George Heriot

Postmaster-Painter of the Canadas

George Heriot (1759–1839), a Scot, is best known as a skilled landscape watercolourist and as the contentious deputy postmaster general of British North America from 1800 to 1816. He was also a travel writer (his *Travels through the Canadas* was published in 1807) and a poet.

In this volume, a combination of biography and art history, Gerald Finley presents, for the first time, a rounded picture of Heriot, revealing his motives and ideals while also illuminating the texture of life in Canada during the early years of settlement. In describing Heriot's several roles as artist, administrator, patriot, spy, Finley presents a portrait of an eighteenth-century gentleman whose superficial desires were for an active public life but whose deeper yearnings were for a life of contemplation.

As a member of the gentry it was natural that Heriot found his way into public service, for which he was suited both by education and by upbringing. Nevertheless, his public career did not always run smoothly and it ended in frustration and sadness. However, through his writing and especially his art Heriot found welcome relief from the tensions of his public duties.

Indeed, Heriot's chief importance lies in his art. Trained as a topographical artist, he was an important exponent of the picturesque landscape. As a mode of vision the Picturesque furnished him with a special way of looking at and recording the Canadian scene – to him Canada possessed the qualities of Arcadia. This viewpoint served both as aesthetic consolation and as stimulus to inspiration.

This volume serves to recognize Heriot's artistic achievement and to accord him the place he deserves in the history of Canadian art and of the country itself.

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Self-portrait of George Heriot in silhouette (detail).
A photo-mechanical impression probably made from
a stencilled image in one of Heriot's sketch-books.
New Brunswick Museum, Saint John

GERALD FINLEY

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For Christopher and Heath

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Preface

George Heriot, one of those important early recorders of Canada, has left only the most elusive shadow behind him. There are few contemporary published references – none of them particularly illuminating, either for his life or for his art. The first comprehensive article on his life, which was published in 1910, has, until recently, also been the most authoritative publication; the author, J.C.A. Heriot, was a descendant (George Heriot was his great-uncle) who lived in Montreal and had a consuming interest in his family's past. This article provides a brief but useful summary of Heriot's Post Office career and some details of his ancestry. J.C.A. Heriot was the first writer to draw attention to the traditional confusion between the artist and his second cousin, 'Major General, the Honourable Frederick George Heriot, C.B., who served with distinction in Canada through the War of 1812.' The article, however, contains insufficient material to offer a clear picture either of Heriot's life and personality or of his art. Moreover, though we are given occasional glimpses of Heriot the painter, the value of the text is reduced by glaring errors, a few of them concerning the watercolours and their chronology – errors which have been repeated by most subsequent writers.

Recent intensive primary research has uncovered new information from which the modern writer on Heriot is able to profit. During the last fifty years significant cultural studies have appeared which illuminate certain relevant aspects of life in the period in which Heriot lived. For example, it is now possible to consider intelligently and fruitfully the concept and movement of the Picturesque (thanks to Christopher Hussey's pioneering study, *The Picturesque*, published in 1927), to discuss

the education of an eighteenth-century gentleman (as a result of George C. Brauer Jr's *The Education of a Gentleman*, published in 1959), and to understand the poetic quest for happiness in pastoral retirement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (because of M.S. Roestvig's *The Happy Man*, first published in 1954–8). Such studies as these provide the essential contexts within which to examine the lives of cultured men – and especially artists – such as Heriot, and to come to understand their art.

