTaggart's pictures first to France. He thought that "Paris wd understand and put a sort of stamp on them & then the other places wd follow."⁴⁶ Dott believed that McTaggart's high key colour was not in favour with most Scottish collectors at the end of the 19th century, who found the darker tones of works by the Hague and Barbizon schools more acceptable.⁴⁷ The apparent lack of acceptance of McTaggart's later works would suggest that they were regarded as unusual for the time.

The unusual appearance of McTaggart's work was, however, only a matter of degree. As discussed above, high-key colour techniques can be found in the work of other Scott Lauder artists and had been developed in Pre-Raphaelite landscape.

The lightening of McTaggart's palette in his later work can be related to his composition in terms of hue. As Phillips observed, a colour technique based upon the arrangement of warm and cold hue also allowed the artist to maintain a relatively high tone throughout the picture. "To prevent heaviness, the warm and cool colours are opposed to each other throughout the subject, as such opposition produces that relief which must otherwise have been obtained by increase of depth."⁴⁸

Some of McTaggart's early works such as The Wreck of the Hesperus (pl.9) 1861, are based upon more traditional chiaroscuro modelling. Space and volumes are determined largely through the arrangement of light and shade. This, however, is a subject painting intended to convey a sense of drama, strengthened by dramatic lighting. In other works of the 1860s McTaggart already begins to narrow his tonal range in the attempt to create a more naturalistic effect of light. In The Past and the Present (pl.8) of 1860, for example, McTaggart maintains colour and light in the shadow of the wall in the background. Positive use is made of the light ground colour, which glows through the thinly painted browns of the shadows. Touches of green and blue glazes and scumbles modulate the depth of the shadows, introducing cool hues into the warm browns.

Similarly in Spring (pl.14), 1864, the tone is generally light, with a light green hue dominating the colour scheme. The light colour of the ground is important in the thinly painted portions of the pinafore of the seated girl; it is again used to suggest reflected light in the shadows. In this, as in the majority of McTaggart's works of the 1860s, the highlights tend to be cool, with McTaggart working from warm, thin shadows to cooler impasto highlights. This can be contrasted with the means of structuring landscape compositions on a chiaroscuro basis, in which warm highlights were common, predominant earlier in the century.

Such a technique as McTaggart used was becoming acceptable and was perceived as more natural. In 1857 The Art Journal had observed the tradition of landscape painting had been based upon the principle of three lights and that

"the highest light in every picture was, according to prescription, warm, and every landscape without a brown tree was unendurable. But now we see unexceptional pictures with any number of lights - with cool principle

light, and without brown trees. We admire now landscapes with a quantity of green that would set Fuseli's teeth on edge, and periously shake the nerves of Sir George Beaumont."⁴⁹

In Dora (pl.23), of 1869, McTaggart uses quite a thick paint layer in the sky and the field.⁵⁰ Much use is made of white to key up the colours, resulting in muted pastel-like tints. Nevertheless the shadows are still painted relatively thinly and the light canvas ground shows through in Dora's dress and several areas of the foreground.

Two Boys and a Dog in a Boat (pl.28), of c.1871, is a smaller, apparently more casual composition. Again the high key tonality is created with extensive use of white pigment in painting the sky and the sea. The areas of shadow in the foreground of the boat are thinly painted over a light ground. The figures are seen against the light but McTaggart introduces a significant amount of reflected light and colour into the foreground, creating an effect of clear natural daylight. This can be contrasted with G.P. Chalmer's similar composition Girl in a Boat (pl.104). Here also the figure is seen *contre jour* and Chalmer's also explores the effect of reflected light on the girl's face. However, the tonal contrast between the light sky and the dark foreground is greater than in McTaggart's work.

McTaggart's The Fisher's Landing (pl.38) of 1877 is also notable for its high-key tonality. The picture has something of a dry chalky appearance through the use of white to key up the colours. Quite a thick layer of white pigment is used in the sky, which is modulated by a scumble of blue on top. The waves are depicted with short dabs of blue and green paint and white highlights, whilst the foreground is created from broader, more fused strokes of bluish grey and grey/green. When shown at the RSA in 1878, it was noted of this work that "The style is vigorous and broad, and the colour fresh and clear. The work, as a whole, is likely to attract much

criticism, as a daring interpretation of an exceptionally difficult idea."⁵¹ The writer is not explicit about exactly what he considers this "exceptionally difficult idea" to be. He is unlikely to be referring to the composition. Scenes of fishermen and women walking across the beach towards the viewer would have been familiar to a Scottish audience through contemporary Dutch painting. Examples of Hague school pictures such as Josef Israels' Fishermen Carrying a Drowned Man (pl.124), of c.1860, could be compared in terms of subject and composition with The Fisher's Landing. Israels' picture was a particularly well-known image in Britain, exhibited at the International Exhibitions in London in 1862 and Glasgow in 1888, and which was owned by the Scottish collector Alexander Young in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

It is more likely, therefore, the critic was referring to the lighting effect which McTaggart was trying to convey and the resultant colour technique. The effect of low sunlight across the water is one of the main preoccupations of the painting; when exhibited at the RSA, the picture was accompanied in the catalogue by the line "The air and the water dance, glitter and play." Of this work and A Day on the Seashore (untraced), the critic points to a "peculiarity in the higher lights".⁵² Certainly compared with the Hague school works of similar composition, McTaggart's raising of tonality and the organisation of the composition in terms of warm and cool hue would have appeared unusual. As Caw points out, part of the reason why the picture may have seemed strange was perhaps because of McTaggart's raising of tonality throughout the picture. Caw quotes an unidentified writer as inquiring "whether the principal figure should not show darker, coming, as it seems to do, between the eye and the luminous sea."⁵³ Instead of creating a dramatic contrast between the light on the water in the background and dark shadow in the foreground as Israels had done in Fishermen Carrying a Drowned Man, the pitch of the colour is raised throughout, including the frontal planes of the foreground figures which one might

expect to lie in quite deep shadow. Although there is some degree of shadow in the face of the central figure, it is not exaggerated. Already in a work such as Two Boys and a Dog in a Boat (pl.28), of c.1871 it can be seen that McTaggart was introducing a large amount of reflected light into faces seen *contre jour*. By levelling out this tonal contrast, McTaggart was able to increase the impression of luminosity throughout the picture. Certainly The Fisher's Landing was regarded at the time as a "bright" painting. The first owner of the picture, A.B. Stewart, wrote to McTaggart in October 1878, "I have just got your picture hung in my gallery and am I not proud of it? It lightens up all the room and would indeed 'make sunshine in a dark place.'"⁵⁴ Since McTaggart in this picture does not employ saturated colour but rather pastel-like tints with extensive use of white pigment, the quality of "brightness" in this instance can be associated with the raising of tonal value. It is relevant in this context, however, to observe that the term "bright" was also used in the description of the colour in Pre-Raphaelite painting where, although tonal values were frequently quite high, the use of saturated colour was often the most distinctive quality of the colour technique. "Intensity" of colour was also used to describe Pre-Raphaelite works and this can perhaps be more closely associated with the description of saturated hue.⁵⁵ "Intense", was rarely used as a description of the colour in McTaggart's work, although as will be suggested below, in a picture such as the 1890 Storm McTaggart did achieve what might be termed an intense or heightened depiction of effect through his use of colour.

The same propensity for an overall high tonality can be seen in McTaggart's works of the 1880s. In Corn in the Ear (pl.54), of 1887, for example, McTaggart again achieves a luminous pastel-like quality to the colour structure, using a keyed-up palette and a relatively thin, dryish application of paint over a light ground. The foreground is kept very light with a scumble of a pinkish hue. Although the faces of the children are partly in shade, the tonal depth of the shadow

is not exaggerated. This light within shadow, as we have seen in earlier works, helps to increase the perceived tonal brilliance of the work as a whole. McTaggart appears to be striving for a means of suggesting full daylight which would not have been possible with a more conventional relationship between light and shade found, for example, in the work of Horatio McCulloch. In Loch Katrine (pl.129) of 1866, in which the light sky suggests that an effect of sunlight is intended, McCulloch introduces areas of dense shadow in the foreground and midground which militate against a sensation of bright sunlight. Unlike McCulloch, McTaggart does not rely upon the opposition of broad masses of contrasting light and dark and was thus free to raise tonal values in areas where deeper shade might be expected.

McTaggart's use of higher key colour, therefore, can be seen developing in his work throughout the 1860s, '70s and '80s. The early 1890s, however, appear to be something of a turning point for McTaggart. With the second version of The Storm (pl.59) in 1890, McTaggart revises his earlier work, elaborating and heightening effect whilst using the same basic composition. In comparison with The Storm (pl.43) of 1883, the later version uses a very highly keyed palette, with a much more extensive use of white pigment and plays upon the contrast between the slate blue sky and the yellow light on the landscape. The result is an intensification of illumination, an increased effect of light.

In the early 1890s McTaggart also decided to re-work the colour composition of The Emigrants, again creating a more luminous effect comparable to that in the revised version of The Storm. In the Emigrants (pl.67) of 1891-4 this is achieved through broader areas of keyed-up colour in comparison with the earlier canvas of 1883-90. Whereas the earlier work appears to have been painted on an off-white ground the 1891-4 version uses a brownish ground which establishes a basic warm underlayer. There are also areas of thin brown underpainting, such as in the sky, where it is

overlain by keyed-up blues, reds and yellow/greens in broad sweeps of the brush. There is much use of wet on wet mixing; white and blue and white and reds are mixed together on the canvas. In the sea, McTaggart uses shorter, horizontal strokes of blue, green and white with wet on wet mixing. Impasto white is scumbled diagonally to suggest the fall of rain. The overall effect is again, as in the revised version of The Storm, of an intense and heightened atmosphere.

The Coming of St. Columba (pl.71), which dates from the middle of the 1890s, is one of the most vibrant of McTaggart's large canvases. It utilizes a relatively narrow tonal range at the high end of the scale. By this stage McTaggart had completely abandoned the traditional "chiaroscuro" structure which landscapists such as McCulloch had relied upon. A comparison between this work and McCulloch's Loch Katrine (pl.129) illustrates how far McTaggart had taken colour technique in Scottish landscape painting. Compositionally, McTaggart has adopted a division of foreground, middle distance and far distance comparable to that of McCulloch but in terms of colour structure the works are very different. McTaggart makes very little use of aerial perspective or a systematic gradation of tone from foreground towards horizon. Instead the tonal value is increased throughout the picture; he has suffused his palette with white pigment, merging the zones of the composition together without losing a sense of recession or space. The varying quality of brushwork in each of these zones and the more complex mixture of hue in the foreground help to achieve this recession. The basic green hue in the foreground is articulated with touches of vivid yellows and purple. Touches of blue with orange and blue with vermillion are used together in the painting of the stones in the left foreground. The rocks in the mid ground are also formed from a number of different hues, with patches of low toned blue and brown helping to accentuate the overall luminosity of the composition.

COLOURED GROUNDS AND THE RESTRICTION OF TONAL RANGE

The use of coloured grounds, rather than the more common white or off-white priming, is also of relevance when considering the light palette and balance of warm and cool hue in McTaggart's later work.

A range of tinted grounds is a feature of many of McTaggart's oil paintings in the 1890s and, to a lesser extent, the 1900s. They appear in various types of work, from large scale oils down to the smallest panels. Many of these grounds are of an ochre hue, varying from a light buff tonality to a rich mid tone. Sometimes there is also a distinct pink tint enriching the brown, as is the case with Noontide - Jovie's Nook (pl.69), 1894. Occasionally a mid-tone grey priming is found, as in September's Silver and Gold (Private Collection) of 1905. The evident effect of these coloured grounds, particularly when used, as in McTaggart's case, with a very open style of brushwork allowing the ground to remain visible in many areas of the picture, is to vary the tone and hue of the finished work.

McTaggart would have first encountered the effect of using an underlying colour ground on tone and hue in his early Academy studies and portrait drawings. A range of toned papers are used in his drawings from antique casts; a light greyish brown is used, for example, in a shaded drawing of The Dying Alexander (Private Collection). In a Shaded drawing of three casts from the antique (Private Collection) and his 1855 prizewinning Stump drawing from a group of casts (pl.1) he has used a darker brown paper.

One effect of using a toned paper, when the medium is pencil or black chalk, is to reduce the tonal range of the drawing. Thus the highlights of the prize drawing are not white but brown, with the tonal range extending down to black. This in part would have helped the artist to achieve subtle tonal gradations. This is of relevance when one considers that a

feature of many of McTaggart's later oils is the general reduction of the tonal range.

A narrowing of tonal range was possible when using a white canvas if McTaggart keyed up the colours of his palette and opted for a bright daylight effect. Such a technique is found in numerous works of the 1890s and 1900s. Two notable examples are The Coming of St. Columba (pl.71) of 1895 and The Soldier's Return (pl.83) of 1898, which are both very light in overall tone.

In the St.Columba painting, although there are some touches of dark paint such as the black used in the painting of the rocks, these are isolated accents. The tonal range is primarily geared towards the upper end of the scale established by the white/off-white priming of the canvas, which is allowed to show between the brushwork in numerous parts of the composition. McTaggart has keyed up his colours to the upper end of the scale by an extensive use of white mixed in with the basic colour palette of blues and greens. He has also made much use of unmixed white to emphasize areas of highlight, especially where he has also wished to add texture to the surface of the canvas, such as in the wave-crests.

A similar technique has been adopted in The Soldier's Return, where much white has been used in the purplish hues in the foreground and the golden yellows of the cornfield. Again the canvas is white or off-white and has been allowed to show between the brushwork in numerous areas.

If, however, McTaggart wished to create an effect of light other than that of full daylight, whilst retaining a narrow tonal range (which as suggested above, had come to be associated with naturalistic depiction of light), he appears often to have chosen a darker canvas to establish the basic tone of the painting. This, for example, is the case with Moorland and Lea, September Afternoon (pl.64), probably of

c.1892, and Harvest Moon (pl.84) of c.1899. Both these works are painted on darkish ochre primed canvas. In Moorland and Lea McTaggart has painted a twilight effect, keying in his palette to the darker tone of the canvas, which remains visible and an important tonal feature of the finished work. Similarly, in Harvest Moon the tones of the broad colour-masses of the composition, the green hue of the sky and the gold of the corn, are closely related to the pinkish brown of the canvas priming. Accents of white and dark paint are used but only in limited areas of the picture, such as the white highlights of the figures and the dark band of trees below the horizon. McTaggart thus achieves the effect of luminous twilight within a relatively narrow tonal range, which would not have been so readily achieved if painted on a white primed canvas - or at least not using McTaggart's mature technique in which the canvas plays a positive role.

It is interesting in this respect to examine how McTaggart tackled twilight landscapes earlier in his career. In Going to Sea (pl.5), as in nearly all his early works, McTaggart appears to have used a white or off white ground. He has reduced his palette to primarily grey/brown hues in order to bring down the general tonal effect of the work, using the light tone of the canvas to provide luminosity and reflected light in the thinly painted shadows. The Wreck of the Hesperus (pl.9) of 1861 is also painted on a light ground. It is slightly more thickly painted than Going to Sea but the browns are still relatively thin and modulated over the light ground. The impression here is again of a primarily brown palette used to bring down the tonality of the painting in order to achieve an effect of half light. Both works are also somewhat theatrical in appearance, playing upon the drama of the lighting effect. This is something which McTaggart has clearly avoided in his later twilight subjects where a more natural effect of light appears to have been his aim. It is possible, therefore, that McTaggart's use of a darker toned canvas in his later works can be related to the

pursuit of a more natural effect of light, enabling him to key his palette to a basic tone on a level appropriate to the light effect he wished to convey.

As well as altering the tonal composition of a work, the various coloured grounds in McTaggart's oils also often appear to have been carefully chosen in terms of hue. The use of a warm ground colour could assist in the balance of warm and cool hues. In North Berwick Law from Cockenzie (pl.70), 1894, for example, much use is made of the buff coloured ground over which generally cool colours are painted in the sea and sky. In The Sailing of the Emigrant Ship (pl.72) of 1895 the warm light brown hue of the ground is extensively played against the cool blue colours of the sky.

Similarly, in Consider the Lilies (pl.81), the buff-coloured ground is not used simply to tone down the general effect of the painting, which remains that of daylight, but to introduce a warm unifying hue, linking together other areas of cooler and harsher colour. As well as providing a basis for the warm flesh tones of the figures, it also shows through in much of the painting of the sky, creating a warm interlinking colour, suffusing the white and blues, and establishing a warm foil to the harsher and more saturated colour of the green foliage (pl.81a).

The use of a coloured ground can, therefore, be closely associated with the aims of contemporary landscape painting, particularly the pursuit of naturalistic lighting and a unified colour composition.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

McTAGGART'S WATERCOLOUR TECHNIQUE

The importance of McTaggart's experience in watercolour painting should be examined in the context of the overall development of his technique - particularly the general lightening of the tonal structure in his oil paintings. It is not difficult to imagine how watercolour painting could influence an artist's approach to colour and tonal composition. Burnet had argued, for example, that Turner's experience in watercolour may have influenced the increased brightness of his later works:

"How far his eye may have been led into this excess of light from his practice in watercolour drawing is a very probable supposition, as the brilliancy and luminous quality of watercolours make oil paintings, especially in obscure light, look heavy; nor do watercolours demand that force and solidity which we expect to find in paintings; they seem to rely for their excellence upon what they can accomplish by the possession of this luminous quality."¹

Watercolours form an important aspect of McTaggart's work throughout his career. Generally, the variation in technique found in the watercolours parallels, or even prefigures, that of his oils. From the 1870s, McTaggart was already exploring in his watercolours how to translate a natural scene pictorially in terms primarily of hue rather than tone. But as in his oils, McTaggart remained experimental, employing thin washes of colour or thicker body-colour according as much to the subject he was painting as to any internal development.

