

A University of Sussex PhD thesis

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder

Logan McKinsey Morse

The Qualification Aimed for

University of Sussex

January 2022

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree. However, the thesis incorporates to the extent indicated below, material already submitted as part of required coursework and/or for the degree of:

Doctor of Philosophy
In Art History
which was awarded by University of Sussex

Signature:	
	as not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in ersity for the award of any other degree.
Signature:	

Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder

Dedication

In loving memory of Big Mom.

Acknowledgements

It would be longer than the length of this dissertation to thank everyone who was involved with my research on George Barret, an artist who many people have never heard of, but there are some people I would like to mention personally. First, I would like to thank my father, Greg Morse, who encouraged me to apply myself to a doctorate degree, and has always supported me and had faith in me. I would also like to thank my mother, Jamie Broyles, who has also supported me even though I was living so far away from Texas. I need to thank my husband Rhys Lapidus, who has listened to me complain about writing over and over again and encouraged me to never give up.

In addition to my family, others I would like to thank include Brendan Rooney at the National Gallery of Ireland, who has always been helpful to me, and through whom I met William Laffan. I can't thank William enough for introducing me to innumerable private collections and for sharing with me his knowledge of the eighteenth-century Irish art world centred around Dublin. Without William, I would have never known about the Irish Georgian Society who have generously published a few of my writings and granted me a scholarship.

I am incredibly grateful to staff and librarians at all the museums, institutions and private collections I have come into contact with throughout this project. These

include Yale University, the National Art Library, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Paul Mellon Centre, Sotheby's Auction House, Christies Auction House, Tate Britain and the Royal Academy of Arts, all of which have kindly allowed me access to viewing their collections.

This thesis would never have been written if it were not for the support of my family, friends and my advisors Geoff Quilley and Liz James, at the University of Sussex.

Abstract / Synopsis

As the first complete catalogue of the known work of George Barret (1728 or 1732-1784), this dissertation presents an analysis of the Irish landscape painter whose work has been largely overlooked in the artistic genres of British art. Beginning his career in Dublin, before moving to London and working around the British Isles, Barret's work engages with an Anglo-Irish perspective on landscape informed by the contemporary trends of the Sublime, the classical and ultimately the Picturesque. As a friend of Edmund Burke (1929-1797), and an acquaintance of William Gilpin, Barret manifests the direct influence of their ideas. Despite this more artistic merit, arguably the artist's greatest success is a result of his ability to interact with potential patrons, gaining him commissions over now better-known contemporaries such as Richard Wilson. The son of a Dublin tailor, Barret rose to become a founding member of the Royal Academy in 1768, and his work was very popular in his lifetime. According to Thomas Bodkin, "George Barret, the elder, was reputed in his day, to be the greatest landscape painter whom Ireland, England, or Scotland had till then produced until then." Despite this, Barret experienced the vicissitudes of the eighteenth-century art market and ended his life in relative obscurity, having suffered a bankruptcy from which he was not to recover. His artistic success, his position at the Royal Academy and the support he received from Burke notwithstanding, Barret has historically been seen as belonging to a lower tier of artistic merit than his better-known contemporaries. Contemporary painters such as Wilson themselves contributed to this impression, describing Barret's paintings as depicting foliage like "spinach and eggs."

As this dissertation will show, unlike Wilson, Barret did not travel to Italy. Instead, he borrowed the classical motifs that appear in his work from prints or his patrons' Old Master collections in order to cater to the tastes of the Grand Tourists who commissioned his work. His working-class background meant that Barret needed to make a living from his painting. As a result, many of his landscapes were primarily intended for sale or as part of interior decoration commissions, for which Barret gained much contemporary commercial success - as at Norbury Park. This dissertation considers how his work developed alongside the rise of the Picturesque in British art a term which denoted a landscape or view as worthy of being included in a picture and which grew out of Burke's ideas of the Sublime. It is not within conventional art history - which remains rooted in a hierarchical celebration of individual British genius - that this dissertation will take place. Instead, it offers a partial catalogue of Barret's work alongside an analysis of how his oeuvre can be seen within the social context of the eighteenth-century British art world, as Barret vied with a variety of different artists to achieve the most lucrative commissions.