Very many have assisted me in my researches for this study and my earlier short essay on Heriot (*George Heriot, 1759–1839*, published in 1979). I am under a special obligation to the staffs of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC; the Glasgow Art Galleries; the Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa; the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; the Canadiana Department of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto; and the McCord Museum, Montreal. Mary Allodi of the Royal Ontario Museum and Conrad Graham of the McCord Museum have been especially helpful. I wish to acknowledge the assistance of the members and staff of La Société Jersiase, and also my debt to the staffs of the Witt Library in London and the Frick Library in New York, whose services have been much valued on more than one occasion, and to the proprietors of the Kennedy Galleries in New York and of the Laing Galleries and the Morris Galleries in Toronto, who have assisted me in various ways. Of those who initially encouraged me and gave me counsel, I owe a special debt to J. Russell Harper, Robert H. Hubbard, Dennis Reid, Kenneth Saltmarche, James John Talman, and the late W.P. Wolfe. During the later stages of preparation I received valued advice and assistance from J.H. Appleby, Roland J. Auger, the late R.G. Bartelot, J. Wallace Beaton, James Burant, Philip Malet de Carterer, Warda Drummond, W.E. Duggan Grey, Michael Ingram, David Irwin, Richard Ivor, George P. Kidd, Hughes Lapointe, Kenneth S. Mackenzie, Louis Melzack, Farquar Mackintosh, Duncan Macmillan, Willis Moogk, Gerald Paget, Matthew Pryor, Dudley Snelgrove, H.C. Torbock, Peter S. Winkworth, and Barbara de Veulle. For information concerning Heriot watercolours and/or the Heriot family I am indebted to W.L. Day, Richard Guy, Christopher Mackonochie, and Lillian Heriot Sternau. Mrs Sternau has been especially generous, providing me with unique documentary materials concerning George Heriot that have greatly assisted me in reconstructing aspects of the artist's final years. I am also grateful to P.T. van der Merwe of the Historical Section of the National Maritime Museum, London who has generously advised me on several occasions on a considerable number of

points concerning the events leading up to the War of 1812. There are many who have assisted me in other specific ways and acknowledgment of their aid has been made in the notes to the text and in the check-list. One of the great benefits of my researches has been the personal kindness shown to me by so many, to whom full acknowledgment, unfortunately, cannot be made here. Undoubtedly the most deserving of mention are the private collectors and owners whose generosity, patience, and tolerance have made this undertaking not only eminently worthwhile but, indeed, possible.

For making the project feasible I am deeply indebted to the Queen's University Arts Research Committee, which funded the initial investigation and later provided me with an additional travel grant. I am yet again (as in the case of my recent studies *Landscapes of Memory: Turner as Illustrator to Scott* and *Turner and George IV in Edinburgh, 1822*) deeply indebted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The amount of travelling necessary to complete this book has been considerable and the acquisition of photographs expensive: without the Council's aid I should not have accomplished what I have. The book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and with the assistance of the Publications Fund of the University of Toronto Press.

A further obligation is to my friends and colleagues who have aided me in special ways. William F.E. Morley, Curator of Special Collections, Douglas Library, Queen's University, and James Brennan of the National Postal Museum, Ottawa, have assisted me on numerous occasions in my quest for Heriot watercolours and for both published and unpublished documents relating to him. Jenny Hope Simpson and Ross Kilpatrick generously translated Heriot's Latin poetry. I am especially indebted to Ross Kilpatrick, who translated several particularly long poems. Pierre du Prey kindly examined the first draft of the short essay and pointed out parts that needed to be tightened. James Pritchard kindly read a draft of this book for its historical accuracy. To J. Douglas Stewart I owe a particular debt. In the late winter, when teaching pressures are at their greatest, he took time to read the final draft of this work, to make valuable suggestions, and to give me encouragement to complete it.

Last, but not least, I wish to thank my wife, Helen, for her counsel. She read without complaint many draft chapters. I am also indebted to the typist of the first draft, Thelma Hodgson, who not only successfully

deciphered my rather poor handwriting but also discovered errors and inconsistencies in both text and check-list that I had overlooked.

Because of high production costs it has not been possible to illustrate in this book as broad a range of Heriot's works as I should have wished, nor to include colour plates, which would have furnished a valuable indication of the nature, diversity, and development of his colour. However, further information on Heriot's paintings, watercolours, and prints, and those prints made after his work can be found in the check-list of his works at the end of the book. (An asterisk preceding a check-list number or, in the case of a sketch-book, a folio number, indicates that the listed work or the folio is illustrated in the book.) This check-list, resulting from my wide search for Heriot's art during the investigations for and the preparation of this book, will provide the reader with a better understanding of the nature and variety of Heriot's artistic output.