Early watercolours, however, such as Ben Ledi (Private Collection) of 1853 tend to be heavier in tone, more detailed and finely worked, bearing comparison with more conventional

technique found, for example, in the pictures of John McWhirter.²

There are relatively few traced watercolours dating to before 1870 and Caw lists substantially less for the 1860s than for the 1870s. McTaggart, although making several watercolour sketches, appears prior to 1870 not to have regarded it as a serious medium in its own right. His study of Fishermen (pl.96) probably dates from this early period. Quite dark in tone, with each figure worked upon in isolation, it should be regarded as a study rather than a finished picture.

As Caw suggests³, it may have been contact with Sam Bough which stimulated a new interest in watercolour for McTaggart. Bough had moved to Edinburgh in 1855 and it is probable that McTaggart would have first met him when Bough spent a short time in the late 1850s at the Trustees Academy.

Closer association with Bough, however, probably came during the 1870s, particularly with the lead up to the foundation of the Scottish Society of Watercolour Painters. Although originated in the West of Scotland, the Society drew membership from Edinburgh as well as Glasgow and Sam Bough became the first Vice-President with McTaggart also ranking as one of the four members of the executive council. Both artists therefore were probably closely involved with events of the Society prior to the first exhibition in 1878. Bough died less than a year after the Society was formed and McTaggart took his place as Vice-President. There had evidently been a measure of respect between the two artists since Bough had nominated McTaggart as one of his three trustees, each of whom was allowed to choose a finished watercolour drawing from Bough's estate.⁴ McTaggart also had the task of organising the sale of Bough's work which took place the following year.

Bough was generally recognised as one of the most important landscape artists of the time. Already in the late 1850s he

was beginning to attract attention. The Art Journal in 1858 asserts that of the young painters beginning to challenge the landscape masters such as McCulloch and Crawford, "Among these by far the most successful is Mr Samuel Bough...His versatility is amazing...⁵

Watercolour was Bough's preferred medium and with it he was usually more successful than in oil. His watercolours of the late 1860s and the 1870s, a period when his pictures were gaining much in popularity and price, are characterised by a free and vigorous technique. This was described by P.G. Hamerton in 1879, when a drawing of Cellardyke Harbour, Firth of Forth - Sunset was published as an etching in The Portfolio. Hamerton writes of Bough's technique in terms which were beginning to be closely associated with "impressionism", and which can be related to the concept of "unity" discussed in Chapter Eleven. He claims that,

"Bough's mind was essentially synthetic; he did not see things one by one, but in their mutual relation, so that they all blended together in artistic unity...In all synthetic work there is, however, a tendency to suppress or sacrifice minute knowledge, though it may be fully possessed, and the reader would do wrong to conclude that Bough was ignorant of the refinements of form merely because he aimed at something else."⁶

Examples of Bough's technique can be seen in small watercolour drawings such as Landing at Iona (pl.99) and Fishing Boats in Rough Weather (pl.100). Using large brushes and heavy paper, it is likely that he exerted some influence upon McTaggart's own technique. The broad but controlled handling in these works is comparable to what McTaggart began to develop.

McTaggart may also have gained an interest in the watercolours of David Cox, who was represented in the collections of both Orchar and William Ritchie. As with

Bough, a comparison can be made between McTaggart's mature technique and the broad handling of atmospheric effect found in Cox.

Caw suggests that by the early 1870s McTaggart was producing watercolours which were "an advance on the capacity shown in his contemporaneous oils of rendering elusive and transient effects of atmosphere upon a high key,"⁷ and that McTaggart's watercolours changed at this time as he used them as a medium for experiment with "impressionist tendencies."⁸

The nature of the watercolour medium did perhaps give McTaggart greater freedom to develop these interests, and works such as Machrihanish, Wet Weather (pl.30) of 1875 have a freshness and vitality which oils of this period, even oils such as Through Wind and Rain (pl.29), which was upheld as an example of McTaggart's "impressionist" methods⁹, do not yet achieve. Using broad brushwork, Through Wind and Rain is very freely painted but compared with later oils, such as The Fisher's Landing (pl.38), of 1877, the surface is quite heavily loaded.

By the late 1870s, McTaggart had developed a very individual watercolour style. As with the bare canvas in his oils, he more frequently begins to use the untouched paper as a positive element in the finished picture. In Children Paddling (pl.34) of 1877 he uses the white of the paper as a highlight in the sea, showing between the strokes of blue pigment. The texture of paper is also important. Colour is dragged over the surface of the paper, emphasising its coarseness. Similarly in The Edge of the Sea (pl.35), 1877, McTaggart uses large areas of white paper left untouched to suggest the sheen of light on the sea.

As in oil paintings of this period, McTaggart in Children Paddling paints the figures on top of the seascape, allowing the waves and the beach to partly show through the

broken brushstrokes. This can be directly compared with oils such as Bait Gatherers (pl.40) of 1879. However, the effect is emphasized in the earlier watercolours, supporting the assertion that in some respects McTaggart's watercolours prefigure his oils.

In a series of works of the mid to late 1870s, McTaggart's use of relatively thin washes, and the employment of blotting paper or a sponge to remove paint from the surface of the paper is evident. His practice of toning down areas of colour is described by T.S. Robertson,

"When any part of his drawing looked too strong he gave it a coat of water which was lifted off with blotting paper. And if lights had been forgotten to be left out in the foreground, these after being treated in the same way with water were rubbed out with stale bread and filled in with the finest colours."¹⁰

This type of technique was probably used, for example, in A Wet Day (pls.37 & 37a) where the area of light cloud appears to have been sponged or blotted out. Such a work, however, is not uniformly thinly painted. In A Wet Day McTaggart modulates the depth and strength of the paint surface through the selective use of body-colour and opaque white highlights.

The somewhat fluid, pastel quality of the paint surface and the high key tonality of such works compare with a number of oil paintings of the late 1870s, in particular The Fisher's Landing (pl.38) of 1877. The subject of these watercolours is also comparable to that of the The Fisher's Landing, showing groups of figures walking across the dunes towards the spectator.

Other watercolours can be directly related to oil compositions. Crossing the Bar (pls.52 & 52a), of 1883-6, for example, can be linked both to an oil painting of the

same name from 1883 and another oil, Over the Harbour Bar (untraced), of 1886.¹¹ In the watercolour McTaggart uses quite dry paint on a mid toned paper. He uses the same variation of brushstrokes which can be found in his oil paintings of this time; a light wash in the sky, long fused strokes in the sea near the horizon and broader strokes in the foreground sea. The boat is painted in brown pigment, directly onto the paper allowing the tone of the paper to show through. As in an oil such as Dawn at Sea - Homewards (pl.61), where brown pigment is thinly painted over the canvas ground, an impression of luminosity and light reflected from the water onto the keel of the of the boat is achieved.

Similarly a watercolour of Kilbrannan Sound (Private Collection), of 1885, could be compared with the oil North Wind, Kilbrannan Sound (coll: Glasgow Museum and Art Gallery) of 1883. Both works use quite strong areas of colour, playing upon the contrast of blue waves and brown rocks. Similar bold, strong colouring is found in the watercolour, The Shores of the Atlantic (pl.46) of 1883.

The late 1870s and early 1880s were particularly fruitful years for McTaggart in watercolour. During this period he was usually spending spring/early summer in Carnoustie and late summer/autumn in Kintyre. The seasonal variations which he experienced gave him a wide range of subject in terms of light and atmosphere. Caw claims that the summers of 1876-1878 were the first seasons which McTaggart spent painting out of doors on the Atlantic coast.¹²

The technique of using areas of bare paper appears to have been used in most of McTaggart's watercolours in the late 1870s. In the 1880s the technique is more pronounced and McTaggart appears to become more interested in using discrete dabs of quite strong and more opaque colour, leaving the surrounding white paper clear. He is far less reliant upon the atmospheric blending and sponging techniques of A Wet

Day (pl.37). This new emphasis upon solid colour is seen for example in The Shores of the Atlantic (pl.46), 1883, or Where the Burnie Runs to the Sea (pl.47), 1883, where small dabs of blue, mauve and brown pick out the stones in the foreground of the picture. However, McTaggart still recognized the full potential of his medium; the dabs of colour are contrasted with areas of translucent wash, effectively employed to suggest the interaction of light and water. McTaggart was very aware of how watercolour technique could be adapted to suggest different natural appearances.

A group of watercolours, including Red Roofs (pl.48) and In the Equinoctal Gales (pl.49) were originated at Crail in 1881, where, according to Caw, McTaggart worked purely in watercolour.¹³ This interest in a location outwith McTaggart's usual Carnoustie/West Coast routine was perhaps inspired by Sam Bough who had frequently sketched in the fishing villages of the Fife coast and whose watercolour drawing of Cellardyke was reproduced as an etching in The Portfolio in July 1879. The technique of this drawing cannot readily be appreciated from the etching itself but Hamerton describes it as,

"boldly and broadly washed on paper, with a coarse grain ... The paper itself seems to have been nearly white, but so broadly washed with water-colour, after the manner of some of Turner's Alpine studies, as to have the appearance of warmly-tinted paper."¹⁴

Bough's desire to effectively warm the tonal ground by colour washes may have been of some influence upon McTaggart's technique. In several of his Crail pictures, such as In the Equinoctal Gales, unlike his West Coast and Carnoustie watercolours, McTaggart applies dark tonal washes. He also makes extensive use of a preliminary charcoal drawing stroke to outline and detail the architecture of the harbour and the fishing village.

In his late watercolours McTaggart usually adopts a more open technique which resembles that of his late oils. This is seen, for example, in Haytime (Private Collection) of 1889 and The Shore Road - Aird's Bay (pl.85) of 1901. An undated Seascape (pl.97) can be directly compared with some of McTaggart's last oils such as The Sea, Machrihanish (pl.94).

As Caw points out, McTaggart's watercolours were frequently painted on a half-sheet (approx. 13 x 20 inches).¹⁵ In the 1880s he began to paint occasionally on slightly larger sheets but rarely on anything larger than 20 x 30 inches. Most are painted on thick, rough-surfaced Whatman paper.¹⁶ Although there are some works, particularly figure subjects which appear to have originated in the studio, many of McTaggart's watercolour sketches are likely to have been painted to a large extent out of doors.

T.S. Robertson gives a full account of McTaggart's sketching practice. He states that McTaggart always used an easel, usually standing rather than sitting in front of it.¹⁷ It is likely therefore that McTaggart preferred to keep some distance from the paper. This, together with the use of "the largest quill brushes" would have assisted the artist in keeping control of the broad relationships of tone and colour throughout the work.

McTaggart exhibited his watercolours almost exclusively at the Scottish Society of Water-Colour Painters. He contributed four works to the first exhibition in 1878 and thereafter sent a similar number to most of the Society's exhibitions up until his death. He also remained Vice-President of the Society for this duration. Few of the pictures which he sent to the exhibition were for sale. Although he produced works which he would have considered "finished", watercolour for McTaggart seems to have been largely an experimental medium.¹⁸

The originality of McTaggart's watercolours did not go unrecognised by other artists and critics, and to some extent they strengthened his reputation as an "impressionist" and his association with the New Art of the 1880s and '90s. In the Scottish Art Review, the young Glasgow school artist George Henry, reviewing the exhibition of the Royal Scottish Society of Water-colour Painters of 1888, comments that in McTaggart's work,

"will be found none of that lifeless conscientiousness, which is the guiding star, or forlorn hope, as occasion demands, of so many weak painters. Swift to sieze the dominant motive which impresses him, his art instincts prompt him to reveal it in the most direct way, and by the simplest methods."¹⁹

In 1896, the critic of the Pall Mall Gazette, most probably R.A.M. Stevenson, calls for a representative exhibition of McTaggart's work in London, pointing particularly to his watercolours. A few dozen of McTaggart's watercolours it is claimed "would be a revelation to English artists." He suggests that if no dealer can organise such an exhibition, then why not the New English Art Club? "They would have all the art world of London crowding to their doors within a week."²⁰

SECTION IV

CONCLUSION: MEANING AND TECHNIQUE

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

INTRODUCTION: THE INTER-RELATION OF SUBJECT AND TECHNIQUE

The portrayal by several writers since Caw of McTaggart as an isolated innovator, developing his own brand of "impressionism", is misleading. McTaggart was in many respects a product of his generation; his work emerged from contemporary attitudes to subject matter and technique in landscape painting. This thesis has examined some of the questions facing the development of landscape painting in the second half of the 19th century. Two broad issues have been identified: how the artist should deal with content or meaning in landscape and how to respond to new ideas about technique.

In some respects the new formalist art criticism did mean that subject matter was of less importance. A levelling process occurred, in which, if the primacy of technique were fully accepted, subject matter would become irrelevant; the artist would be concerned with the landscape only in so far as it offered a means of portraying, in a detached sense, natural objects and phenomena through a painterly medium. However, it is often the acceptance of the inter-relation of technique and subject which emerges as being of importance, even to formalist critics such as MacColl and Stevenson.

To reach some understanding of McTaggart's work, this inter-relation needs to be recognized. It was implicit in the criticism of writers close to McTaggart, such as Caw, Pinnington and Dott, who knew the artist and his work. To interpret McTaggart in purely formalist terms, as an "Impressionist", as has often been the tendency in more recent years¹, is to deny the human quality of his work, which the artist himself stressed.

Despite the polarisation of viewpoints promoted by the New

Art/Conservative controversy, there still existed a middle-ground system of critical values, allowing the accomodation of a new concern with such ideas as "impressionism" within a structure which still valued content in a more traditional sense. It should be recognized that there was a degree of continuity of critical standards during McTaggart's painting career from Ruskin through to MacColl and Stevenson, the key art commentators during this period.

Although Ruskinian aesthetics are often associated with the conservative critic's adherence to importance of subject (particularly in a didactic sense), much of the basis of this middle ground can be found in Ruskin. Ruskin believed that the formal means by which a picture is produced are inseparable from the consideration of subject.² Form has an effect upon the mind, not just the senses; the language or means of production are inextricably bound to our perception of the artwork as a whole. He states that "there are certain ideas inherent in language itself, and that strictly speaking, every pleasure connected with art has in it some reference to the intellect."³ This extends to a recognition of the significance of purely formal values. Ruskin observes that, "If I were to say...that the best picture was that which most closely imitated nature, I should assume that art could only please by imitating nature..."⁴ With this in mind, he proclaims his desire for "a definition of art wide enough to include all its varieties of aim."⁵

Similar points of view, stressing the inter-relation of subject and technique, emerge in many important areas of British art criticism and theory in the late 19th century. Discussion of the French Impressionists and "impressionism", as variously interpreted in Britain at the time, cannot be neatly packaged into conservative and formalist aesthetics.

The early ideas of several critics of the New Art were grounded in Ruskin. Both P.G. Hamerton and MacColl were initially much influenced by Ruskin's aesthetic principles.

MacColl refers to himself as a "good Ruskinian" in his youth.⁶ In later years he established an aesthetic system which at times still bears comparison to Ruskin. In the essay Subject and Technique of 1893, he asserts that "technique means remembering the tools you have to work with, and taking nothing from a scene that these tools will not naturally and beautifully render."⁷ Like Ruskin, he saw technique as fundamental to art, as "a condition under which the painter sees things...not a mechanical beauty stuck upon the surface of a picture and detachable from it." At the same time, the mediating factor, observes MacColl, is Imagination, "the power of seeing images in things, and making images out of them."⁸

A very similar position was taken by R.A.M Stevenson. In the chapter on "The Dignity of Technique" in his study of Velasquez, Stevenson also stresses that painting is the material embodiment of imagination. It does not provide a narrative text which can be read independently of the artwork itself; the physical process of painting is inherent to the development of the imaginative idea. "Without matter there is no art; without matter there is no stuff in which imagination may create an image."⁹ Far from denying the importance of the subject, Stevenson acknowledges the association between content and technique: "as paint serves both to record impressions of the external world and to decorate a given space and shape, an artist, however partial to either, must give some measure of attention to both of these aims."¹⁰ In a painting, asserts Stevenson, the artist is "master to make his material speak in character, follow a vein of sentiment, express a mood of seeing."¹¹

This approach to technique would, therefore, have been quite compatible with the concept of the "poetic" landscape, which attempted to express a sentiment of nature. Underlying this aesthetic system was still an adherence to the idea of "truth to nature". Stevenson admits that there may be such a thing as "mere technique" but concludes that in painting this would

be "mere decorative consistency, without the meaning or emotion of truth to nature."¹² Emotional significance in an artwork, even for a critic such as Stevenson, was still bound therefore to the subject.