Table of Contents

<u>Volume I</u>

Timeline	9
Introduction	16
Methodology	23
Cataloguing	34
Literature Review	35
Chapter I: Barret in Ireland (1728-1762)	40
Barret's Background and Early Life	41
Barret's Irish Patrons and Commissions	49
Chapter II: Barret in Orchard Street (1762-1772)	87
Barret's Move to Orchard Street	88
Barret's Orchard Street Patrons and Commissions	106
Chapter III: Contextualizing Barret Among his Contemporaries	128
Barret and Other Eighteenth-Century Landscape Painters	129
Chapter IV: Barret in Paddington (1772-1784)	149
Barret's Bankruptcy	150

Barret's Collaborations15	7
Norbury Park1	.58
Collaborations with Gilpin1	.72
Collaborations with Stubbs1	.75
Chapter V: Barret in Wales, the Lake District, the Isle of Wight, and Scotlar	nd:
Speculative Painting (1768-1784)	.85
Barret's Links to the Picturesque1	.87
Barret's Work Produced Around Britain1	.91
Chapter VI: Barret's Final Years and Legacy: The Artist Family2	05
Barret's Exploration of Print Culture2	:06
Barret's Last Commission, Death and Legacy2	:14
Conclusion2	22
Volume II	
Illustrations	1
Appendices)3
Bibliography23	33

Summary of the Chronology Proposed

Timeline Chronology of the Life and Major Events of George Barret Senior

- •1728 or 1732 Barret was born in Dublin
- •1730 Edmund Burke was born on January 12th
- •1733- Sawrey Gilpin was born on October 30th
- 1741- James Barry was born on October 11th
 - Famine in Ireland killed 10% of the population
- •1744 Sotheby's Auction House was founded
- •1746 Royal Dublin Arts School was founded
 - -John Boydell became an independent engraver
- •1747 Barret attended Robert West's Academy in Dublin
 - -Earliest known signed painting by Barret
 - -In May of this year Barret was mentioned in the *Dublin Newspaper* as a student at Robert West's Academy
 - -Barret won first prize at the Dublin Society
 - -Joseph Farington was born on November 21st
- •1748 Barret was commissioned by Joseph Lesson (1701 1783), at Russborough House
 - -William Gilpin anonymously published A Dialogue Upon the Gardens
 - -First excavation at Pompeii

- •1749 Barret was commissioned by James Fitzgerald (1722 1773), Leinster House
 -Edmund Burke graduated from Trinity College Dublin
- •1750 Edmund Burke moved to London
- •1753 Edmund Burke (1723 1792) drafted the *Philosophical Enquiry Concerning* the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757)
- •1754 Barret was commissioned by William Conolly (D. 1754), Castletown House (in 1762 a letter between Barret and the son of William Thomas Conolly (1738-1803) confirms this
 - William Cavendish, Duke of Devonshire (1720-1764) became Prime Minister until 1757
- •1755 Barret was commissioned by Reverend Samuel Madden (1686 1765), Manor Waterhouse
 - Barret was mentioned in *Dublin Newspaper* on December 23rd for the award of being the best performer in landscape painting
- •1756 The start of the Seven Year War
- •1757 Barret married Frances Percy (d. 1810)
 - -Burke published *Philosophical Enquiry Concerning the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*
 - Robert West became master of the Drawing School in Dublin
- •1759- Joseph Barret (1759 1830) was born in Dublin, Ireland
 - Barret was mentioned in *Dublin Newspaper* for a sale he had of furniture and three landscape paintings.
 - The Duke of Cumberland commissioned Gilpin

- •1760 –Barret was commissioned by Thomas Taylour (1724 1795), at Headfort House
 - Reign of King George III (1738 1820) began in England
 - The Society of Arts held its first exhibition in London, England
 - -Barret moved to London sometime between now and 1764
- •1761 Barret was commissioned by Edward Wingfield (1729 1764), Powerscourt House
 - A split results in the Society of Artists becoming the Society of Artists of Great Britain
 - -Thomas Cobbe of Newbridge House(1733-1815) commissioned Barret to paint four paintings
- •1762 James Barret (1762 1819) was born in London, England
 - -Reign of Catherine the Great (1729 1796) began in Russia
 - -Sir George Colebrooke (1729 1809) commissioned Barret to depict Gatton Park
 - -The Free Society of Artists was founded
 - -King George III acquired Buckingham Palace
 - Barret issued a proposal for publishing and engraving subscription with John Dixon (1740-1811)
- •1763 The Treaty of Paris ended the Seven Year War
- •1764 Barret displayed a painting at the Free Society of Artists
 - Barret was awarded the premium prize from the Free Society of Artists for being the most accomplished landscape painter
 - -Barret exhibited four paintings at the Society of Artists of Great Britain
 - -Dublin Newspaper mentioned that the Marques of Rockingham (1730 1782) bought a painting by Barret for 100 guineas.