GF Sommerville House, Kingston, May 1982

Chronology of George Heriot's Life

1759	Born at Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland
1769–74	Student at Royal High School, Edinburgh
1774–7	In Edinburgh; befriended by Sir James Grant of Grant; probably received initial training in art there
1777–81	In London; seeks career as an artist; leaves suddenly for West Indies, remaining there for four years; composes *A Descriptive Poem, written in the West Indies* (1781)
1781–92	Returns to England; becomes officer cadet at Royal Military Academy, Woolwich; studies topographical drawing under Paul Sandby; c 1783 appointed clerk at Arsenal, Woolwich, remaining in that position until departure for Quebec in 1792; travels to Channel Islands between c 1786 and 1787
1792–6	Settles in Quebec City, possibly at 6 Rampart Street; takes up position as clerk of cheque in Ordnance; visits Montreal
1796–7	Visits Britain; travels in England and Scotland; enrols at Edinburgh University; returns to London in early 1797; exhibits three watercolours at Royal Academy exhibition, spring 1797; returns to Canada
1798–1800	Visits La Malbaie; appointed assistant storekeeper, Ordnance; appointment suddenly withdrawn in 1799; takes up appointment as deputy postmaster general of British North America in 1800 and begins planning for the development of postal services, especially in Upper Canada
1801–2	Travels to Niagara and probably to York on postal business; attempts unsuccessfully to secure position of superintendent of *maîtres de poste* (provincial post-houses)

1804–5	Appointed clerk of survey, Ordnance Department, 12 March 1804; publishes first and only volume of *The History of Canada* (1804); visits Niagara probably in 1804, certainly in 1805
1806	Returns to Britain; travels through Scotland and possibly England
1807	Sails to Halifax from Britain; meets Judge Edward Winslow, who accompanies him on postal business, possibly around Nova Scotia and certainly through New Brunswick; publishes *Travels through the Canadas*
1808	Visits Niagara and probably York on postal business
1809	Attends special fête at Spencer Wood given by Sir James Craig, the lieutenant governor of Lower Canada, perhaps to celebrate fiftieth anniversary of Anglican services held at Quebec
1813	Attempt made to force Heriot to take Ordnance post at Kingston; Heriot refuses and is suspended from Ordnance
1815	Travels through eastern United States on postal affairs and intelligence mission; travels at least as far south as Washington, DC
1816	Travels to Niagara, Sandwich, and Amherstburg on postal business; resigns as deputy postmaster general; returns to Britain and settles in London; travels to Scotland; visits the south of England
1817–18	Continental tour; France, Italy (as far south as Sicily), Austria, Hungary, Germany (possibly)
1819	Visits Scotland
1820	Continental tour: France, Spain
1821	Travels in England
1822	Lives in Chelsea, London
1823	Visits Wales
1824	Lives in Dover Street, London; publishes *A Picturesque Tour ... through the Pyrenean Mountains* (only two parts of which were published)
1828	Continental tour: France
1833	Death of brother John during cholera epidemic
1834	Lives at 7 Cadogan Place, London; sends many North American sketches to son of his brother Roger in South Carolina
1839	Dies at his residence at 32 Sloane Street, London, on 22 July

George Heriot
Postmaster-Painter of the Canadas

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1

Topographical Landscape and the Picturesque

A Scottish painter who spent the central and most fruitful years of his life in Canada, George Heriot was a gifted member of that group of topographical artists who, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, brought an imaginative interpretation of the picturesque idiom to bear on the depiction of landscape not only in Britain but also in Britain's colonies.

In Canada landscape painting really began with the conquest of Quebec by the British in 1759–60. For the ensuing hundred years British artists, working as administrators, clerks, or military officers in the service of the Empire, were to produce some of the finest pictorial records of colonial Canada's life and terrain that have come down to us. In order to understand what these men set out to achieve it will be helpful to consider briefly the origins of topographical art in Britain and its growth up to the late eighteenth century, and then to examine, in fuller detail, the influence which picturesque theory began to exercise on it from that time.

Of the artists who were working in Canada during the relevant period, three of the most significant, all born in the eighteenth century, were Thomas Davies (c 1739–1812), James Pattison Cockburn (1779–1847), and the subject of this study, George Heriot (1759–1839). All three received their training in topographical drawing at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, where they came under the influence of Paul Sandby (1725–1809), who was drawing master there from 1768 until 1799.