Edward Pinnington's understanding of McTaggart rested to some extent upon the denial of the importance of formal concerns:

"I know of no living artist whose work, in the mass, reduces to such hopeless scorn the fad of modernity that art is all cleverness of technique, all canvas and paint. McTaggart is a living protest...against the inane assumption that to be artistic a picture must be intellectually vacuous, devoid of moral significance, and destitute of beauty."¹³

In a series of articles in 1909 he develops an argument for art to be seen in terms of content which appeals to the intellect and the emotions.¹⁴ For Pinnington, the importance of art rested in feeling rather than technique. "None can love painted cleverness; all may love a poem of passion in beautiful colour."¹⁵ In these terms, he questions the Glasgow School, in whose work he believed that "Art is approached from a new standpoint...The emphasis is removed from subject to technique - brushwork, colour, arrangement, everything that is included in mechanic."¹⁶

It would be wrong, however, to interpret Pinnington simply as a conservative, despite the fact that much of his writing was structured as a defence against what he regarded as the damaging threat of modern values. Although he questioned the new stress upon technique, he was also hostile to the use of anecdote for its own sake. He upholds McTaggart and Lauder's leading pupils as having

"stood between the badly painted inanities prevalent in every division of art, depending wholly for acceptance upon subject interest or 'anecdote', and the incoming

inainties of the Glasgow School depending wholly upon technique.¹⁷

James Caw's support for McTaggart was built upon similar foundations but Caw, unlike Pinnington, did make more allowance for the importance of technique in the aesthetic experience as a whole. His enthusiasm for McTaggart's approach to subject matter was not diminished by his recognition of the formal qualities of his work. He defines art as being "a compromise between the artist's own feelings and technical skill, the legitimate claims of nature, and the special characteristics of the medium of expression..."¹⁸ He also cites Aristotle's definition of the beautiful in art as "the shining of the idea through a sensuous medium."¹⁹ For Caw and, one suspects, for McTaggart, "poetry" and "impressionism" could easily co-exist on grounds which accepted both content and form.

The nature of his subject matter remained important to McTaggart throughout his career; it was not simply a pretext for his developing technique. On the other hand, it is very unlikely that McTaggart remained unaware of the new criticism and aesthetics which were building up around "impressionism", particularly since it was applied to his own work and that of artists with whom he was in direct contact.²⁰ It is likely that his own work responded, to some extent, to the critical debate about technique, fuelling his own experiments with "impressionistic" methods. Nevertheless he was completely able to absorb such interests within his broader aim to create "poetic" landscapes.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

FIGURES AND LANDSCAPE

INTRODUCTION

In this final section, the inter-relation of subject and technique in McTaggart's work will be examined in two case studies. These works, which occupied McTaggart over long periods of time, contain significant subject matter and could be described as "poetic" landscapes in the terms considered earlier. However, they also demonstrate McTaggart's interest in the "impressionistic" landscape notions of effect, unity and expansive vision - concepts closely, although not exclusively, associated with the new critical values of the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Central to the discussion of these works is the integration of figure subject into the landscape. MacColl claimed that imagination in art did not simply rest upon the introduction of figures into a picture with a sentimental title.¹

Nevertheless, the inclusion of genre figures is important in the consideration of McTaggart's landscapes and to the idea of natural harmony which appears to lie behind them. Recent critics have followed MacColl's argument and have tended to reject these figures as one of the less acceptable aspects of McTaggart's work, his submission to a late twentieth century notion of Victorian sentimentalism which uses figure incident as a simple device to encourage popular appeal.² In the attempt to portray McTaggart as a progressive independent, as the forerunner of a modern Scottish school of landscape artists and an impressionist, comparable to but not derivative of the French Impressionists, his use of figures - especially children - becomes a hindrance.

There is no evidence, however, to suggest that this was any sort of compromise dictated by a popular market for genre

scenes. The genre content in McTaggart's later work is present but not obvious. If he had intended to conform to a popular taste for genre it seems more likely that he would have adopted the more conventional rustic genres of Cameron or Faed. Moreover, as examined in Chapter Three, McTaggart had achieved sufficient independence from both financial and Academic pressure to freely choose the content of his work. His use of genre figures represents the exploration of a personal interest and requires more careful assessment.

A landscape which emphasises human involvement with nature was not perhaps a formulated intention in McTaggart's earliest works. However, from the evidence of his paintings (his choice of landscape and his handling of figures within it) it is clear that from early in his career McTaggart gave careful consideration to the relative value of figure and background and how the one could be integrated into the other. This concern distinguishes his work from both a Pre-Raphaelite tradition, which as in Millais' Spring, frequently produced a tension between figure and background, and from a viewpoint occupied primarily with the depiction of outdoor effect. It also establishes McTaggart's individuality within the Scottish school and marks a break from pure landscape, such as that of Horatio McCulloch, and from Scottish genre scenes in the tradition of Wilkie or Thomas Faed, where anecdotal incident is far more important.

THE SOLDIER'S RETURN

McTaggart's treatment of figures within a landscape can be compared in two paintings on the theme of "The Soldier's Return". The first of these, The Old Pathway (pl.10) was painted in 1861 and exhibited the following year at the RSA where it was purchased by the Royal Association.³ The second, The Soldier's Return (pl.83) was painted nearly 40 years later in 1898. It is approximately twice the size of

The Old Pathway (136 x 206 cms compared with 70 x 90 cms) but both paintings are important and representative examples of their respective periods in McTaggart's career.

The earlier work does derive in part from the Scottish school of anecdotal genre and could be compared with an example of Thomas Faed's cottage scenes, First Break in the Family (see pl.109) of 1857. In both works there is an anecdotal title and the unfolding of a narrative. In Faed's picture, this narrative is built around a scene of departure; in the McTaggart, upon loss and reunion, where the subject is the return home of a soldier who is as yet unseen by his family. The wistful expressions of the central figures in each picture create a similar mood.

The placing of figures and the compositional structure is comparable; in each work the foreground figure group is balanced against the approaching/departing figure(s) along a diagonal path into depth. There are, however, significant differences, particularly in the setting of the figures in the landscape. For Faed, landscape is a theatrical backdrop in which the threatening sky establishes a natural counterpart to the human emotion, but from which the figures appear physically isolated, suggesting a studio environment. Faed's only exhibit at the Royal Academy in 1857 and shown at the Scottish Academy the following year, The First Break.., was noted by The Athenaeum for its "most smooth and careful painting." The critic also remarked, "We do not like to see reflections...from lights not in the picture. Such hypothetical clouds and windows may serve as excuses for any absurdity, and are strains upon one's forbearance."⁴ Such criticism is equally applicable to the watercolour version (pl.109), in which the inconsistency of lighting (for example, the conflicting shadows on the faces of the two women on the right) strengthens the sense of artificiality. It is likely that McTaggart also painted his figures in the studio, as was his practice at this time.⁵ However, there is an impression of greater unity between figures and setting

in The Old Pathway. The figures do not dominate the landscape to the same extent as in Faed's work. Already at this stage McTaggart is developing a concern for overall atmospheric unity. Although he still adheres to a means of organising the composition in terms of broad areas of light and shade, this bears greater relation to the actual environment, and appears less arbitrary, than in Faed's painting. The play of light and shade across the figures integrates them into the landscape and creates a more natural effect. Rather than rely upon a conventional chiaroscuro to depict features, McTaggart adopts a more complex scheme of illumination paying greater attention to reflected light (as in the face of the girl at the old man's knee) and to the fall of light across figures predominantly in shade (the child in the foreground and the boy on the left). Thus while McTaggart adhered to a narrative genre composition, his heightened interest in natural observation - and the technique he used to achieve this - added a new dimension to his work.

When exhibited at the RSA in 1862, The Scotsman observed that McTaggart "paints landscapes and figures equally well." and found that in The Old Pathway

"he happily unites figures with landscape. The group assembled before the cottage, basking in the sun, and enjoying the gambols of a girl in pursuit of a butterfly, is beautifully expressed. The landscape portion of the picture is also well painted..."⁶

The freshness of McTaggart's approach to such a subject also appears to have been appreciated by fellow artists. According to Caw, The Old Pathway when first exhibited made a deep and lasting impression upon William Darling McKay, who was studying in Edinburgh in the 1860s.⁷ The picture was purchased from the RSA by the Royal Association and won by an Irishman.⁸ McKay, however, was later to acquire it for his own collection (from c.1880). Caw cites McKay as remarking

that, for the younger artists of that time "...McTaggart's work stood more clearly than that of any other artist for the most vital tendencies about them and pointed the way to further developments."⁹

Given MacKay's paper on "Traditional and Modern Methods in Oil Painting"¹⁰ and his stress upon the importance of technique, it is likely that it was McTaggart's technical handling of the subject rather than the subject itself which he saw as progressive and embodying "vital tendencies." Nevertheless, the subject matter was important to McTaggart. It was not simply an excuse to explore how best to represent tonal and colour values in a naturalistic landscape, nor simply the adoption of an anecdotal scenario.

Although the main canvas of 1861 was called The Old Pathway, a work of similar date which Caw describes as a smaller version, being either a study or a replica, retained the title The Soldier's Return.¹¹ This gives a clue to the possible origin of the subject, and indicates that McTaggart thought of the work as more than just a naturalistic landscape.

Part of the impetus for the subject must have come from the familiar sight of soldiers returning from the Crimean War (1854-6) and the Indian Mutiny (1857). McTaggart's soldier appears to be dressed in contemporary military uniform and sports a beard (normally against convention but common with Crimean veterans, who had been given permission to grow beards during the campaign).¹² McTaggart's picture deals with the notion of "homeland", a time when the war was still fresh in the public mind. However, the title The Soldier's Return was also closely associated with a poem by Robert Burns, dealing with the return from war (probably the Napoleonic wars) of a soldier to Scotland. The poem makes strong use of landscape imagery; the soldier's thoughts of his native land are mingled with that of his love: "I thought upon the bank o' Coil/ I thought upon my Nancy".¹³

Although McTaggart does not follow the narrative of the poem or develop any specific image from it, he does depict a scene of reunion with homeland and family. His picture is concerned with the relationship between man and the landscape in an emotional as well as a physical sense.

A volume of Burns's The Soldier's Return had been published in 1857 for the Royal Association and it was perhaps this which provided impetus for McTaggart's adoption of the subject. The volume had been illustrated by John Faed, whose illustration for the opening stanza is that of a soldier walking through a glade of trees, a country village seen in the background. (pl.106). Despite McTaggart's alteration to the scale of the principal figure, his choice of the moment of the homeward journey immediately prior to re-union and his similar use of a canopy of trees through which the soldier approaches, suggests that he was aware of Faed's illustration.¹⁴

McTaggart's later version of The Soldier's Return (pls.83 & 83a) was painted nearly 40 years after in 1898. The narrative is less obvious than in the earlier work and the *features of individual figures* have been suppressed; their presence and actions do not create the same focus of attention. However, content and meaning, conveyed through the figure subject, still remains important. It is significant that the work is called The Soldier's Return, linking the picture both to his earlier work of 1861 and again to Burns' poem.

It is possible that with the second version of this subject McTaggart returned to John Faed's interpretation of Burns. Faed's illustration to the third verse of The Soldier's Return depicts the soldier leaning against a wall, his hand covering his face to hide his tears after catching sight of Nancy (pl.107). There is no mention of a wall with a landscape beyond in Burns' poem but it is a feature found in both Faed's and McTaggart's pictures. However, McTaggart only develops the basic elements of Faed's composition. There is

no obvious reference to the meeting between the soldier and Nancy, and McTaggart introduces the various figures of children engaged in play and watching the soldier.

The perception of the landscape and the role of the figures within McTaggart's second treatment of the subject remain essentially the same as in The Old Pathway. The figures merge into the setting and are read as part of the landscape. The soldier looks out across the cornfields, both absorbed with the landscape and absorbed by it as his body merges with the structure of the wall against which he reclines. The children sprawl and appear to be physically absorbed into the background, the attitude of untroubled play of the child in the middle foreground comparable to that of the child chasing a butterfly in the earlier picture.

The method by which the integration of figure and background is achieved is a development of that in the earlier work. Already in The Old Pathway McTaggart's brushstrokes had begun to cut across form, emphasising the overall effect of light rather than the delineation of individual objects. This is taken further in the later work, where there is a much broader technique and the use of a high-keyed palette within a narrow tonal range. McTaggart makes extensive use of wet on wet painting, especially evident in the tree where a range of greens and browns, blues and yellows are blended together on the canvas. The figures are on the whole painted over the landscape, although some bare canvas appears to have been left for them, and the brushwork in the figures opened out to merge with the landscape. The finished canvas has been extended by approximately four to six inches on the left and right; the previous tack holes are still clearly visible. The picture is therefore characteristic of his late work, exhibiting the intensified interest in outdoor landscape "effect", "unity" and colour-mixing associated with the notion of impressionism in the late nineteenth century. In this respect The Soldier's Return can be interpreted within the critical principles of the New Art. However, its subject

matter, its link with the earlier Old Pathway and its likely ultimate derivation from the poetry of Robert Burns and a pictorial format suggested by an artist working within a more ostensibly anecdotal tradition of the previous generation, should not be underestimated. McTaggart uses the freedom of his technique not to deny subject but to strengthen and enhance its meaning. Ideas of homeland and homecoming, the emotional link between man and landscape, are expressed in part through technique. The formal integration of figure and landscape is not simply a by-product of McTaggart's method of painting but a reflection of his response to significant meaning within landscape.

THE EMIGRANT SERIES

McTaggart also develops the theme of homeland in his series of canvases dealing with the departure of emigrants from the Scottish Highlands. These works are not figure subject paintings in the same sense as Thomas Faed's Last of the Clan (pl.110), where the landscape simply forms a backdrop for the subject matter. For McTaggart, the emotional content of the subject is closely linked to the response to the landscape. Here McTaggart is again exploring the relationship between figure and landscape.

With the theme of "The Emigrants", as with his pictures of St. Columba landing and preaching in Scotland, McTaggart develops an interpretation of historical events which are of particular relevance to his native Kintyre, from which there had been extensive emigration.¹⁵ It might seem important, therefore, that the landscape portrayed in these works is specific. McTaggart, however, appears to have been involved with a more general reflection on the subject and the titles in this series variously refer to "The Emigrants", "Emigrants Leaving the Hebrides" and "Crofter Emigrants Leaving the West of Scotland". As in many other of his landscapes with

figures, it is probable that the figure subject was not conceived at the same time at which the original landscape was painted. Whether or not the landscapes in the Emigrant pictures would have been recognised as specific locations by an audience at the RSA is largely irrelevant. McTaggart was not painting these works for public exhibition. The Emigrant pictures were not widely exhibited at major shows during McTaggart's lifetime. They should perhaps more accurately be interpreted as the exploration of a personal interest.¹⁶

The theme of emigration had been treated in various ways by several artists before McTaggart: Ford Madox Brown The Last of England (1852-5), Richard Regrave The Emigrant's Last Sight of Home (1859) and Erskine Nicol An Irish Emigrant Landing at Liverpool (1871). The subject, however, does not appear to have been popular at the RSA in the 19th century. Very few of the exhibits of Academicians and Associates listed by Frank Rinder deal specifically with emigration.¹⁷ This lack of serious approach to Highland emigration in the visual arts in Scotland may have been partly the result of the perceived social and political sensitivity of the subject. The clearances did not fit easily into the view of the Scottish peasantry as depicted by McTaggart's contemporaries such as Chalmers or Cameron. Although Cameron in a work such as A Lonely Life (coll: National Gallery of Scotland), of c.1873, depicts the dignity of peasant life in the face of adversity, there is no real questioning of the social order which lay behind this existence. Also, Highland emigration, in contrast to emigration from England, was from non-urban areas and, although fully reported in the papers, was somewhat removed from the art-buying centres of Edinburgh and Glasgow. However, it should be remembered that some collectors such as J.G. Orchar, and some artists, such as McTaggart himself, were from the poorer rural classes and the issue of the clearances would have been of relevance to them.

For McTaggart, the most important precedent, dealing with a specifically Scottish situation, is likely to have been

Thomas Faed's The Last of the Clan (pl.110) of 1865, exhibited at the Royal Academy in London but not at the RSA. Like many other pictures by Faed, the Scottish subject matter was intended for an English rather than a Scottish audience. His treatment of the subject relies heavily upon pathos, sustaining the romantic image of the Scottish Highlanders that had grown in the first half of the 19th century. Although it does deal with the realities of the Highland land situation, it is couched in a romantic visual language which removes it from the level of social realism.