- -In September the *Dublin Newspaper* mentioned the sale of Barret's furniture and paintings from his house on Leeson Street, Dublin (Hog Hill)
- •1765 Barret was commissioned by the Duke of Portland (1738 -1809)
 - -Barret exhibited two paintings at the Society of Artists of Great Britain
 - The Marquis of Rockingham became Prime Minister
 - Burke became private secretary for the Marquis of Rockingham
 - Isabella Barret was born in London, England
 - Letter from Barret to the Duke of Buccleuch
- •1766 James Barry wrote a letter about Wales that inspired Barret to paint Welsh landscapes
 - -Christies Auction House was founded
 - -Barret exhibited three paintings with the Society of Artists of Great Britain
 - -George Stubbs (1724 1806) published *The Anatomy of a Horse*
- •1767 George Barret Junior (1767 1842) was born in December in London
 - -Barret exhibited three paintings with the Society of Artists of Great Britain
 - -Barret was mentioned in letter by the Duke of Portland
 - -Lord Shelburne (1737 1805) commissioned Barret, Gainsborough (1727 1788), and Wilson (1714 1782)
 - -Barret was mentioned in a letter from Burke to Barry about being in a "mortal war" with Stubbs, Wright and Hamilton and "not very well" with West
- •1768 The Royal Academy was founded
 - -Barret exhibited four paintings with the Society of Artists of Great Britain
 - -William Gilpin (1724 1804) published Essay on Prints
 - -Sawrey Gilpin (1733 1807) painted a series based on *Gulliver's Travels*
 - -Barret was in Scotland (Scotland letter for proof)

- -Duke of Buccleuch commissioned Barret throughout the year
- •1769 Commissioned by the Duke of Buccleuch, Melrose Abbey, Scotland (1765-80?) was mentioned in several incidences in the account books
- •1770 Lord North (1732 1792) became Prime Minister
 - -Barret displayed three paintings at the Royal Academy
 - -Barret declared bankruptcy
 - -Barret was mentioned in letter by the Duke of Portland
 - -Charles Barret was born in Marylebone, London, England
 - -Barret was listed in the account books of Duke of Buccleuch
 - -Barret was commissioned with Gilpin from Col. Thomas Thornton
- •1771 Mary Barret (1771 1836) was born
 - -Barret sold the contents of his house in London
 - Barret displayed one painting at the Royal Academy
 - Duke of Portland wrote letters to Barret
 - Will Lock Barret was born in Marylebone, London, England
- •1772 Barret moved to Westbourne Green near the village of Paddington
 - Barret exhibited three paintings in the Royal Academy
 - Barret was mentioned in the *London Chronicle*
 - Barret was mentioned in *The Morning Post*
- •1773 Boston Tea Party
 - Barret exhibited three paintings in the Royal Academy

- Council Minutes from the Royal Academy mentioned a discussion of an apology letter written by Barret to the Academy for displaying work with the Society Artists Great Britain
- The Duke of Portland and Barret exchanged letters
- •1774 Barret exhibited a painting at the Royal Academy
 - -Barret was mentioned in a sale in the *Dublin Newspaper*
 - -Thomas Sandby (1721 1798) designed Norbury Park House for William Lock (1732 1810)
 - -Barret wrote letters to the Duke of Buccleuch
 - Barret visited the Isle of Wight most likely
- •1775 American War of Independence began
 - -Barret exhibited five paintings at the Royal Academy
 - Barret was commissioned by William Lock, Norbury Park House
 - -Duke of Buccleuch gave Barret money
 - -Joseph Barret was awarded a gold palette by the Society of Arts
- •1776 United States signed the Declaration of Independence
 - -Barret exhibited two paintings at the Royal Academy
- 1777 Barret exhibited four paintings at the Royal Academy
 - -Barret was mentioned in the *London Chronicle* for his paintings in the Royal Academy Exhibition
- •1778 Barret exhibited a painting at the Royal Academy
- •1779 Barret exhibited two paintings at the Royal Academy