The training in topographical drawing which the gentleman cadet received was an essential and eminently practical part of his preparation

for a career as an army officer. It equipped him to document terrain, structures, and troop deployment, to facilitate the planning of manœvres, and to provide historical records. However, the surviving drawings and watercolours executed by men who were trained in this way are mainly those painted during their leisure hours. These works are usually views of towns and countryside that were recorded because of their attractiveness or because they possessed personal associations for the artist. The styles and interests of Davies, Cockburn, and Heriot, as exhibited in their Canadian watercolours and drawings, are varied and distinctive. For subject-matter Cockburn seemed to enjoy the bustling urban scene, while both Heriot and Davies preferred the remoteness of the countryside and the outlying settlements or the grandeur of the Canadian rivers and forests. Their interests reflect those of most British topographical artists working in Canada during the colonial period and are part of a long-established tradition which had nothing to do with military draughtsmanship.

Topographical landscape drawings of English subjects dating at least as early as the first half of the sixteenth century were often commissioned by members of the court for either their strategic value or their descriptive content. By the end of the century documents indicate that topographical views were widely favoured and quite avidly collected for their purely artistic qualitites as well as for their descriptive value. The walls of Lord Burghley's house, Theobalds, were hung with a series of landscapes 'of the most important towns of Christendom.'[1] In another compartment of the house were pictures which 'depicted the kingdom of England, with all its cities, towns and villages, mountains and rivers.'[2] The frequent visits of Queen Elizabeth I, which prompted Burghley to enlarge Theobalds, may also have encouraged him to assemble this collection of views for her pleasure and entertainment. Such evidence suggests that topographical landscape representations were rising in esteem. Yet the depth and extent of interest in this genre in England during the first half of the seventeenth century is difficult to determine, since most topographical landscapes were engraved, and accounts of collections of engravings made at this time are rare.

We are better informed about the collecting of topographical landscape paintings during the second half of the seventeenth century. By that time increasing numbers of topographical artists from the Continent were visiting or settling in England, including several notable figures such as Wenceslaus Hollar from Bohemia, Jan Siberechts from Flanders, and

Leonard Knyff from Holland. The growing importance of topographical landscape painting did not lie simply in the strategic purposes for which it was to be employed for a long period to come or in the desire to record great cities. Topographical landscapes were increasingly being commissioned by the aristocracy and substantial gentry, who wanted their vast estates and great houses to be recorded in this way, not only as an index of their belongings, but as tangible symbols of social and political power and evidence of personal achievement. Knyff made a grand series of eighty drawings of country houses and royal residences, which were engraved by Johannes Kip and published by him in his *Britannia illustrata* (1707–8). It was mainly for proprietorial reasons that the volume of topographical landscape painting was maintained – and, indeed, expanded – during the prosperous years of the eighteenth century.

But in the eighteenth century topographical landscapes, considered purely as art, were seldom deemed worthy of particular attention. In his XIII Discourse of 1786 Sir Joshua Reynolds, then at the height of his fame as a portrait painter and president of the Royal Academy, noted that 'ordinary and common' views were vastly inferior to those produced by the 'poetical mind,' which did not require specific references in landscape. The basic distinctions between them, he suggested, were akin to the relationship existing between 'cold prosaick narration or description' and the poetry of Milton's 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso.' An imaginary scene, he believed, could 'make a more forcible impression on the mind than the real scenes, were they presented before us.'[3] Thomas Gainsborough, Reynolds's illustrious contemporary, shared his low opinion of specific views. In a letter to Lord Hardwicke, written about 1764 in response to a request for a topographical painting, Gainsborough wrote: 'Mr Gainsborough presents his humble respects to Lord Hardwicke, and shall always think it an honour to be employed in anything for his Lordship, but with respect to real views from Nature ... he has never seen any place that affords a subject equal to the poorest imitations of Gaspar or Claude.'[4]

Reynolds's and Gainsborough's reactions were typical of the prevalent academic distaste for topographical views, which were considered to be deficient in invention or in imaginative manipulation. In other words, to paint a topographical view was to indulge in a mechanical and uncreative activity. Yet well-born and propertied persons of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, neither connected with art academies nor formally acquainted with the society of artists, considered topographical views to

be both familiar and eminently desirable commodities. They were to be found in folios of engravings, in printed books, and, even more readily to hand, on drawingroom walls. They were as much a part of the domestic setting as the family portrait.