Inherent in Faed's view is the recognition of the changing status of the Highlands. From its inception, the 19th century image of Scotland fed upon a nostalgia for a way of life which was dying out. Faed, as the title of his work indicates, capitalised upon this nostalgia, also apparent in the lines which accompanied the painting when exhibited at the RA in 1865: "...we began to feel that our once powerful clan was now represented by a feeble old man and his grand-daughter, who...owned not a single blade of grass in the glen that was once all our own." Despite the reference to loss of land, the picture appears to have been viewed in terms of pathos - The Art Journal, for example, regarded it as "A touching story" - rather than serious social comment.¹⁸

McTaggart's Emigrant pictures of the 1890s are in some respects also romantic in conception. Although he makes less overt use of Highland nostalgia, the scenes which he depicts are evidently imaginary or historical. The emigrant vessels travelling to America by the 1890s were almost exclusively steam-ships, leaving from major ports such as Glasgow. It is probable that McTaggart, who depicts a sailing vessel, was looking back to mid century when the "Gleaner" regularly sailed from Campbeltown to America. This vessel was owned by a local foundry and timber merchants, Nathaniel McNair & Sons, who plied the emigrant trade to America bringing back ship-building timber on the return run.¹⁹

It is likely that McTaggart in childhood was familiar with the sight of friends and neighbours being uprooted and leaving the country. As a small crofter, McTaggart's father was perhaps himself threatened with the prospect of emigration. There were certainly pressures upon the family at Aros; whilst William was still young, they were forced to move to nearby relatives and subsequently into Campbeltown. However, although a large part of the family's income came from growing corn, potatoes and flax, it was supplemented by digging peat for the local distilleries, a staple industry of the region. The large area of mossland between Campbeltown and Machrihanish ensured that a family with rights to dig peat had some security for as long as the distilleries flourished.

Some of the most active periods of emigration in Kintyre, and in the West of Scotland generally, occurred in the 1840s and 50s. The Scotsman in the 1840s is filled with accounts of the sailing of emigrant ships. One senses in these an undercurrent of concern about the conditions of the sea voyage and the relative wealth of the emigrants. Many episodes of forced emigration had led to severe social and economic problems in the host country. Thus in 1842, The Scotsman, reporting the sailing of the "Perthshire" from Glasgow to the USA, stresses that "The passengers were all of a very respectable class - chiefly farmers with their friends - and were in the best spirits."²⁰

There was, therefore, an ambivalent attitude to emigration. Whilst the problems and dangers were fully recognised there was nevertheless a sense of forced optimism. By the 1890s, when McTaggart was painting the main canvases of his emigrant series, the positive aspect of emigration was more firmly established. A large proportion of the Kintyre emigrants travelled to America.²¹ Their success encouraged further emigration from Argyll and their departure was seen as a positive movement, not simply the result of pressure on the land. Several of the emigrants maintained links with Kintyre

through the "Kintyre Club", and by the 1890s the subject of emigration was not looked upon with the fear that it had aroused earlier in the century.

In general, the situation in the Highlands had improved during the 1860s and 70s. In the early 1850s the clearances had been concentrated on the West Coast and Island areas and the public were still particularly aware of the oppression and violence, which was well covered in the newspapers. But by the 1860s the cumulative effect of the earlier periods of emigration meant that population pressures had improved, which, linked with good harvests and ancillary employment such as fishing, had meant a general improvement in the level of prosperity reaching down to the crofting classes. In 1886 the Crofters Act was passed, giving crofters security of tenure in perpetuity and fair rents established by the Crofters' Commission. There were further outbreaks of violence in the 1880s but these were based upon a desire to recover land rights rather than being the direct result of action by landlords. As an emotive issue, emigration was by this time centred upon the issue of "homeland", to which McTaggart's exploration of figure and landscape relates.

Although McTaggart's first major emigrant painting was not begun until around 1883-90, he first touched upon the subject early in his career. A small oil sketch entitled Anxious Enquiries (pl.6), which Caw dates to about 1860²², is probably a reference to emigration. It shows a harbour scene with figures and luggage being boarded onto a rowing boat about to set out for a large sailing vessel seen in the background. Caw refers to a large canvas (untraced) also entitled Anxious Enquiries, which he dates to around 1891-5²³, which would suggest that McTaggart may have reworked this initial idea at the same time he was developing his main Emigrant series.

Caw also mentions a drawing made at a sketching club before 1862 "which in some ways foreshadows the late Emigrant

pictures."²⁴ The first definite treatment of the theme, however, is in Word From the West, an oil of 1864. This is an interior scene in which a girl reads to her family a letter from a relation who has emigrated. Pencil studies for this work are extant (Trustees of the Misses McTaggart). The Emigrants First Letter Home, exhibited at the RA in 1868 is probably of a similar scene. This aspect of emigration, focusing upon the family left at home was approached by other artists such as James Collinson in Answering the Emigrant's Letter (coll: Manchester City Art Gallery) shown at the RA in 1850 and a work by Charles Lees, The Emigrant's First Letter from Australia to his Wife, exhibited at the RSA in 1874.

A later work, although not normally grouped as part of his Emigration series, also appears to relate to the subject; Away O'er the Sea - Hope's Whisper (pl.56) dated 1889, was painted at a time when McTaggart was completing the first main Emigrant painting. Here two figures are placed high on a knove in the foreground, watching the sails of a ship as it moves into the distance. It is an essentially peaceful and optimistic image, a poetic reflection. The title of the work and the high-key palette of pearly colours support this mood.

The first painting in the main sequence of McTaggart's Emigrant pictures is The Emigrants (pl.58), which Caw²⁵ dates to between 1883 and 1889/90. According to Caw, this first version, known to the artist's family as the "Blue Emigrants", was begun in 1883, when McTaggart painted a seascape with a rocky knove in the foreground out of doors at Carradale.²⁶ The evidence of the paint structure supports that the figures were painted subsequent to the landscape. The figures and the distant ship are clearly painted on top of the land/seascape, although the area of the headland has been extended upwards at the same time as the figures were added and in some parts, such as the figure group on the left, portions of the land/seascape have been reworked around the additions. The colour mix of this work, in comparison

with the later version of 1891-4, is less complicated, suggesting that the main landscape portion may have been painted outside.

Apparently dissatisfied with the effect achieved in this first canvas, McTaggart found this arrangement of the subject of sufficient interest to begin a second version shortly after in 1891 (pl.67). The new picture retains the basic composition of the first work; the figure grouping is almost identical. The later work, however, is very different in conception and construction. All parts of the composition are worked in parallel. The distant ship is painted on bare ground, not over the sea. A wider range of hues are employed in the treatment of the sky and sea. Yellows, greens and reds are woven in the sky and yellows and green in the sea. Overall it is of a higher key; more extensive use is made of white, unmixed as a highlight and to key up hues, especially blues and yellows. As in the earlier work, the basic figure positions are outlined in dark paint but now McTaggart paints the outlines directly onto the basic ground colour rather than over the paint layer of the land/seascape. It is likely, therefore, that this later version was painted in the studio using the painting of 1883/90 as a model.

These changes do not primarily involve outright changes in the subject or composition of the work. They are concerned with the general effect expressed through technique. However, this has resulted, perhaps intentionally, in a subtle shift in the relationship between figure and landscape. Conceived as part of the composition from the outset, the figure subject is more fully absorbed into the landscape. McTaggart has also introduced a double rainbow into the sky and has added the lettering "AMERICA" onto a piece of luggage in the foreground. The lettering reinforces the reading of the painting as a subject dealing with emigration. The rainbow, not only a symbol of hope linking this work with the earlier Away O'er the Sea - Hope's Whisper, heightens the natural drama of the scene. That the landscape plays a key role in

how the picture was intended to be understood is indicated by a fuller title given to one of the studies/replicas (possibly the work now in Kirkcaldy Art Gallery & Museum) when it was sold to Peter McOmish Dott in 1898. The picture appears in Dott's daybook as Crofters leaving Hebrides for America in threatening yet hopeful weather. Similarly, when the Kirkcaldy picture was exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1901 it was accompanied in the catalogue by the lines,

"In storm and sunshine; mixed with fears and hopes,
From their rude island homes to distant lands they went."

Of this work Dott recalled,

"McTaggart remarked 'You see the figures are not painted but only 'etched' in', - his notion was to make the squall and rainbow dominant, the spectator to come back to figures as a significant embroidery with also dramatic or human interest."²⁷

There are a number of smaller panels and canvases of the Emigrant pictures and it is clear that McTaggart spent considerable effort in working upon this series.²⁸ Most of the small panels are not simply replicas but represent McTaggart's working out of his ideas. It was a theme which occupied him, on and off, for most of his career and must, therefore, in terms of subject matter, be seen as one of the most important projects of his career.

In 1895 McTaggart painted the last in the main series of canvases. The Sailing of the Emigrant Ship (pl.72) depicts the same headland and the same expanse of sea as the earlier pictures; although slightly squarer in format it is compositionally very similar. However, it can be seen as a progression in a sequence to be read in relation to the previous works. The ship has now sailed from right to left across the canvas and is about to leave the field of view.

The bustling crowd on the shore has dispersed, leaving a few isolated figures. It is different in mood. The rainbow has almost left the sky and optimism is replaced by sadness.

In this last work McTaggart comes closest to Faed's Last of the Clan. He is using a vocabulary similar to that of Faed. The figures left behind are the remnants of the community, an old man bent double, who may indeed be the last of the clan, and a howling dog. Nevertheless, it is still very different from Faed's picture. McTaggart avoids Faed's emphasis upon the individual to present a more generalised scene of departure, in which the land/sea-scape plays an essential role. He is concerned with evocation rather than narrative.

The more overt subject matter in the Emigrants and the Return of the Soldier series does not separate them as unusual within McTaggart's oeuvre. In their basic conception they can still be related to other important late works such as The Harvest Moon or Winter, Broomieknowe. They all deal with people in the landscape and meaning is expressed through this relationship. Even large seascapes without figures such as And all the Choral Waters Sang derive their significance from human, emotional response to the subject.

Poetic sentiment was at the root of McTaggart's approach to art. It had been a dominating factor in his relationship with his early patrons; Simpson, Ritchie and Bell had encouraged McTaggart to explore literary and poetic subject matter. McTaggart had also learnt a form of suggestive poeticism from the work of Millais, which remained important throughout his career. Integral to this poetic sentiment was a perception of the rural and coastal landscape, recognising the dialectic of town and country, the poetic tradition of Burns, and a desire to portray the harmony of man and nature.

McTaggart did respond to the challenge of new ideas concerning the technique of painting, ideas which were

fundamental to the critical discourse surrounding the opposition of content and technique in British art in the late nineteenth century. He pursued aims which can be associated with "impressionism" and the New Art of this period: pictorial "effect", "unity", "breadth of vision" and an experimental and sophisticated colour technique.

However, to read such works as The Emigrants or The Soldier's Return as exercises in the study of light and atmosphere, articulated through "impressionistic" technique, limits their meaning. McTaggart's landscapes are not simply about "scenes" or "views", nor about the landscape as the object of empirical study. They are concerned with the emotional and physical link between man and landscape, how people are involved with and perceive the natural world. They are, in McTaggart's own terms, "human" landscapes.

NOTES

NOTES

Abbreviations:

NGS - National Gallery of Scotland.
 NLS - National Library of Scotland.
 RSA - Royal Scottish Academy.
 RA - Royal Academy.
 RGI - Royal Glasgow Institute.
 RHA - Royal Hibernian Academy.

Caw 1917 - James Caw, William McTaggart RSA, Glasgow, 1917.
 Monograph and catalogue of works.

Ruskin, Works - E.T. Cook and A. Wedderburn (ed.) The Works of John Ruskin, Library Edition.
 London, 1902-12.

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1. The chronological development of McTaggart's work is covered in Caw 1917 and Lindsay Errington's catalogue of the exhibition William McTaggart 1835-1910, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1989, held at the Royal Scottish Academy.

CHAPTER TWO: Critical Overview

1. Sir James Lewis Caw (1864-1950). Married Annie, the eldest daughter of William McTaggart in 1909. Curator of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 1895-1907, and Director of the National Galleries of Scotland, 1907-30.
2. D.S. MacColl, "William McTaggart", Burlington Magazine, vol.XXXII, 1918, pp.227-8.
3. D.S. MacColl, Nineteenth Century Art, Glasgow, 1902, p.78.
4. MacColl, "William McTaggart", p.227.
5. Caw 1917, p.208.
6. Ibid., p.100.

7. Letter from MacColl to James Caw dated 19 June 1918, NGS, Caw Archive.
8. Letter from MacColl to James Caw dated 22 June 1918, NGS, Caw Archive. In this letter MacColl links together McTaggart and Monet as adopting the convention of rendering the colour of shadows and a general high tonal pitch instead of the range of tones between shadow and light.
9. For the defence of the Impressionists in terms of historical precedence see Kate Flint, Impressionists in England - The Critical Reception, London, Boston & Melbourne, 1984, p.16.
10. Phillipe Burty, "The Paris Exhibitions", The Academy, vol.V, 1874, p.616.
11. E.F.S. Pattison, "Review of the Summer Exhibition of the Society of French Artists", The Academy, vol. III, 1872, p.204.
12. D.S. MacColl, "The Logic of Painting", The Albermarle Review, September 1892, no.ii, p.90.
This was written in reply to an article by the artist Charles Furse, "Impressionism - What it means", The Albermarle Review, August 1892, no.i , p.47-51.
13. The Scotsman, 21 February 1859.
14. The Scotsman, 11 February 1860.
15. Idem.
16. The Art Journal, 1870, p.93.
17. Reviews of these works contained in The Art Journal, 1867 p.122 and 1868, p.65.
18. The Art Journal, 1866, p.138.
19. The Art Journal, 1861, p.85.
20. Idem.
21. The Academy, 1871, p.261. Unsigned review of the Royal Academy Exhibition. A landscape by Keeley Halswelle (entitled Contadini) is cited as an example: it "depends entirely on the imitation of the rough coasts and brown bread, otherwise the vast canvas is vacuous, notwithstanding the inflated verses inserted in the catalogue."
22. George Halkett (ed.), Royal Scottish Academy Notes, 1878, p.48 (exhibit 333).

23. Ibid., p.61 (exhibit 424).
24. W.E. Henley, A Century of Artists, Glasgow, 1889.
25. Mortimer Wheeler, "Review: A Century of Artists", The Scottish Art Review, vol.II, no.17, October 1889, p.171.
26. Idem.
27. Stevenson also knew James Caw, and co-authored a book with Caw and Walter Armstrong on Sir Henry Raeburn, published in 1901.
28. R.A.M. Stevenson, "The Art of the Reign", Pall Mall Gazette, 16 June 1892, p.2.
29. Unsigned article, "Art Notes", Pall Mall Gazette, 17 October 1896, p.3.
30. Walter Armstrong, Scottish Painters, London, 1888, p.74.
31. J.M. Gray, "The Wingate and McTaggart Sales", The Scottish Art Review, vol.I, no.12, May 1889, p.367.
32. W.G. Blaikie Murdoch, "A Seascape by McTaggart", Scotia, vol.4, no.3, Lammas 1910, p.138.
33. James Caw, "A Scottish Impressionist", The Art Journal, 1894, p.243.
34. Ibid., p.243.
35. Ibid., p.245.
36. Idem.
37. Idem.
38. See below, p.18-20.
39. James Caw, "The Scottish School of Painting", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, March 1895, p.349.
40. Caw 1917, p.39-40.
41. W.G. Blaikie Murdoch, op cit., p.137.
42. C. Lewis Hind, Landscape Painting: vol.II - From Constable to the Present Day, London, 1924, p.114.
43. C.H. Collins Baker and Montague R. James, British Painting, London, 1933, p.217.
44. Ibid., p.218

45. The Sunday Times, 1935, quoted by George A Hutcheson, "William McTaggart's London Exhibitions", The Scottish Art Review, vol.XI, no.2, 1967, p.5.

Although exhibitions in London opened up McTaggart's work to an English audience, he continued to make little impact on an international level. He had received some mention in Cornelius Gurlitt's Die Malerei in Schottland (1893) but had not featured in Richard Muther's The History of Modern Painting (revised ed., London and New York, 1907). Muther had referred to other Scott Lauder pupils, showing an interest in comparisons between George Paul Chalmers and Hugh Cameron with Josef Israels and Dutch painting, an argument into which McTaggart's work would not readily fit.

46. John Tonge, The Arts of Scotland, London, 1938, p.84.
47. *Ibid.*, p.85.
48. Ian Findlay, Art in Scotland, Oxford, 1948, p.134.
49. Stanley Cursiter, Scottish Art, London, 1949, p.125.
50. David and Francina Irwin Scottish Painters at Home and Abroad 1700-1900, London, 1975, p.369.
51. William Hardie, Scottish Painting 1837-1939 (1st publ. 1976) revised ed., London, 1976, p.63.
52. *Ibid.*, p.49.
53. Edward Gage, The Eye in the Wind, London, 1977, p.15.
54. *Ibid.*, p.14.
55. *Idem.*
56. *Idem.*
57. William Hardie, *op.cit.*, p.66.
58. Caw 1917, p.156-7.
59. Lindsay Errington, Master Class: Robert Scott Lauder and his Pupils, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1983, p.98.
60. Lindsay Errington, William McTaggart 1835-1910, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1989.

CHAPTER THREE: Determinants of McTaggart's Career

1. See Lindsay Errington, Master Class: Robert Scott Lauder and his Pupils, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1983, for a general discussion of the Trustees Academy in the 1850s and '60s.
2. See Caw 1917, p.11; and Hugh Cameron, "A Few Recollections of Student Days" in The Cairn, Edinburgh College of Art, no date.
3. Contrary to Caw's assertion (Caw 1917, p.13) that McTaggart passed immediately into Lauder's class and began drawing from the round, there exist a number of outline drawings in McTaggart's Academy portfolio, in possession of McTaggart family, which suggest that McTaggart followed the usual progression of study. See also Lindsay Errington, William McTaggart, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1989, p.16-17.
4. Quoted Errington, Master Class, p.31-32.
5. For example: Youth and Age (1852), A Fisher Boy (1856), Mischief, or the Mother's Wardrobe Invaded (1857).
6. Untraced. But another work entitled Left in Charge, painted in 1902 (illustr. sale cat. Sothebys, Gleneagles, 30.8.1983), which itself was a reworking of an earlier picture of the same title of 1865, appears to follow the same basic narrative as The Sleeper and the Watcher.
7. Caw 1917, p.20.
8. Included in the Manchester exhibition were Millais' Autumn Leaves 1855-6, Ford Maddox Brown's The Hayfield 1855-6, and Holman Hunt's The Hireling Shepherd 1851-2 and Our English Coasts - Strayed Sheep 1852, all of which tackle the issue of outdoor landscape effect.
9. Albert Boime, The Academy and French Painting in the Nineteenth Century, London, 1971, pp.47 & 77.
10. Cameron, "A Few Recollections of Student Days", p.6.
11. Ibid p.9.
12. P.G. Hamerton, Thoughts About Art, London, 1873, p.34.
13. Duncan MacMillan, Painting in Scotland: the Golden Age, Oxford, 1986, p.155.
14. Vol.II pub. 1846, Vol.III 1856, Vol.IV 1856, Vol.V 1860.

15. See letter from McTaggart to Simpson, dated 10 Feb 1864, NLS, MS 6351, ff.22-23.
16. Letter from McTaggart to Simpson, dated 4 Nov 1863, NLS, MS 6351, ff.7-8. See also MS 6351, ff.17-18.
17. Errington, McTaggart, p.21.
18. Caw 1917, p.13.
19. The 1866 work was a loan picture. The 1872 picture had previously been exhibited at the Glasgow Institute. In 1901, two appear to have been on loan and one was sent on from the exhibition of the International Society.
20. Caw 1917, p.20
21. Ibid, p.221-279.
22. Ibid, p.79.
23. See, for example, letter from C.R. Leslie to his sister, May 1851, quoted in E. Johnson, Painters of the British Social Scene, London, 1986, p.18.

See also Dianne Sachko Macleod, "Mid Victorian Patronage of the Arts: F.G. Stephens's 'The Private Collections of England'", Burlington Magazine, vol. cxxxviii, 1986, p.597-607.
24. The Art Journal, 1859, p.112.
25. The annual contemporary Fine Art exhibitions in Dundee continued from 1879 to 1891 with a further exhibition in 1895.
26. Among his eighteen loans were works by Erskine Nicol, Sam Bough, Horatio McCulloch, McTaggart, A.H. Burr, George Paul Chalmers, John Pettie and John McWhirter. See also Dundee Yearbook, 1897, p.75, for reference to the first sale of Bell's collection in 1877.
27. See also Chapter Six, p.116.
28. Quoted Caw 1917, p.43.
29. For an examination of some of the reasons behind the taste for rural genre amongst the Dundee collectors see John Morrison, Rural Nostalgia 1850-1870, Ph.D thesis, St.Andrews University, 1989. Morrison's assertion (p.175) that "None of them saw their collection as a means of ostentatious display of wealth or a means of acquiring prestige within the community" is perhaps too sweeping a statement. The concern for the social and "educative" role of art, which he cites as underlying

the attitude of these collectors, was advanced so frequently during this period that it becomes almost a platitude, a standard justification of art which survives even today. Simpson's desire to protect the originality of his works (see below, p.37-38) suggests that the personal dynamics within the circle of collectors created a more complex situation.

30. Simpson was a Fellow of the Royal Society of Scotland and a member of the Numismatic Society of London. He assembled a large and valuable collection of coins and medals which, like his paintings, he was forced to sell in 1882.
31. Modern Pictures of Scottish, English, French and Belgian Schools belonging to George B Simpson, T. Chapman & Son, Edinburgh, 4 December 1880.

The Leighton was bought partly on Chalmer's recommendation. See letter from Chalmers to Simpson, post-marked 28 November 1872, RSA Library, Simpson's annotated transcript no.LXXI.
32. Valuable Collection of Objects of Art etc. Property of George B Simpson, Dowells, Edinburgh, 31 March 1886.

Two of the largest works were The Marriage of St. Catherine and The Adoration of the Shepherds (each 58.5 x 47.5 inches), ascribed to Luca Giordano. There were also two large canvasses by Robert Scott Lauder - Christ's Resurrection Declared by an Angel to the Women and Claverhouse Ordering Morton to be Carried Out and Shot (97 x 64 inches).
33. Catalogue of the Valuable Library belonging to George Simpson Esq., sold at Dowell's, Edinburgh, 19 & 20 April 1886.
34. The extant letters probably represent the main bulk of the actual correspondence. Simpson appears to have methodically retained most of the manuscripts which he received as well as a number of draft letters to his correspondents, which are now held by National Library of Scotland.
35. This is probably the sketch which survives under the title The Daisy Chain (PC), signed and dated 1863. It has been brought to a moderate level of finish, although not to the extent of the main painting.
36. Draft letter, dated 8 May 1863, MS 6351, ff.5-6.
37. Letter dated 14 July 1863, NLS, MS 6350, ff.175-6.
38. Letter dated 18 Dec 1865, NLS, MS 6351, ff.172-3.
39. Letter dated 8 May 1863, NLS, MS 6351, ff.5-6.

40. Letter dated 1 June (?)1867, NLS, MS 6351, ff.57-58.
41. Letter dated 4 July 1868, NLS, MS 6351, ff.67-70.
42. Letter dated 6 July 1868, NLS, MS 6351, ff.72-4.
43. Caw 1917, p.51.
44. Letter dated 4 (?)April 1866, NLS, MS 6351, ff.46-7.
This trip is also referred to by Chalmers in a letter to Simpson, dated 16 April 1866, RSA Library, Simpson transcript no.XLI.
45. Valuable Modern Pictures, William Ritchie Esq., late of Elmslea, Dundee, Dowell's, Edinburgh, 14 March 1885.
46. Letter dated 10 June 1864, NLS, MS 6351, ff.34-35.
47. Caw 1917, pp.44 & 46. Caw's reference, p.46, to McTaggart working on a larger version of this picture for Simpson appears to have been an error.
48. Letter dated 31 Jan 1867, NLS, MS 6351, ff.52-53.
49. Letter dated 24 August 1880, NLS, MS 6351, ff.116-17.
50. Letter from Robertson to James Caw, dated 9 February [?], NGS, Caw Archives.
51. Sketchbook of c.1863/4, NGS Department of Prints and Drawings, D.3930.
52. See Caw 1917, p.24.
53. Errington, McTaggart, p.28.
54. Hargitt, for example, owned such works as Hugh Cameron's Going to the Hay, 1859 (coll: NGS) as well as pictures by John Faed, Thomas Faed, Alexander Fraser and John Pettie.
55. Caw 1917, p.27.
56. Letter from Craig to McTaggart, Sept 1859, McTaggart family papers, quoted by Errington, McTaggart, p.28.
57. Letter from McTaggart to Craig, McTaggart family papers, quoted Caw 1917, p.27.
58. Letter from Craig to McTaggart, 29 Sept 1859, McTaggart family papers, quoted Errington, McTaggart, p.30.
59. Letter from McTaggart to Craig, McTaggart family papers, quoted Caw 1917, p.27, and Errington, McTaggart, p.30

60. Letter from Craig to McTaggart, McTaggart family papers, quoted Errington, McTaggart, p.31.
61. Letter from Craig to McTaggart, date 30 May 1860. McTaggart family papers, quoted Errington, McTaggart, p.31. As Errington points out, the subject of boys playing admist tombs in Greyfriars Churchyard had already been painted by George Harvey in a work of 1849, entitled Blowing Bubbles: The Past and Present (Untraced. Reproduced in Rev. A L. Simpson and T Annan, Selections from the works of Sir George Harvey, RRSA, Edinburgh, no date).
62. See Chapter Ten, p.166.
63. See Minutes of the Dundee Fine Art Exhibition Committee and Dundee Art Union Annual Reports 1877-1891, Dundee Art Galleries and Museums.
64. Caw 1917, p.135.
65. See Caw 1917, catalogue of pictures, p.221-279.
66. McTaggart's family correspondence indicates that in the 1850s he had accounts with various Edinburgh colourmen, including Aitken Dott. See Errington, McTaggart, p.20.
67. Undated pencil note to Caw, NGS, Caw Archive.
68. Idem. The sales referred to here are those of Joseph Henderson at Edmistons, Glasgow and John Ramsay at Dowells in Edinburgh, within a week of each other in March 1909.
69. Idem.
70. See above n.68.
71. Undated pencil note to James Caw, NGS, Caw Archive.
72. This was Emigrants Leaving the Hebrides, now in Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Gallery.
73. Letter from Dott to James Caw, dated 23 June 1915, NGS, Caw Archive
74. Edward Pinnington, "William McTaggart RSA", Good Words, 1899, p.751.
75. Letter from Dott to James Caw, dated 23 June 1915, NGS, Caw Archive
76. Edward Gage, The Eye in the Wind, London, 1977, p.13, for example, describes McTaggart as "Scotland's first great modern painter." In the attempt to define a Scottish school, McTaggart has become a case study in the promotion of a "national" art. See Chapter Two.

77. The Art Journal, 1861, p.85.
78. See Chapter Twelve (section on Traditional and Modern Methods) for W.D. McKay's assessment of the differences between British and French teaching methods, and the principle of *valeurs* which in part underlay the British understanding of "impressionism".
79. "A Note on Nationality in Art", The Scottish Art Review, vol.I, no.4, September 1888, p.89.
80. Idem.
81. Caw 1917, p.55.
82. Dundee Courier, 10 May 1904.
83. McTaggart's correspondence with Simpson helps establish the pattern of his movements in the 1860s. Unfortunately, the correspondence is scant after 1871 and it is therefore difficult to trace his later movements from this source.
84. The Art Journal, 1862, p.99.
85. Dora (pl.23) was the one exception to this, being exhibited first in Edinburgh. However, when exhibited at the RSA in 1868 it was in its original state of an evening or twilight effect. When submitted to the RA in 1869 it had been substantially altered to the present daylight effect.
86. Caw 1917, p.42.
87. Letter dated 10 June 1864, NLS, MS 6351, ff.34-35.
88. Letter dated from postmark 17 April 1866, NLS, MS 6351, ff.42-3.
89. Letter dated from postmark 4 (?) May 1866, NLS, MS 6351, ff.46-7.
90. The documentation of Sir Coutts Lindsay's involvement with the Kirkcaldy Fine Art Association is scant. Local records and newspaper reviews have yielded little information. See The Academy, 6 September 1879, which states that many of the 683 works in the Kirkcaldy exhibition had previously appeared in the Grosvenor Gallery, as well as the RA and the RSA.
91. The Art Journal, 1878, p.36.
92. Letter dated 25 June [1868 from postmark], NLS, MS 6351, ff.63-66.
93. Letter dated 24 March 1869, NLS, MS 6351, ff.80-83.

94. Letter dated from postmark 5 April 1869, NLS, MS 6351, ff.84-85.
95. Letter dated from postmark 3 May 1869, NLS, MS 6351, ff. 86-87.
96. Letter dated 11 May 1869, NLS, MS 6351, ff.88-91.
97. Letter dated 5 May 1870, NLS, MS 6351, ff.104-7.
98. Letter dated 16 May 1871, NLS, MS 6351, ff.108-11.
99. The Times, 6 May 1874, p.7. This was a response to a review in The Times, 2 May 1874, of the RA exhibition, sympathetic to the lack of representation of landscape artists in the body of the Academy. Armitage, a member of the Hanging committee replied, The Times, 7 May 1874, p.5. A reply to Armitage, signed "Skyline", appeared in The Times, 12 May 1874.
100. The Art Journal, 1874, p.199. Francis Turner Palgrave, writing in the Academy, (vol.v, 1874, p.554), also refers to the complaint that landscape had suffered at the hands of the hanging committee. In his opinion, however, the landscapes at the 1874 RA, both on and off the line, were the most striking feature of the exhibition.
101. Caw 1917, p.58.
102. The Scotsman, 2 May 1874.
103. The Academy, vol.V, 1874, p.554.
104. George Leslie, The Inner Life of the Royal Academy, London, 1914, p.174.
105. James Guthrie, PRSA, in Eighty-Third Annual Report of the Council of the RSA, 1910, p.10.
106. See also Chalmer's letters to Simpson, NLS, MS 6348.
107. See Caw 1917, p.90.
108. Letter on RSA headed notepaper, dated 12 November 1886, RSA Library.
109. Letter dated 23 May 1888, RSA Library.
110. See Esme Gordon, The Royal Scottish Academy 1826-1976, Edinburgh, 1976, p.162/3 and Caw 1917, p.127/8.
111. J.M. Gibbon, "Painters of the Light - An Interview with William McTaggart RSA", Black and White, vol.30, 30 Sept 1905, p.450.
112. Caw 1917, p.211.

CHAPTER FOUR: - The Status and Function of Landscape art in
the mid Nineteenth Century

1. The Connoisseur, 1719, quoted by Leslie Parris, Landscape in Britain 1750-1850, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, 1973, p.9.
2. Joshua Reynolds Discourses on Art (1st publ. 1769-90), new edition, with introduction by Robert R Wark, New Haven and London, 1975, Discourse XIV, p.255.
3. Ibid, p.255-6.
4. Ibid, p.256.
5. See Catalogue of the Valuable Library of the Late Sam Bough Esq RSA, sold at Dowells, Edinburgh, 21 April 1879; Catalogue of the Valuable Library belonging to George Simpson Esq, sold at Dowells, Edinburgh, 19 & 20 April 1886; John Hutchison, Catalogue of the Library, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, 1876.
6. "Modern Painters", Vol.1, Preface to 2nd Edition, 1844, Ruskin, Works, vol.III. p.21.
7. Ibid, p.133-4.
8. Ibid, p.135.
9. John Burnet, Landscape Painting in Oil Colours (1st published 1849), re-edited, with appendix by Henry Murray, London, 1861, p.53-4.
10. C R. Leslie, Handbook for Young Painters, London, 1855, p.255.
11. Ibid, p.256.
12. The Art Journal, 1865, p.161-2.
13. P G. Hamerton, "The Place of Landscape Painting Amongst the Fine Arts", (1st published in the Fortnightly Review, 1 December 1867, pp.197-216), Thoughts About Art, new edition with notes, London, 1873.
14. Thoughts About Art, p.231.
15. Ibid, p.232n.
Hamerton is referring to Robert Hogarth Patterson, Essays in History and Art, Edinburgh, 1862.
16. E V. Ward, Pictor Depictus, Edinburgh, 1876, p.6.
17. See below, Chapter Six.

18. Letter from Millais to F.G. Stephens, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Quoted in The Pre-Raphaelites, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, 1984, p.139.
19. Note by artist, pasted on back of picture. Quoted by J.G. Millais, The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais, London, 1899, vol.II, p.29
20. William Holman Hunt, Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, London, 1905, vol.I, p.150.
21. Virginia Surtees (edit.) The Diary of Ford Madox Brown, New Haven and London, 1981, p.76.
22. Leathart Papers, Special Collections, University of British Columbia Library. Quoted The Pre-Raphaelites, Tate, 1984, p.94.
23. The Art Journal, 1852, p.175.
24. Letter of February 1853, Ford Madox Brown family papers, private collection. Quoted The Pre-Raphaelites, Tate Gallery, 1974, p.94.
25. The Art Journal, 1856, p.173.
26. Artist, vol.VIII, Aug 1887, p.258.

CHAPTER FIVE: Meaning in Scottish Landscape Art

1. This is examined in more detail in Chapter Seven.
2. See Chapter Three, p.27.
3. To some extent, this would seem to follow a similar general trend in British art as a whole. Without a British overview, involving study of London and provincial exhibitions and a more complete survey of critical reviews, no firm conclusions can be drawn. However, it does seem that the narrower base of patronage in Scotland, compared with that of London, partly restricted interest in history or allegorical subjects in the early years of the nineteenth century (see quote from The Scotsman, below, n.10), and gave relatively more prominence to landscape and rural genre subjects.
4. See Chapter Four.
5. Lord Cockburn, Memorials of His Time (1st publ. 1874), new ed. with introduction by K F C. Miller, Chicago and London, 1974, p.230.

6. In the first three years of its activity the Scottish Academy exhibitions cannot necessarily be taken as representative of contemporary art production in Scotland. Many of the prominent Scottish artists such as H.W. Williams, Alexander Nasmyth and John Watson Gordon remained with the rival body, the Institution for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts, who had also begun to stage contemporary art exhibitions. By 1830, however, the Scottish Academy was firmly established as the main exhibiting body and, as can be seen from Appendix III, the composition of the exhibitions of 1830 and 1831 remained roughly similar to that of 1827.
7. The Scotsman, 13 March 1819.
8. Catalogue of Fourth Public Exhibition of Paintings in Scotland with Critical Remarks, Edinburgh, 1811, entry no.83.
9. The Scotsman, 18 March 1820.
10. The Scotsman, 17 March 1821.
11. Idem.
12. Caw 1917, p.201.
13. Black and White, vol.30, 30 Sept 1905, p.450.
14. The concept of the "picturesque" has not been included here as a separate category for discussion. It was of undoubted importance as a recognized aesthetic approach to the landscape in Scotland as elsewhere from the late 18th century. In so far as it became the basis of a shared experience, a standard by which to judge and depict the landscape, it can be regarded as contributing some level of meaning to landscape art. However, this meaning is self-referential, concerned not with an external, higher level of significance (which the structure provided by the classical, the sublime, the historical or the literary might be said to have) but with the process of picture making itself.