Possibly because of this strong and widespread attachment in Britain to painted topographical landscapes, academies, while not approving of them, were not entirely, or too strongly, opposed to them. After all, the topographical artist Paul Sandby had become a founding member of the Royal Academy in 1768. When Gainsborough declined the commission for a topographical view from Lord Hardwicke, and observed that he had never seen 'any place that affords a subject equal to the poorest imitation of Gaspar or Claude,' he did add that 'Paul Sandby is the only man of genius ... who has employed his pencil that way.' Even Reynolds, who refused to consider topographical views to be within the realm of art, was prepared to accept the principle that such views could be raised to a higher level of aesthetic significance.

Reynolds proposed that to do this the topographical draughtsman should acquaint himself with the imaginary or ideal views of Italianate French painters of the seventeenth-century classical school, such as Claude Lorraine, Gaspard Dughet, and Nicolas Poussin. He believed that by wedding their generalized manner with a particular view a topographical painter could elevate a specific landscape to the realm of art.[5] However, by the time Reynolds publicly proclaimed the value of this union (1786) the idea was hardly novel: the 'elevation' of specific landscape views was by then widely familiar and generally practised.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Englishmen were beginning to discover the beauties of wild nature, they were also beginning to seek an aesthetic system by which to evaluate scenery. They discovered it in the idealized landscapes of the French Italianate school, and also in those of the Italian Salvator Rosa; increasingly, too, the classicizing features of the Italianate Dutch landscapes, such as those of Jan Both and Nicolas Berchem, began to capture their attention. The superiority of idealized nature in paintings was espoused also in French and Italian theoretical works. Perhaps one of the most influential of these treatises was C.A. Dufresnoy's theoretical work, in Latin verse, *De arte graphica*, translated into French by Roger De Piles (published in 1668) and into English by John Dryden (whose translation was first published in 1695).

Concepts concerning the ideal expressed in these treatises influenced

both the outlook and the writings of cultivated Englishmen such as Anthony Ashley Cooper (1671–1713), Third Earl of Shaftesbury, and Jonathan Richardson, the portrait painter. Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks*, first published in 1711, brought the discussion of the Ideal forcefully into English critical writing. In Richardson's *An Essay on the Theory of Painting* (1715), which was designed as much to inform the taste of gentlemen as to enlighten artists, the author draws attention to the link between the Ideal and landscape painting. Both Shaftesbury and Richardson were seeking rules by which they could judge works of art, and both certainly found these in the theory of the Ideal.

Shaftesbury advised the artist to employ idealization, because 'A PAINTER, if he has any Genius, understands the *Truth* and Unity of Design; and knows he is even then unnatural, when he follows nature too close, and strictly copies *Life*. For his Art allows him not to bring *All* Nature into his Piece, but *a Part* only.'[6] Richardson clarified the process of achieving the Ideal: 'a painter must raise his ideas beyond what he sees, and form a model of perfection in his own mind which is not to be found in reality, but yet such a one as is probable and rational.' In comparing Dutch, Flemish, and Italian masters of 'low subjects' Richardson considered the Italian painters superior, since 'they have not servilely followed common nature, but raised, and improved, or at least have always made the best choice of it. This gives a dignity to a low subject, and is the reason of the esteem we have for the landscapes of Salvator Rosa ... Claude Lorrain, the Poussins.'[7]

However, the theory of the Ideal soon hardened into a set of rules for the critic's guidance, and Shaftesbury emphasized the necessity of such rules in forming any judgments on works of art: 'I LIKE! I fancy! I admire! How? By accident: or *as I please*. No. But I *learn* to fancy, to admire, *to please*, as the Subjects themselves are deserving, and can bear me out. Otherwise, I like at this hour, but dislike the next. I shall be weary of my Pursuit, and, upon experience, find little *Pleasure* in the main, if my Choice and Judgment in it be from no other Rule than that single one, *because I please*.'[8]

It was against this background that Reynolds's theory of the Ideal evolved, and paintings of specific landscapes, such as those by Richard Wilson, were developed or modified to conform to principles determined largely by classical landscape. Topographical features essential to the identification of a view were retained but simplified, and subordinate elements, such as foreground and lighting, were manipulated according

to classical tenets. In this way Wilson created the 'classicized' topographical view: one that evoked sentiment, or, as Reynolds would have put it (had he been more appreciative of Wilson's art), 'poetical' feeling.