To some extent also the picturesque cut across other standards of landscape perception. Experience of the sublime did not necessarily exclude the recognition of picturesque qualities in the landscape.

Discussion of the picturesque in relation to the Scottish landscape can be found in Malcolm Andrews, The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800, Aldershot, 1989.

15. The Scotsman, 8 November 1817.
16. Ibid, p.336.

17. See Lindsay Errington, Master Class: Robert Scott Lauder and his Pupils, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Scotland, 1983, p.10.
18. James Nasmyth, Autobiography, London, 1883, p.24.
19. Joshua Reynolds, Discourses on Art (1st publ. 1769-90), new edition with introduction by Robert R Wark, New Haven and London, 1975, Discourse III, p.42.
20. Ibid, Discourse IV, p.69-70.
21. Letter from James Byers to Phillip Yorke, 4 June 1783, referred to by D. MacMillan, Painting in Scotland, Edinburgh and London, 1986, p.142.
22. William Gilpin, Observations of the Highlands of Scotland (1st publ. 1789) reprint, Richmond, 1973, p.21-22.
23. He exhibited Cottages from Nature in 1822 and Study from Nature on the Coast in 1828.
24. Published in The Spectator, nos. 411-421, 21 June to 3 July 1712.
25. The Spectator, no.412, 23 June 1712.
26. Hugh Blair (1718-1800), follower of Burke and Professor of Rhetoric and Belle-Lettres at the University of Edinburgh. Quoted in J. Dixon Hunt, The Figure in the Landscape, Baltimore and London, 1976, p.172.
27. Thomas Pennant, A Tour in Scotland, and Voyage to the Hebrides, London, 1790, p.330.
28. The Scotsman, 16 April 1828.
29. The Scotsman, 31 March 1821.
30. Thomas Newte, A Tour of England and Scotland in 1785, London, 1788, p.133.
31. The Scotsman, 31 March 1821.
32. M. Misson, Memoirs and Observations in his Travels Over England with Some Account of Scotland and Ireland (written originally in French and translated by Mr Ozell), London, 1719, p.286-87.
33. James Caw, Scottish Painting, Edinburgh, 1908, p.143.
34. Letter to Daniel Terry, 9 January 1823. Published in The Letters of Sir Walter Scott (edited by H.J.C. Grierson), London, 1932-7, vol.VII, p.303.

35. The Scotsman, 23 February 1867.
36. Dundee Advertiser, 17 February 1867.
37. The Highland Outpost remains in the Orchar Collection (now part of Dundee Art Galleries and Museums), whilst Disbanded was presented to Dundee Art Gallery by Orchar.
38. Of importance in the popularisation of the Highlands were improvements in lines of communication, particularly the spread of the railway network, significantly reducing the time and cost involved in travel. This not only made the "Scottish Tour" easier but opened it up to a wider sector of the population.
39. Letter to his mother, dated 14 July 1872, quoted in J.G. Marks, Life and Letters of Frederick Walker, London, 1896, p.247.
40. See Appendix I.
41. George and Peter Anderson, Guide to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, London, 1834, p.350
42. ABC Introduction to the Health, Profit and Pleasure Resorts of Bonnie Scotland, Glasgow and Rothesay, 1897, pp.27 and 88.
43. Thomas Pennant, A Tour in Scotland, and Voyage to the Hebrides, London, 1790, p.224.
44. John MacCulloch, The Highlands and Western Islands of Scotland, London, 1824, vol.II, p.66.
45. The New Statistical Account of Scotland, Edinburgh and London, 1845, vol.VII, p.455-56.
46. Letter dated 24 August 1880, RSA Library.
47. See Alex. MacLeod, The Campbeltown and Glasgow Steam Packet Joint Stock Company Ltd Centenary History (1st publ. in The Campbeltown Courier, March 1927, Campbeltown, 1927.
48. John Walton, The English Seaside Resort: A Social History, 1750-1914, New York, 1983, p.2.
49. Caw 1917, p.25.
50. Idem.
51. Letter dated 21 December 1863, NLS, MS 6351, ff.17-18. This proposed picture cannot be positively linked with any of McTaggart's works of this period, although there are several titles, such as A Summer Afternoon, exhibited RSA 1865, with which it may be connected.

52. Letter dated 25 June [1868 from postmark], NLS, MS 6351, ff.63-66.
53. Caw 1917, p.129-30.
54. Lord Cockburn, Circuit Journeys (1st published 1888), Hawick: Byway Books, 1983, p.18.
55. Francis H. Groome (edit.), Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1885, vol.I, p.240.
56. Alexander Reid, Carnoustie and Its Neighbourhood, Carnoustie, 1874, p.7.
57. Ibid., p.34.
58. Black's Picturesque Tourist of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1882.
59. Dorothy Wordsworth, Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland AD 1803, 3rd edition, edited by J.C. Sharp, Edinburgh, 1894, p.246.
60. Sir Walter Scott, Provincial Antiquities and picturesque scenery of Scotland, 2 vols. in 1 with continuous pagination, London and Edinburgh, 1826, p.127.

CHAPTER SIX: The Poetic Landscape

1. Caw 1917, p.201.
2. J.M. Gibbon, "Painters of the Light - An Interview with William McTaggart, RSA", Black and White, 30 September 1905, vol.30, p.450.
3. Caw, op.cit., p.201.
4. Ibid., p.205.
5. Idem.
6. See Chapter Four, p.63-64.
7. Ruskin, "Modern Painters", vol.I., Works, vol.III, p.87-92.
8. Ibid., p.88.
9. Ruskin "Modern Painters", vol.V., Works, vol.VII, p.454.

The desire to create "human" or "poetic" landscapes can be interpreted as an important aspect of Turner's work. This is discussed, in particular, by Eric Shanes, Turner's Human Landscape, London, 1990.

10. "Modern Painters", vol.I., Works, vol.III, p.133.
11. John Linnell, The Bouquet, no.25, 1853.
Quoted by Katherine Crouan, John Linnell, A Centennial Exhibition, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 1982, p.ix.
12. Preface to 2nd edition of "Modern Painters", vol.I, 1844, Works, vol.III, p.21-2.
13. Caw 1917, p.145.
14. Ibid., p.190.
15. See Chapter Two, p.8-9.
16. Ruskin, "Modern Painters", vol.I, Works, vol.III, p.89.
17. See Chapter Two, p.8.
18. The Scotsman, 21 February 1852.
19. Ignoramus Piger, "Autumn Leaves", The Art Treasures Examiner: A Pictorial, Critical and Historical Record of the Art Treasures Exhibition at Manchester in 1857, London and Manchester, 1857, p.142.
20. See The Scotsman for 2, 5, 16 and 19 November 1853.
21. Ruskin, "Lectures on Architecture and Painting. Edinburgh, November 1853", Works, vol.XII, p.159-60.
22. Ibid., p.157.
23. See Sheenah Smith, Horatio MacCulloch, 1805-1867, exhibition catalogue, Glasgow Museum and Art Gallery, 1988, p.23.
24. J.M. Gibbon, op.cit., p.450.
25. See, for example, NLS, MS 6351, ff.63-66; 76-77; 86-87; 88-91; ff.92-93; ff.104-7; ff.108-11.
26. It is likely that McTaggart's Going to Sea has darkened from the original effect.
27. The composition of Hook's A Widow's Son Going to Sea can be compared with McTaggart's small oil sketch Anxious Enquiries (pl.6) of c.1860.
28. The Scotsman, 21 February 1859.

29. Millais to F.G. Stephens, Bodleian Library, quoted in The Pre-Raphaelites, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, 1984, p.139.
30. The Scotsman, 3 April 1858.
31. Millais to F.G. Stephens, loc.cit.
32. Aaron Scharf (Art and Photography, 1st publ. 1968, revised ed. London, 1974, p.111), points to the inconsistency in tonal character between the foreground and the background of this picture.
33. See Chapter Three, p.44.
34. Numerous other biblical quotations of relevance include: "The same stone which the builders refused: is become the headstone in the corner. This is the Lord's doing: and it is marvellous in our eyes." (Prayer Book 1662, Psalm 118, verse 22; and "We know that if our earthly tabernacle of this house were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Corinthians 3:5).
35. Letter dated 26 March [1866 from postmark], NLS, MS 6351, ff.40-41.
36. Letter from Chalmers to Simpson postmarked 16 March 1866, transcript by Simpson, RSA Library, letter no.XXXVIII.
37. Letter to Holman Hunt, quoted in The Pre-Raphaelites, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, London, 1984, p.172.
38. The Pre-Raphaelites, p.171.
39. Another possible source for McTaggart's paired Spring and Autumn may have been John Linnell's Spring and Autumn (untraced) which McTaggart and his patron Simpson would have seen exhibited at the RSA in 1861.
40. Quoted, The Pre-Raphaelites, p.134.
41. The picture was afterwards presented by McTaggart as his Diploma work to the RSA in 1870.
42. See Caw 1917, p.229.
43. Both reproduced as line engravings by John le Conte.
44. The three poems, for which McTaggart's illustrations were reproduced as wood engravings, were Auld Lang Syne, I'll aye ca' in by yon Town and Mary Morrison.

45. The individual subjects are listed Caw 1917, p.271-2. Several of McTaggart's sketches are in the possession of the McTaggart family.
46. See Chapter Three, p.35.
47. The subject of McTaggart's picture is described in Caw 1917, p.42.
48. Asked of the value which he puts upon life, the gypsy Jasper Petulengro replies, "Life is very sweet brother, who would wish to die," and asked if he were blind, "There's the wind on the heath brother. If I could only feel that, I would gladly live forever." Lavengro, chapter 25.
49. This is dealt with in more detail in Chapter Seven.
50. Other artists who showed a preference for simple topographical titles include the majority of important mid nineteenth century landscape painters: Samuel Bough (1822-1878), J.C. Wintour (1825-1882), Alexander Fraser (1827-1899) and James Docherty (1829-1878). In MacCulloch's case one notable exception to this is My Heart is in the Highlands (Glasgow Museum and Art Gallery) of 1860.
51. John Veitch, The Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry, Edinburgh and London, 1887, p.5.
52. Ibid., p.359.
53. P.M. Dott, Notes Technical and Explanatory on the art of Mr William McTaggart, Edinburgh, 1901, p.18-19.
54. Royal Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland. See also Chapter Fifteen, n.3.
55. For an outline of attitudes to the rural poor in mid nineteenth century Scotland see John Morrison, Rural Nostalgia, Ph.D thesis, St. Andrews University, 1989.
56. William Wordsworth, preface to "Lyrical Ballads with Pastoral and other poems" (1802), John Hayden (ed.), William Wordsworth: the Poems, New Haven and London, 1981, vol.I, p.869-70.
57. Country Life Magazine, 8 August 1868.
58. Good Words, 1878, p.702-3.
59. R. Hutchison, "Report on the Dietaries of Scottish Agricultural Labourers", Transactions of the Highland and Agricultural Society, 4th series, vol.II, (1868), quoted in T.C. Smout, A Century of the Scottish

People 1830-1950, London, 1987, p.80.

60. T.C. Smout, *op.cit.*, p.58.
61. Caw 1917, p.119.
62. The change to the surrounding landscape during McTaggart's residence at Broomieknowe can partly be gauged from Ordnance Survey maps of the Bonnyrigg area for the years 1892, 1905 and 1912.
63. He already had six children by his previous marriage.
64. Verbal evidence of the artist's daughters.
65. Cuthbert Bede (pseudonym of Edward Bradley), Glencreggan, London, 1861, vol.I, p.276. For a general discussion of the life of rural children in the nineteenth century, see Pamela Horn, The Victorian Country Child, Gloucester, 1985. Also G.E. Mingay (ed.), The Victorian Countryside, London, Boston and Henley, 1981.
66. T.H.C. (Thomas Chauncey Townsend), A Descriptive Tour in Scotland, London, 1840, p.5.
67. This tradition extended back to such works as Joshua's Reynold's The Age of Innocence (National Gallery), 1788.
68. John Barrell, The Dark Side of the Landscape, Cambridge, London, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney, 1980, p.35-88.
69. Barrell (*op.cit.*, p.32-3) suggests that by the mid nineteenth century the concern of the rich had shifted from the rural to the industrial worker and that as a result the countryside became more neutral ground for the artist.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Figure and Seascape

1. See letters in NLS, MS 6351, ff.22-23 and ff.60-62.
2. See, for example, the remark of G.P. Chalmers quoted in Chapter Six, p.110.
3. Lindsay Errington, William McTaggart 1835-1910, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1989, p.52. For a detailed discussion of the activity of the Kintyre fishing communities in the nineteenth century, see Angus Martin, The Ring Net

- Fishermen, Edinburgh, 1981.
4. Walter Armstrong, Celebrated Pictures Exhibited at the Glasgow International Exhibition: Fine Arts Section, London, 1888, p.61.
 5. A.H. Palmer, "James Clark Hook RA", The Portfolio, 1888, pp.1-9, 35-43, 74, 105, 165.
 6. Ibid., p.38-39.
 7. Ibid., p.39.
 8. Ibid., p.40.
 9. Idem.
 10. Ruskin, Royal Academy Notes 1859, Works, vol.XIV, p.228.
 11. Other works by McTaggart of similar composition include Two Boys and a Dog in Boat (pl.28), of c.1871, For His Daily Bread (coll: RSA) of c.1879-81, and Daybreak, Kilbrannan Sound (PC) of 1883. MacColl, in his review of Caw's biography (Burlington Magazine, vol.32, 1918, p.22), remarks on Daybreak, Kilbrannan Sound as being a variant on Luff Boy!.
 12. Letter dated 18 June [1866], NLS, MS 2257, ff.332-4.
 13. Letter dated 25 June [1868 from postmark], NLS, MS 6351, ff.63-66.
 14. These works are now in Aberdeen Art Gallery (MacDonald Collection).
 15. The Art Journal, 1863, p.113.
 16. The Standard, 1877, quoted in H.C. Richardson (ed.), Academy Criticism, London, 1877, p.41 (exhibit 126).
 17. See above, n.9.
 18. Caw 1917, p.185.
 19. Errington, McTaggart, p.80-81.
 20. Open from 12th to 29th April 1882 at the Waverley Market, Princes Street, the exhibition attracted 140,000 paid admissions as well as several hundred season ticket holders.
 21. John Brett, Three Months on the Scottish Coast: A Series of Sketches and Pictures Painted During the Summer of the Present Year, Accompanied by an Introductory Essay by John Brett, exhibition catalogue, Fine Art Society, London, 1886, p.10.

22. Caw 1917, p.81. Caw cross-references this picture with the work listed, p.245, as Summer Sundown, Tir nan og.
23. Ibid., p.81n.
24. It is listed by Caw (op.cit., p.245) as belonging to the artist's trustees in 1917.
25. Untraced. Caw, op.cit, p.268.
26. Patrick Geddes, "The Royal Scottish Academy Exhibition", The Scottish Art Review, vol.1., no.11, April 1889, p.307. The picture referred to is probably Machrihanish Bay (coll: NGS) of 1878, which Caw identifies as the work exhibited at the RSA in 1889.
27. The line is inscribed in one of McTaggart's sketchbooks (coll: Trustees of the Misses McTaggart).
28. Like McTaggart, Swinburne was a keen swimmer. In a letter of 1889 to his sister, he writes "Today when I was in the sea it was like swimming into heaven - the glorious sunlight on and in the splendid broad rolling waves made one feel for the minute as if one was in another and better world..."
Letter dated 30 October 1889. C.Y. Lang (ed.), The Swinburne Letters, New Haven, 1959, vol.V, p.274.

Similarly several of his poems, such as The Swimmer's Dream, refer to swimming.
29. Swinburnes Collected Poetical Works, London, 1924, vol.2, p.859.
30. Offshore, verses 40 and 41. Swinburnes Collected Poetical Works, vol.2., p.468.
31. Caw 1917, p.181.

CHAPTER EIGHT: The Importance of Technique

1. Unsigned article, "Art for Art's Sake - A Contrast", The Scottish Art Review, vol.II, no.19, December 1889, p.211.
2. R.A.M. Stevenson, Velasquez (1st publ. 1895), revised ed. with biographical study by Denys Sutton, London, 1962, p.67.
3. The Standard, 1 July 1882, p.3.

No catalogue has been traced for this exhibition.

4. John Lavery, The Life of a Painter, London, 1940, p.108.
5. J. McNeill Whistler, "The Ten O'Clock Lecture", in The Gentle Art of Making Enemies, revised ed., New York, 1982, p.143.
6. See Chapter Fifteen, p.261.
7. W.D. McKay, "Traditional and Modern Methods in Oil Painting", Transactions of the National Association of Art and Its Application to Industry, Edinburgh Meeting 1889, London, 1890, p.96.
8. Ibid., p.97.

CHAPTER NINE: McTaggart and Impressionism

1. See Chapter Two.
2. Caw 1917, p.208.
3. William Hardie, Scottish Painting 1837-1939 (1st publ. 1976), Revised ed. London, 1980, p.62.
4. The range of French and Dutch work in Scotland can be gauged from the loans to the International exhibitions in Edinburgh (1886) and Glasgow (1888).
5. Douglas Cooper (The Courtauld Collection, London, 1970) suggests that the Impressionists received little critical acclaim in the British Journals in the 1870s. This is not strictly accurate; there are some favourable, if not remarkable, reviews to be found. William Rossetti, for instance, saw Monet's Windmill Holland, exhibited at the Society of French Artists in 1874, as "quaint and homely in its picturesqueness." (The Academy, vol.VI, 1874, p.594).
6. Catalogue to the Exhibition of La Société Des Impressionistes, Dowdeswell Galleries, London, 1883, p.v.
7. Ibid., copy held at National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Press mark. 200.B.146(7).
8. See below, ns.19, 20, 21.
9. McTaggart family papers.

10. George Buchanan, "Some Influences Upon McTaggart and Pringle", The Scottish Art Review, Special No., vol.XV, no.2, 1979, p.30-34.
11. Caw 1917, p.197 and 197n.
12. Daniel Wildenstein, Claude Monet, Biographie et Catalogue Raisonné, Lausanne and Paris, 1979, vol.I, p.238.
13. Frederick Wedmore, Fortnightly Review, January 1883, no.xxxiii, p.82.
14. The paint structure of Monet's works is discussed in detail by John House, Monet: Nature into Art, New Haven and London, 1986. See also A. Callen, Techniques of the Impressionists, London, 1982.
15. Lindsay Errington (William McTaggart 1835-1910, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1989, p.79), claims that none of the technical features of McTaggart's Storm "could have been inspired by any of the Impressionist pictures at Durand Ruel's show." She relies upon an overly narrow interpretation of Impressionist method to draw a distinction between McTaggart and Monet.
16. See Chapter Twelve, p.213.
17. Another work by Monet which possibly offers comparison to McTaggart's 1883 Storm, in that it corresponds more closely in composition, is Bord des Falaises à Pourville (Wildenstein, op.cit., vol.II, p.76, catalogue no.751), painted in 1882, and which was also exhibited at the Durand Ruel exhibition of 1883.
18. Frederick Wedmore, op.cit., p.82.
19. Unsigned review, The Standard, 25 April 1883. Kate Flint (Impressionists in England, London, 1984, p.57) suggests that this critic may also have been Frederick Wedmore.
20. Unsigned review, The Artist, 1 May 1883, IV, p.138.

CHAPTER TEN: Effect, Impression and Finish

1. Giles Firman Phillips, Principles of Effect and Colour, as Applicable to Landscape Painting (1st publ. 1838), 3rd ed. London, c.1840, p.4. It is the third edition which was in the library of McTaggart's friend and fellow artist, Sam Bough.

2. George Barnard, The Theory and Practice of Landscape Painting in watercolours, London, 1855, p.45-6.
3. Past and Present (1st publ. 1843), new ed., edited by R.D. Altick, Boston, 1965, p.196.
4. "The Seven Lamps of Architecture", ch.2, Works, vol.VII, p.81.
5. "Modern Painters", vol.I, Works, vol.III p.94.
6. "Val d'Arno", Lecture III, Works, vol.XXIII, pp.48 & 49.
7. Ibid., p.49.
8. Transactions of the National Association for the Advancement of Art and Its Application to Industry, Edinburgh Meeting, 1889, London, 1890, p.332.
9. Ibid., p.334.
10. Ibid., p.340.
11. Ibid., p.343.
12. Ibid., p.342.
13. Ibid., p.344.
14. Ibid., p.95-109.
15. Ibid., p.99.
16. Ibid., p.101.
17. Ibid., p.100.
18. Ibid., p.106.
19. Caw 1917, p.45.
20. Daily Review, 18 February 1864.
21. Letter dated 24 April [1864 from postmark], NLS, MS 6351, ff.26-28.
22. Letter of May 1860, quoted Caw 1917, p.31.
23. Dundee Advertiser, 17 February 1867.
24. The Art Journal, 1870, p.166.
25. The Art Journal, 1874, p.103.
26. Letters quoted in Caw 1917, p.66.

27. Iconoclast, Scottish Art and Artists in 1860,
Edinburgh, 1860. p.47. Caw 1917, p.31, suggests that the
writer was probably the poet-essayist Alexander Smith.
28. The Art Journal, 1862, p.99.
29. Black and White, vol.30, 30 September 1905, p.450.
30. The Art Journal, 1857, p.165.
31. Allen Staley, The Pre-Raphaelite Landscape, Oxford,
1973, p.174.
32. The Art Journal, 1856, p.161.
33. Caw, McTaggart, p.23.
34. "Modern Painters", vol.I, Works, vol.III, p.197-8.
35. *Ibid.*, p.624.
36. John Burnet, Landscape Painting in Oil Colours (1st
published 1849), re-edited with appendix by Henry
Murray, London, 1861, p.57-8.
37. Hugh Cameron, "A Few Recollections of Student Days",
The Cairn, Edinburgh College of Art, no date, p.10.
38. The Scotsman, 14 February 1860.
39. Caw 1917, p.25.
40. See John McWhirter Landscape Painting in Watercolour,
(1st publ. 1900), London, Paris, New York, Toronto,
Melbourne, 1907, p.16. McWhirter states that Ruskin
purchased 25 of his flower, moss and stone studies. Four
of these are now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
41. McWhirter, *op.cit*, p.16.
42. *Idem.*
43. T.S. Robertson in Dundee Courier, 3 May 1904.
44. Letter from Robertson to James Caw, date 9 February
1915, NGS, Caw Archive.
45. Dundee Advertiser 17 February 1867.
46. "Modern Painters", vol.I, Works, vol.III, p.323.
47. "Modern Painters", vol.III, Works, vol.V., p.155.
48. *Ibid.*, p.168.
49. "Modern Painters", vol.I, Works, vol.III, p.322.

50. Ibid., p.340.
51. Ibid., p.339.
52. Ibid., p.341.
53. Ibid., pp.193 & 195.
54. Theories of memory-training and painting from memory were closely associated with the concept of the "impression" and capturing of transitory effect. P.G. Hamerton, for example, addresses the role of memory in landscape painting. It is an issue which he touches upon in Thoughts About Art (London, 1873). In his book Imagination in Landscape Painting (London, 1887), he devotes a complete chapter to the subject, referring extensively to Lecoq de Boisbaudran, whose Education de la Memoire Pittoresque was published in 1862.
55. "Lectures on Architecture and Painting, Edinburgh 1853", Works, vol.XII, p.159.
56. Dundee Advertiser, 12 March 1867.
57. The Art Journal, 1878, p.165.
58. Henry Blackburn (ed.), Academy Notes, London, 1878, p.31 (exhibit 267).
59. The Scotsman, 4 March 1857.
60. Idem.
61. Quoted by Sheenah Smith, Horatio McCulloch 1805-1867, exhibition catalogue, Glasgow Museums & Art Galleries, 1988, p.13-14.
62. The Scotsman, 8 March 1851.
63. The Times, 14 May 1852.
64. Idem.
65. Undated letter, NLS, MS 6351, ff.164-5.
66. P.G. Hammerton, "The Place of Landscape Painting Amongst the Fine Arts" (1st published in The Fortnightly Review, 1 December 1867). Included in Thoughts About Art, London, 1873, p.215, where Hamerton records the article as having been written in 1865.
67. The Scotsman, 27 February 1862.
68. The Graphic 1877. Quoted in H.C. Richardson (ed.), Academy Criticism, London, 1877, p.123 (entry no.946).

69. The Scotsman, 16 February 1875.
70. P.G. Hamerton, Thoughts About Art, note dated 1873, p.33.
71. See for example, Chapter Three, p.28.
72. Letter to George Simpson dated 14 July 1863, NLS, MS 6350, ff.175-6.
73. The Saturday Review, 19 December 1874.
74. Errington (McTaggart, p.85-6) also points to the fact that during the 1880s McTaggart would have been able to see the 118 Constable oil sketches and studies on loan from Mrs Anna Constable to the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art.
75. See for example, NLS, MS 6351, ff.17-18 and ff.22-23.
76. Caw 1917, p.197 and 197n.
77. Caw 1917, p.125.
78. "Lectures on Architecture and Painting, Edinburgh, 1853", Lecture IV, Works, vol.XII, p.157-8.
79. See Caw 1917, p.56.
80. Letter dated 25 June [1868 from postmark], NLS, MS 6351, ff.63-66.
81. Quoted in J.K. Marks, The Life and Letters of Frederick Walker, ARA, London, 1886, p.198.
82. P.G. Hamerton, op.cit., p.36.
83. Ibid., p.41.
84. See above, n.54.
85. P.G. Hamerton, op.cit., p.51.
86. G.F. Phillips, op.cit., p.4.
87. George Barnard, op.cit., p.90.
88. This work was published in several editions by the colourmen George Rowney & co.
89. J. Bacon, The Theory of Colouring, 3rd edition, London, 1872, p.31.
90. Ibid., p.32.
91. Dundee Courier, 3 May 1904.

92. Letter from T.S. Robertson to James Caw, dated 9 February 1915, NGS, Caw Archive.
93. Letter dated 22 June 1869, NLS, MS 6351, ff.97-98. The artist referred to is almost certainly David Adolphe Constant Artz (1837-1890), several of whose works were included for sale in the Dundee annual Fine Art exhibitions of 1877-1891. In 1869 Artz had been invited by the RSA to contribute work to their exhibition.
94. Transactions of the National Association for the Advancement of Art and Its Application to Industry, Edinburgh Meeting, 1889, Edinburgh, 1890, p.93.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: Unity and Breadth of Effect

1. J.M. Gray, "The Wingate and McTaggart Sales", The Scottish Art Review, vol.I, no.12, May 1889, p.367.
2. R.A.M. Stevenson, "Corot", The Art Journal, 1889, p.210.
3. Ibid., p.211.
4. R.A.M. Stevenson, Velasquez (1st published 1895), revised ed. with biographical study by Denys Sutton, London, 1962, p.86.
5. Ibid., p.90.
6. Stevenson, "Corot", p.211.
7. Ibid., p.209.
8. Unsigned review, "Art in the West of Scotland", The Scottish Art Review, vol.I, no.6, November 1888, p.147.
9. Alexander Roche, "Of Finish in Art", Transactions of the National Association for the Advancement of Art and its Application to Industry, Edinburgh Meeting, 1889, London, 1890, p.341.
10. G.F. Phillips, Principles of Effect and Colour (1st publ. 1838), 3rd revised ed., London, n.d.(c.1840), p.4.
11. John Burnet, Landscape Painting in Oil Colours, (1st publ. 1849), re-edited with appendix by Henry Murray, London, 1861, p.70.

12. P.G. Hamerton, "The Reaction from Pre-Raphaelitism" (article dated 1864), Thoughts About Art, revised ed., London, 1873, p.189.
13. See Chapter Ten, n.49.
14. Ruskin, "Modern Painters", vol.I., Works, vol.III, p.325.

The related question of vignetting and the field of vision is discussed by Martin Kemp, The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat, New Haven and London, 1990, p.242-3.

15. As Ruskin observed, a lack of foreground detail is characteristic of many works by Turner. It is seen, for example, in The Evening of the Deluge (pl.146), which McTaggart would have seen exhibited at the 1878 Glasgow Institute. This effect is often achieved with tonal gradation. In The Deluge, the composition is based mainly upon tonal contrast with a central light area and dark periphery. It is worth noting that, according to Caw, McTaggart disliked what he saw as Turner's inclination to make the sun the tonal focus of his work and to gradate the light to a darker tone around the edges of the canvas. In this respect McTaggart preferred the work of Claude - "Frequently I'm inclined to think him greater than Turner. He gave the full suffusion of light over the entire landscape." Caw 1917, p.207.
16. Catalogue of 32 Paintings by William McTaggart RSA, Exhibition catalogue with a preface by Edward Pinnington, Edinburgh, 1901, p.18.
17. Peter McOmish Dott, Notes Technical and Explanatory on the Art of Mr William McTaggart as displayed in Exhibition of 32 Pictures, Edinburgh, 1901, p.16.
18. Letter from T.S. Robertson to James Caw dated 9 February 1915, NGS, Caw Archive.
19. McTaggart, for example, hired models for painting the figures in Enoch Arden. See letter to George Simpson dated 26 March [1866 from postmark], NLS, MS 6351, ff.40-41.
20. For example, George Simpson's Spring. See Chapter Three, p.37.
21. Letter dated 21 December 1863, NLS, MS 6351, ff.17-18. The picture to which McTaggart refers is possibly The Village, Whitehouse, exhibited at the RA in 1875.
22. Caw 1917, p.138.
23. Ruskin, "Modern Painters", vol.I, Works, vol.III, p.325.

24. McTaggart had, however, painted moderately large canvases such as Through Wind and Rain (pl.29) which did not rely upon the type of composition found in The Storm.
25. See Chapter Five, p.79 for reference to Claudian landscape.
26. R.A.M. Stevenson, Velasquez, p.87.
27. Ibid.
28. It is possible that, as T. Crombie observes, the sewn-on additions in several of Velasquez's works were the result of the difficulty of obtaining canvas of the right width or the conversion of works to form matching pairs. See R.A.M. Stevenson, Velasquez, p.88n.
29. Small undated canvas study, 25.5 x 57.5 cms, Private Collection.

CHAPTER TWELVE: Colour Theory and Technique

1. Caw 1917, p.100.
2. Lindsay Errington, William McTaggart, 1835-1910, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1989, p.70.
3. Letter dated 11 May 1869, NLS, MS 6351, ff.88-91.
4. D.R. Hay, The Laws of Harmonious Colouring adapted to House Painting, Edinburgh, 1828.
5. See D.R. Hay, The Laws of Harmonious Colouring, Edinburgh and London, 1836, who refers to Field's Chromatics (1st publ.1817). Field's Chromatography (1st publ. 1835), London, 1841, was also widely read by artists. For an account of Field's colour theory and his relationship with artists see John Gage, George Field and his Circle, exhibition catalogue, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 1989.
6. See John Hutchison, Catalogue of the Library. Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh, 1878.
7. Unsigned article, "The Philosophy of Colour", The Edinburgh Review, October 1879, p.368-395.
8. Ibid., p.378-9.

9. Ibid., p.390.
10. Quoted by Martin Hardie, John Pettie, London, 1908, p.13.
11. Ibid., p.20.
12. Peter McOmish Dott, Notes Technical and Explanatory on the art of Mr William McTaggart, Edinburgh, 1901, p.7-8.
13. Ibid., p.8.
14. Quoted Martin Hardie, op.cit., p.186-7.
15. See Chapter Four.
16. W.D. McKay, "Traditional and Modern Methods in Oil Painting", Transactions of the National Association for the Advancement of Art and its Application to Industry, Edinburgh Meeting, 1889, London, 1890, p.92.
17. The Pre-Raphaelite technique of painting on a wet white ground is described by William Holman Hunt in Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, London, 1905, p.275-77.
18. W.D. McKay, op.cit., p.91.
19. Ibid., p.89.
20. Ibid., p.93.
21. Ibid., p.93-4.
22. Caw 1917, p.196.
23. "The Philosophy of Colour", loc.cit., p.393.
24. Idem.

In Modern Chromatics, New York, 1879, p.316, Rood asserts that,

"The constant study of colour in nature and in the works of great colourists will do much, but even more important still is the possession of a natural feeling for what may be called the poetry of colour, which leads the artist almost instinctively to seize on colour-melodies as they occur in nature, and afterward to reproduce them on canvas, with such additions or modifications as his feeling for colour impels him to make."

25. Rood, op.cit., p.281.
26. G.F. Phillips, Principles of Effect and Colour (1st

- publ. 1838), 3rd revised edition, London, c.1840, p.6.
The developing recognition by artists and theorists of the distinction between the colour properties and of pigment and light is discussed by Martin Kemp, The Science of Art, New Haven and London, 1990, p.261 & ff.
27. George Field, Chromatography, revised edition, London, 1841, p.47.
 28. J. Bacon, The Theory of Colouring (1st published 1868), 3rd revised edition, London, 1872, p.27.
 29. John Burnet, Turner and his Works, London, 1852, p.61.
 30. John Burnet, Landscape Painting in Oil Colours (1st publ. 1849), re-edited with appendix by Henry Murray, London, 1861, p.43.
 31. Ruskin, "Modern Painters", vol.I, Works, vol.III, p.293.
 32. Ibid., p.294.
 33. Quoted by Errington, Master Class: Robert Scott Lauder and his pupils, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1983, p.42.
 34. See Chapter Thirteen.
 35. R.A.M. Stevenson, Velasquez (1st publ. 1895), revised ed. with biography by Denys Sutton, London, 1962), p.117.
 36. "The Philosophy of Colour", loc.cit., p.394.
The principle of after-images is discussed in Rood, op. cit., p.207-8.
 37. G.F. Phillips, op.cit., p.7.
 38. Idem.
 39. Ibid., p.8.
 40. Burnet, Turner and his Works, p.56.
 41. Ibid., p.63.
 42. Richard Allen Schiff, in Impressionist Criticism, Impressionist Color and Cezanne (PhD thesis, Yale University, 1973), refers to Cezanne's use of alternating warm and cool hues. He argues that this bears comparison with Impressionist use of colour and the the basic problem of Impressionist colour was the organisation of relatively bright colour so that it still conveyed a structural and an atmospheric unity.