While Reynolds's precepts and Wilson's canvases produced clear evidence of how topographical landscape could be fortified and elevated by elements of the classical style, there was perhaps a less focused yet none the less widely influential source of inspiration for the 'idealized' specific view. This was the theory and practice of the Picturesque. The picturesque movement owes its inception to the Reverend William Gilpin, an amateur artist and writer, who, during the 1760s and 1770s, devised the theory while considering ways of aesthetically examining landscapes. In his theoretical works and practical guides, most of which were published between 1782 and 1809, he provided step-by-step instructions by which to understand landscape in terms of art – for such was the basis of the Picturesque. Gilpin's theory, like Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), greatly enriched critical language and effectively broadened the aesthetic framework for the examination and appreciation of nature. By a thorough study of it Gilpin was able to 'evolve and formulate a general aesthetic attitude to landscape, which was to have considerable influence in determining English taste for fifty years or more.'[9]

During the last half-century much has been written on the theories of both the Picturesque and the Sublime. However, their practical importance for the art of landscape painting in the late eighteenth century had not been considered deeply until recently, and has never been adequately explained. Therefore it is essential that their relationships and practical importance be discussed, since their impact on the nature of topographical landscape painting was considerable.

Though Gilpin was a thinker of far fewer intellectual gifts than Burke, and with no special talents as an aesthetician, nevertheless he sought to devise an aesthetic system that was more practicable than Burke's – one that would assist the traveller and the artist in their appreciation of the natural scene. Despite Burke's assertion that the Sublime and the Beautiful could not be mixed, Gilpin believed that they were often conjoined in nature (although he admitted that, even when they were successfully combined, either one or the other principle should dominate). It was probably because he was convinced that the Sublime and the Beautiful could be blended that he devised his aesthetic system of the Picturesque, in which he could accommodate both.

Despite Gilpin's misleading assertion that the Picturesque was a 'species' of beauty, evidence provided in his tour guides supports the view that he did in fact believe it to be a separate aesthetic category. Perhaps when he stated that the Picturesque was a 'species' of beauty and assigned to it the quality of 'ruggedness' (Burke had referred to the 'rugged' and 'negligent' quality of the Sublime[10]), Gilpin was trying, in an awkward and illogical way, to illustrate the special character of the Picturesque, in which qualities of the Beautiful and the Sublime could be combined. (Such inconsistencies in Gilpin's theory resulted in those celebrated reassessments of it published by Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight.[11]) Still, it was because within a practical context Gilpin denied the validity of the totally separate and independent nature of Burke's categories that subsequent travel writers, tutored in the principles of the Picturesque, referred to the Sublime and the Beautiful in nature mainly in the Gilpinian sense. A picturesque view required ruggedness, which could be reinforced by other qualities, such as irregularity, variety, and light and shade. In addition, the picturesque landscape needed to possess 'the power to stimulate the imagination.'[12] Through his writings – which, as we have seen, include many travel guides – Gilpin not only described but critically analysed the landscape of Britain. Through them the traveller – or, indeed, the artist – could learn to appreciate new subjects and certain effects equivalent to those in art.

By the time Gilpin began publishing his theoretical works and tour guides, the habit of associating scenes in nature with landscape paintings of the classical school (such as those of the Italianate French painters Claude, Gaspard, and Poussin, as well as the Neapolitan Salvator Rosa) had already become well established. Writers of travel guides, therefore, readily accepted Gilpin's ideas, often referring to locations which they believed to be reminiscent of scenes found in paintings by these artists and sometimes remarking on their picturesque properties; they would even provide, in their published guides, special 'stations' or viewing-points that would present painterly scenes to the traveller's view.[13] To reinforce the picturesqueness of a landscape travellers sometimes carried a 'Claude glass,' which provided a reflection of nature that seemed like a painting. The 'glass' was a slightly convex mirror of black glass which reflected scenes of nature gathered by its convexity and which, by 'reducing the colours to a lower ratio,' described 'tonal values of the various planes, thus modifying a natural scene into a picturesque, idealized, "Claudian" view.'[14]

It is evident from journals that the tourist and painter alike 'saw' pictures in nature at almost every turn of the road. Charles Dibdin noted that 'Cumberland calls for the saucy touch of *Salvator Rosa*,'[15] while Arthur Young asserted that Lake Windermere presented scenes 'as elegant as ever fancied by *Claud* himself.'[16] James Denholm found that 'the rich vale of Leven had mountains reminiscent of the striking productions of Salvator Rosa,' while its lake had 'more of the character of the soft and pleasing pictures of Claude.'[17] Henry P. Wyndham found at Pont Aberglaslyn in Wales a tremendous cliff, much greater than could have been conceived by the 'eccentric and romantic imagination of Salvator Rosa.'[18]