43. P.M. Dott, *op.cit.*, p.11-12.
44. *Ibid.*, p.13.
45. Like Caw, Dott stressed that McTaggart's technique was not influenced by modern continental practice derived from his early apprenticeship in Edinburgh. Notes Technical and Explanatory..., p.12.
46. Letter to James Caw dated 23 June 1915, NGS, Caw Archive.
47. P.M. Dott, Notes Technical and Explanatory..., p.12.
48. G.F. Phillips, *op.cit.*, p.12.
49. The Art Journal, 1857, p.165.
50. This may be partly the result of the re-working of the picture from its earlier twilight effect.
51. George Halkett (ed.), Royal Scottish Academy Notes, Edinburgh, 1878, p.48, (exhibit no.333).
52. *Idem.*
53. Caw 1917, p.73.
54. Quoted Caw 1917, p.73.
55. Millais' Mariana (Makins Collection) of 1851, for example, in which quite saturated hues are employed, attracted much attention for its colour when exhibited at the RSA in 1852. The Scotsman (21 February 1852) observed that "We have heard it objected that the bright colours are not in harmony with the dreary sentiment of the poem" and "that the picture does look strange at first sight, is as much owing to its merits as to any defects in it. The intense splendour of its colour kills everything about it, but its colour is true."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: McTaggart's Watercolour Technique

1. John Burnet, Turner and his Works, London, 1852, p.97.
2. Compare, for example, McWhirter's Harvest Field, Arran (Dundee Art Galleries & Museums, Orchar Collection) of 1866.
3. Caw 1917, p.108n.
4. See Sidney Gilpin, Sam Bough, RSA. Some Account of his

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5. The Art Journal, 1858, p.100.
 6. P.G. Hamerton, "Etchings from Pictures by Contemporary Artists XVII - Sam Bough RSA, Cellarydyke Harbour", The Portfolio, vol.X, 1879, p.113.
 7. Caw 1917, p.70.
 8. *Ibid.*, p.109.
 9. See Chapter Ten, p.184-5.
 10. Letter from T.S. Robertson to James Caw dated 9 February 1915, NGS, Caw Archive.
 11. Caw 1917, p.256, cites a letter dated 30.11.83 in which there is a rough sketch for the placing of the boats in the oil Over the Harbour Bar, suggesting that this work also had its origin in 1883.
 12. *Ibid.*, p.110.
 13. *Ibid.*, p.111.
 14. P.G. Hamerton, *op.cit.*, p.113.
 15. Caw 1917, p.111.
 16. *Ibid.*, p.117.
 17. Letter from T.S. Robertson to James Caw dated 9 February 1915, NGS, Caw Archive.
 18. An exception to this was the body of work painted for the major sale, The McTaggart Portfolio, of his work at Dowell's, Edinburgh, March 1889. As well as including original watercolours from the preceding 30 years, McTaggart also reproduced (or worked up from sketches) some of his earlier oils as watercolour souvenirs. The sale was very much a commercial venture, realising £4040, an unusually large amount for a watercolour sale.
 19. George Henry, "The Royal Scottish Society of Painters in Water-Colour", The Scottish Art Reveiw, vol.1, no.6, November 1888, p.153.
 20. "Art Notes", Pall Mall Gazette, 17 October 1896, p.3. The article is unsigned but the author was clearly familiar with and sympathetic to McTaggart's work. Stevenson was regularly contributing to the Gazette at this time.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: The Inter-Relation of Subject and
Technique

1. See Chapter Two.
2. See also Chapter Four, p.63-64.
3. "Modern Painters", vol.I, Works, vol.III, p.91.
4. Ibid, p.92.
5. Idem.
6. D.S. MacColl, Confessions of a Keeper and Other Papers, London, 1931, p.15.
7. D.S. MacColl, "Subject and Technique", The Spectator, 25 March 1893.
8. Idem.
9. R.A.M. Stevenson, Velasquez (1st publ. 1895), revised edition with biography by Denys Sutton, London, 1962, p.76.
10. Ibid., p.79.
11. Ibid., p.80.
12. Ibid., p.81.
13. Edward Pinnington, "William McTaggart RSA", Good Words, 1899, p.755.
14. Edward Pinnington, "Art Collections of Dundee and District", Dundee Advertiser, April-June 1909.
15. "Art Collections of Dundee and District IV. Dudhope House and Elmslea", Dundee Advertiser, 15 May 1909.
16. "Art Collections of Dundee and District VI. The Manse, Broughty Ferry", Dundee Advertiser, 29 May 1909.
17. "Art Collections of Dundee and District II. The Orchar Collection", Dundee Advertiser, 1 May 1909.
18. Caw 1917, p.188.
19. Ibid., p.194.
20. W.E. Henley's review of the 1888 Glasgow International Exhibition (see Chapter Two, p.12) is an example which would not have escaped McTaggart's attention.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: Figures and Landscape

1. See Chapter Two, p.6.
2. See for example the remarks of W. Hardie and Edward Gage quoted in Chapter Two, p.20.
3. Royal Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland. An Art Union, funded by subscription, which actively supported contemporary art in Scotland by purchasing work from exhibitions and distributed amongst members by ballot. The Association also commissioned literary volumes illustrated by Scottish artists. See also below, n.8.
4. The Athenaeum, 16 May 1857, p.633.
5. See for example, letter from McTaggart to Simpson, NLS, MS 6351, ff.40-41.
6. The Scotsman, 27 February 1862.
7. Caw, McTaggart, p.35.
8. *Ibid.*, p.225.
9. *Ibid.*, p.35.
10. See Chapter Eight, p.149.
11. Caw, McTaggart, p.225. This picture was purchased by William Ritchie and appeared in the sale of his work in 1885.
12. I am grateful to Allan Carswell of the Scottish United Services Museum, Edinburgh for information relating to the uniforms worn by the soldiers in the works by McTaggart and Faed. See also n.14, below.
13. Robert Burns, When Wild War's Deadly Blast or The Soldier's Return, verse 2, lines 5-6.
14. Faed has depicted a composite uniform in which individual details, although in themselves accurately painted, are drawn from a number of different ranks and regiments. It is roughly mid 19th century.
15. The St. Columba pictures are of particular relevance to Kintyre because St. Columba is traditionally thought to have first landed in mainland Scotland on the Kintyre peninsular.
16. A smaller canvas, Emigrants Leaving the Highlands, (Kirkcaldy Museum & Art Gallery), probably a replica of the major work of 1891-4, was exhibited at the RHA in

1901, the RGI in 1902 and by the dealer Reid in 1906. One of the large finished canvases, The Emigrants (Tate Gallery), was also exhibited at Agnew's "Independent Art" exhibition in London in 1906.

17. Frank Rinder and W.D. McKay, The Royal Scottish Academy 1826-1916 (Glasgow, 1917).
18. The Art Journal, 1865, p.169.
19. See Alasdair Carmichael, Kintyre, Best of All Isles, Newton Abbot and London, 1974, p.84.
20. The Scotsman, 4 May 1842, reprinted from The Glasgow Argus.
21. Some created the Kintyre settlement on the Illinois Prairie. Others founded a church near Cincinnati, Ohio. There were also emigrants from Kintyre to New Zealand and other parts of the colonies.
22. Caw, McTaggart, p.279.
23. Idem.
24. Ibid., p.34n.
25. Ibid., p.262.
26. Ibid., p.126.
28. Note with letter dated 10 April 1916 from Dott to James Caw, NGS, Caw Archive.
29. A small panel, Crofter Emigrants Leaving the West of Scotland (pl.63), dated 1891, appears to lie midway between the "Blue Emigrants" and the later canvas of 1891-4. The composition is similar to the earlier work but the palette used in the foreground is closer to that of the later canvas and the figure of the woman on the left of the composition waves her arm as in the later picture. The panel is quite broadly painted and the addition of a narrow strip along the bottom of the panel suggests that this work was primarily experimental. The addition roughly corresponds to the extension along the bottom edge of the main 1891-4 canvas and is crudely painted with little colour matching.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ICHRONOLOGY OF McTAGGART'S ANNUAL PAINTING TRIPS

(Compiled primarily from Caw 1917 and correspondence with George Simpson)

KINTYRE

1857	Campbeltown
1858	"
1859	"
1860	"
1861	Glenramskill
1864	"
1868	Tarbert
1869	"
1870	Kilkevan, nr. Machrihanish
1871	Tarbert and Whitehouse
1874	Kilkerran (Sept) West Loch Tarbert (Oct)
1876	Salt Pans, Machrihanish (Aug/Sept)
1877	Machrihanish (Sept)
1878	Machrihanish (Aug/Sept/Oct)
1879	Kilkerran (part Aug & Sept)
1880	Machrihanish (Aug), Glenramskill (Sept)
1882	Machrihanish (Aug/Sept)
1883	Carradale (Aug/Sept)
1884	Glenramskill (Aug/Sept)
1885	Carradale (Aug/Sept)
1887	Tarbert (July/Aug)
1888	Southend (Aug/Sept)
1889	Southend (Aug)
1892	Machrihanish (June)
1895	Machrihanish (part May & June)
1897	Machrihanish (June)
1898	Machrihanish (June)
1899	Machrihanish (June)
1901	Carradale (July)
1902	Machrihanish (June)
1903	Machrihanish (June)
1904	Machrihanish (June)
1906	Rosehill, Campletown (July)
1907	Machrihanish (June)
1908	Machrihanish (June)

(cont.)

(Appendix I cont.)

CARNOUSTIE

1872 (Spring)
 1873 (Spring & Summer)
 1874 (June & July)
 1875 (Sept & Oct)
 1876 (Oct)
 1877 (part April, May & June)
 1878 (Spring)
 1879 (Spring)
 1880 (Spring)
 1881 (Spring)
 1882 (Spring)
 1883 (Spring)
 1884 (Spring)
 1885 (Spring)
 1886 (Aug & Sept)
 1891 (Easter)
 1893 (Sept)
 1909 (June)

OTHER LOCATIONS

1853 Dublin
 1854 Dublin & Northumberland
 1855 Dublin & Northumberland
 1856 Dublin
 1862 Meikle Earnock and Lochgilphead
 1863 Fairlie (June) and Meikle Earnock (Aug/Sept)
 1865 Fairlie
 1866 Loch Ranza, Arran
 1867 Loch Ranza, Arran
 1872 Helensburgh (Aug)
 1877 Brig o' Turk (Oct)
 1881 Crail (part Aug & Sept)
 1883 Trossachs (few days in Oct)
 1884 Iona (10 days at end June)
 1885 Shandon (2 weeks in July)
 1886 Aberfoyle (Spring)
 1890 At home, Broomieknowe, all year
 1891 Broughty Ferry (early Summer)
 1894 Port Seton (Aug)
 1896 At home, Broomieknowe, all year
 1900 " " "
 1905 " " "

APPENDIX IIMAJOR EXHIBITIONS AT WHICH WORKS BY McTAGGART EXHIBITED
DURING HIS LIFETIME

RHA = Royal Hibernian Academy
 RSA = Royal Scottish Academy
 SSW = (Royal) Society of Scottish Painters in Watercolours
 DFA = Dundee Annual Fine Art Exhibitions
 RGI = (Royal) Glasgow Institute
 SSA = Society of Scottish Artists
 RA = Royal Academy, London

* = denotes first exhibition of organisation
 X = no catalogue traced

Tabulated numbers refer to number of works exhibited
 by McTaggart

	RHA	RSA	SSW	DFA	RGI	SSA	RA	
1854	2							1854
1855		2						1855
1856	3							1856
1857		2						1857
1858		6						1858
1859		3						1859
1860		4						1860
1861		4			4			1861
1862		5			3			1862
1863	1	8						1863
1864		7						1864
1865		5			2			1865
1866	1	4			1		1	1866
1867		5						1867
1868		1			1		1	1868
1869		6			1		1	1869
1870		2			2		1	1870
1871		6			1		1	1871
1872	1	7			2		3	1872
1873		7			4			1873
1874		8			2		2	1874
1875		7					1	1875
1876		5						1876
1877		6		4*	1			1877
1878		5	5*		1			1878
1879		7	4	4				1879
1880		7	4	4	3			1880
1881		7	3	2	4			1881
1882		5	5	4	2			1882
1883		4	1	5	3			1883
1884		5	4	3	4			1884
1885		6	3					1885
1886		2	2	5	1			1886
1887		5	5		2			1887

(Appendix II cont.)

	RHA	RSA	SSW	DFA	RGI	SSA	RA	
1888		4	5		2			1888
1889		2		4	2			1889
1890		2	1	6	2			1890
1891		6	1	5				1891
1892		3	1		2	*		1892
1893		2	5		1	2		1893
1894		3			2	X		1894
1895		2	2	3		X		1895
1896			3		2			1896
1897								1897
1898			3					1898
1899								1899
1900			3			2		1900
1901	3		3		1	1		1901
1902			2		1	2		1902
1903		1				1		1903
1904		1				1		1904
1905			2		1	1		1905
1906			3			1		1906
1907					1	1		1907
1908						1		1908
1909			3			1		1909
1910		3	3		1	4		1910

Works shown at other important London exhibitions include:

New English Art Club 1900 (1 loan work) and 1909 (2 loans)

The International Society 1901 (2 loans)

The Whitechapel Art Gallery Winter loan exhibitions:

1901 (6 works), 1903 (1), 1907 (1), 1908 (1)

APPENDIX IIISTATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE COMPOSITION OF SELECTED ANNUAL EXHIBITIONS OF CONTEMPORARY ART IN SCOTLAND DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Society of Incorporated Artists

	<u>% of</u>	<u>Landscape</u>	<u>Portraits</u>	<u>Figure/Subject</u>	<u>Misc.</u>
1808		29.3	44.6	22.3	3.8
1809		19.7	44.0	33.6	2.7
1810		26.4	44.7	26.4	2.5
1811		26.4	47.1	25.4	1.1
1812		27.8	40.4	29.3	2.5
<u>Average</u>		25.92%	44.16%	27.4%	2.52%

(Royal) Scottish Academy

1827		39.3	33.0	25.5	2.2
1828		34.9	25.7	34.5	4.9
1829		35.2	22.1	39.1	3.6
1830		33.3	31.0	32.5	3.2
1831		38.5	27.5	31.5	2.5
<u>Average</u>		36.24%	27.86%	32.62%	3.28%

1864		54.4	10.9	30.4	4.3
1865		54.4	12.7	30.2	2.7
1866		52.6	12.6	31.2	3.6
1867		51.1	14.4	30.6	3.9
1868		49.4	12.0	35.3	3.3
<u>Average</u>		52.38%	12.52%	31.54%	3.56%

1890		49.3	9.5	36.1	5.1
1891		50.8	10.7	34.2	4.3
1892		53.5	8.5	33.6	4.4
1893		52.4	10.9	29.7	7.0
1894		48.4	12.7	31.0	7.9
<u>Average</u>		50.88%	10.46%	32.92%	5.74%

(cont.)

(Appendix III cont.)

Four roughly equidistant periods (1808-12, 1827-31, 1864-68, 1890-94) have been used to analyse the type of works shown in the main annual Scottish exhibitions during the nineteenth century. In each of these periods a spread of five years has been used to obtain an average percentage figure.

1808 was the year of the first exhibition of the Society of Incorporated Artists (active 1808-13), the first important exhibition by contemporary artists in Edinburgh. 1827 was the year of the first Scottish Academy exhibition. In 1864 McTaggart exhibited Spring, one of his earliest major works with a significant landscape component, at the Royal Scottish Academy. 1890 provides a reference point toward the end of the century when McTaggart was working upon such pictures as the revised version of The Storm.

The figures represent only an approximation. Compiled on the basis of titles alone, extracted from annual exhibition catalogues, there will of necessity be some erroneous assignment to category. For example, it is possible that some of the figure/subject works contain significant landscape backgrounds. It is hoped, however that the percentages obtained by the same method of categorisation throughout will serve to illustrate the general trend.

The composition of each category is as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| <u>Landscape</u> | Those works with topographical titles, general (eg. <u>Waterfall</u>) or specific (eg. <u>Lower Fall of Bruar Water</u>) and titles descriptive of time of day/year or atmospheric conditions. Townscapes included. |
| <u>Portraits</u> | Mainly distinguished by "Portrait" in title. Studies and miniature included. (Portraits of animals under "Figure/Subject"). |
| <u>Figure/Subject</u> | Anecdotal titles (eg. <u>Showing the New Dress</u>) and general figure painting (eg. <u>Peasant Girl</u>). Interiors, still life and various subject painting, including religious and historical. |
| <u>Misc.</u> | Undifferentiated subjects such as <u>Sketch</u> or <u>Study</u> , and various sundry items including architectural drawings. Works described as "models" in the exhibitions of the Society of Incorporated Artists have been omitted from the calculations. |

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note:

Correspondence between McTaggart, his family and other artists is held by the Trustees of McTaggart's one surviving daughter. Unfortunately access to this material has been withheld for the time being. However, it is believed that the bulk of this material is of a personal nature and access to it would not have substantially altered the conclusions of this thesis.

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