Although Gilpin may not have made many references to works by specific painters of the classical school, the construction of their paintings provided him with the basic form of the picturesque view. Such a view would usually require framing 'side screens' or coulisses – usually of trees but sometimes of mountains or hills or even the banks of a river. In addition, there would be three spatial grounds, such as were present in the classical landscape. According to Gilpin, there should be a foreground of dark tonality, often silhouetted against a lighter middle ground and a still lighter distance or background. Of the three grounds, the forward ground was usually singled out by him for its especial significance. 'The foreground,' stated Gilpin, 'is a mere spot, compared with the extension of distance: in itself it is of trivial consequence; and cannot well be called a *feature of the scene*. And yet, tho so little essential in *giving a likeness*, it is more so than any other part in *forming a composition*.'[19]

Gilpin discovered that in a painting or a drawing 'broken ground' was suitably picturesque in the shadowed area of the nearest plane because of its 'accidental outlines and rough shapes.' The coulisses provided a silhouetted, fretted framework for the illuminated middle ground and background. In Gilpin's opinion such foreground framing elements would prevent the eye from wandering, and the picture from being turned into a 'map.'[20] The importance of the foreground was echoed by travel writers, such as Dibdin, who felt that the finest properties of a painted landscape would be destroyed 'where you have no foreground.'[21] Humphrey Repton, the landscape gardener, asserted that the painter's composition 'must have a foreground; and though it may only consist of a single tree, a rail, or a piece of broken road, it is absolutely necessary to the painter's landscape.' Repton summed up the importance of the fore-

ground in Claude's paintings by comparing it to a window which 'would exclude all view from that adjoining.'[22]

The conceptual approach of the Picturesque might at first seem alien to the mode of specific landscape representation. And, indeed, Gilpin opposed the drawing of specific scenery. According to him, nature should be perceived initially in as non-particular a way as possible. A person who understood the principles of the Picturesque could modify the scene in his mind's eye, transform it, and make it approach perfection. The viewer's attitude to nature, according to Gilpin, must be 'creative and not imitative.'[23] Specific landscape might serve as inspiration but never as the final object of the painter's endeavours. Thus Gilpin, like Reynolds, believing in the idea of *general* nature, directed the aspiring artist to avoid 'painful exactness' and rather to 'concentrate on catching the *spirit* and *truth* of the original.'[24] What he proposed was similar to that which Wilson had practised years before: the creation of specific but elevated landscape in which the essential character of the topography was retained, with subordinate or inconsequential parts modified or redistributed to meet the compositional requirements of the classical landscape and thereby assisting in the generation of mood. Since Gilpin's Picturesque was a principle built largely on the general structure of classical landscape rather than on any specific conception of style, painted landscapes influenced by it are diverse. What they shared was a schematic type of composition, irregular surfaces and edges, and certain preferred landscape settings (often either mountainous or rural).

While in theory there was no limit to the variety of subjects suitable for picturesque landscapes, in practice Gilpin suggested those which seemed to him to possess the essential qualities of the Picturesque. It was perhaps for this reason that he often chose to describe the irregular and rough outlines associated with water scenery. What attracted him to water was its broken lights (caused by constantly changing surfaces), and also the irregularity of river banks and of the shorelines of lakes. In addition, waterfalls had a particular charm for Gilpin. The broken lines of small cascades undoubtedly possessed picturesque potential, though they were not perhaps as moving as the almost pure sublimity of the vast, uniform waterfall.[25]

But for the leading subject in a landscape Gilpin would invariably choose an ancient ruin. He found the ruin particularly picturesque, because of its crumbling, splintered, blotched surfaces, and because it

stimulated associative ideas. 'The reigning ideas,' he believed, were '*solitude*, *neglect*, and *desolation*.'[26] Broken and irregular rock forms and bent, fractured, and gnarled trees were the equivalent, he considered, of decayed architecture, for he refers to them as 'natural ruins.'[27] Gilpin claimed that trees were appropriate adjuncts in Salvator Rosa's pictures because, in their bent and splintered majesty, they suited the character of Salvator's stormy landscapes. Indeed, Gilpin declared the 'blasted tree' to be a perfect subject and fully appropriate in a view where 'the dreary heath is spread before the eye and ideas of wildness and desolation are required.' 'What more suitable accompaniment can be imagined,' Gilpin asked, 'than the blasted oak ragged, scathed, and leafless; shooting its peeled, white branches athwart the gathering blackness of some rising storm?'[28] This tree evoked the same associations as did the ancient architectural ruin: these 'remnants of decaying grandeur speak to the imagination in a stile of eloquence, which the stripling cannot reach: they record the history of some storm, some blast of lightning or other great event which transfers its grand ideas to the landscape; and in the representation of elevated subjects assists the sublime.'[29]

No wonder that early visitors to Canada should have considered the landscape a suitable subject for the picturesque brush, with its abundant water and waterfalls, and its wilderness amply supplied with craggy rocks and 'blasted' trees. Indeed, since there were so few ancient ruined buildings in North America, such trees became accepted as excellent substitutes. As the blasted tree was also equated by Gilpin with wilderness landscape, it is not surprising that, in the early twentieth century, through the paintings of the Group of Seven, it was to become the chief symbol of Canada's northern frontier.

In the eighteenth century a knowledge of and practice of the principles of art (as espoused by Reynolds and put into effect by Wilson) and of the theory of the Picturesque were normally restricted to those who sought a career in art or to those interested laymen who enjoyed sufficient leisure to pursue the necessary studies. The latter belong largely to the upper strata of English society: they were young men of breeding, who, as future leaders of society, considered it a moral obligation to become widely informed on, and reasonably accomplished in, a variety of subjects. It was their responsibility, they believed, to learn at least a little about a good deal. The young gentleman was tutored in the fundamentals of the natural sciences and mathematics, in Latin, French, and possibly Italian, and was also given a solid grounding in history. Further, he was often

instructed, formally or otherwise, in the 'polite accomplishments,' such as drawing, architecture, and music.[30]

Drawing was undoubtedly attractive to young men who would have the opportunity of making a Grand Tour of Europe, where such an 'accomplishment' would be useful. Proficiency rather than excellence was recommended. Too much attention to art might distract the young gentleman from those subjects which bore more directly on his future public duties. Lord Chesterfield believed that a gentleman should most certainly have a knowledge of painting and sculpture, yet only to a 'certain degree ... [for] they must only be the amusements, and not the business of a man of parts.'[31]

Despite the tendency in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to subordinate the 'polite accomplishments' to more 'serious' subjects, the importance of the former in the gentleman's education cannot be denied. Their significance is surely attested to by that conspicuous cultural phenomenon, the gentleman amateur, who emerged so strongly during the eighteenth century. 'Amateurs' they were, though the term then lacked the pejorative connotation with which it is burdened today. These were often quite knowledgeable men, whose contributions were sometimes notable. They might study architecture or art, and from their experience and reflection publish dissertations or gather together collections of *vertu*. As artists they made their contribution mainly in terms of landscape (in which subject, as landowners, they displayed considerable interest) and often in watercolour. This was their preferred medium in the late eighteenth century because it required little equipment and effects could be achieved relatively quickly. While amateurs may have been less significant as painters than as architects or collectors, none the less their contribution remains historically important. Indeed, it may be said that they, often as much as any other group of artists, provided the picturesque synthesis of the topographical view and the classical landscape.

As I have suggested, military academies, such as Woolwich, were influential in the training of those topographical artists who worked in Britain and the colonies. However, to see only a simple causal relationship here is to lose sight of the importance of the cultural background of those who attended the academies. These officers in training (such as George Heriot himself) were gentlemen cadets and thus mainly members of the gentry, or sometimes of noble families. In their recent youth they had had the benefit of a liberal education and often of the opportunity to practise

in art. When these young gentlemen came to an academy like Woolwich (as Davies, Cockburn, and Heriot did), they arrived with already developed habits of perception and skills as draughtsmen that further tutelage under a superior artist or sensitive teacher, such as Paul Sandby, served to strengthen and refine. That their styles are so individual certainly speaks well of their teacher, yet it also suggests that the essential elements of these personal styles had been formed before they came to Woolwich.