- •1780 Barret exhibited a painting at the Royal Academy
 - Barret was mentioned in the ${\it London~Courant}$ for his exhibition at the Royal Academy
- •1781 Barret exhibited a painting at the Royal Academy
- •1782 Barret became the master painter at the Chelsea Royal Hospital thanks to Edmund Burke
 - -Barret exhibited two paintings at the Royal Academy
 - -Marques of Rockingham became Prime Minister
 - -Burke became Paymaster-General of the forces
- •1783- Revolutionary War ends
- •1784 Barret died in Paddington on May 29th
 - -Council Minutes at the Royal Academy March 26, mentioned a letter from Barret to Lock that was read out loud to mourn Barret's death

Introduction

The history of British Landscape painting of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has been well documented in the narratives of art history, which plot the dominant story of lone male artistic genius from John Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), to Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) – paradigmatically in William Vaughan's *British Painting: The Golden Age* (1999).¹ Such narratives include discussions of the landscapes of John Constable (1776-1837) and Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) and have even recovered a second tier of British landscape painters, including Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797) and Richard Wilson (1713-1782).²

There remains, however, a substantial number of non-canonical British artists who exist outside the dominant narratives of British art history. This dissertation will take the case of the Irish landscape painter George Barret (1728 or 1732-1784), to argue that not only do such artists represent the possibility of an expanded field of art history but that they also represent a paradigmatic change in the scope and methods of the history of British art. It is not within conventional art history – which remains

¹ For some of the latest texts on these artists see Hallett, M. and Riding, C. (2006). *Hogarth,* London; Warrell, I. and Kelly, F. (2007). *J.M.W. Turner,* London: Tate Publishing; and Hallett, M. (2014). *Joshua Reynolds: Portraiture in Action,* New Haven: Yale University Press.

² For some of the latest texts on these artists see Evans, M., Costaras, N. and Richardson, C. (2011). *John Constable: Oil Sketches from the Victoria and Albert Museum,* London: V & A Publishing, 2011; Soloman, S. (2011). *Gainsborough's Landscapes: Themes and Variations,* London: Philip Wilson Publishers, and Barker, E. and Kidson, A. (2007). *Joseph Wright of Derby in Liverpool,* New Haven: Yale University Press. The first major exhibition of Wilson's work, was held at the Tate, Yale and Cardiff in 1982. A later exhibition, *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting,* was held at the Yale Center for British Art in 2014.

rooted in a hierarchical celebration of individual British male genius – that this dissertation will take place. Instead, it will offer a catalogue of Barret's most significant work alongside an analysis of how his oeuvre can be located within the social context of the British art world during the eighteenth-century. To do this, it will consider the non-canonical Anglo-Irish landscape artist within the social structures which produced, supported and ultimately forgot about him. Above all, in the case of Barret, this dissertation involves building up the first in-depth study of the artist's known works, given that there is no existing catalogue of his oeuvre.

Because of what has been perceived both by certain contemporaries and subsequent art historians as a certain stiffness in his style, an acidity in his colour palette, and his somewhat unoriginal tendency to recycle compositions as a way to commercialise his work, there have been no single-artist exhibitions focused on Barret. He has also not featured prominently in exhibitions of his more canonical contemporaries in the theorization of British landscape painting or the overall history of British art in the eighteenth century. This dissertation therefore aims to show that Barret's unique importance in the history of art lies in the way that his career exposes the vicissitudes of the eighteenth-century British art scene and his own ability to manipulate it. In addition, this dissertation is also the first attempt to compile a complete catalogue of Barret's known paintings together in one document.

The project stems from the attempt to find every Barret painting or possible Barret painting in existence, to create an organized catalogue of all his works in one place. The resulting catalogue raisonné which forms an integral part of the research

includes over 600 paintings, each of which has been attributed, with cataloguing information including provenance, exhibition histories and sales, as well as bibliographies of the literature in which it was featured being provided. To achieve this depth of information on an oeuvre that has, as yet, received little scholarly attention, the focus of the project has been archival. The work involved in building up the catalogue included finding every article and newspaper clipping since the 18th century that mention Barret; finding and reading his will in the National Archives; going through the Royal Academy Minute Book to find every entry Barret was mentioned in; locating and reading as many letters that mention Barret or were written to or from the artist as possible; discovering his journal at the V&A National Art Library; finding and using prints of Barret's work as a method of attribution; creating a solid biography of the artist and his children by researching his ancestry as a way to more securely understand the trajectory of his career and the attribution of his works; researching auction records to find every Barret work that had been sold since the 18th century, alongside attempting to find as many Barret works in both public and private collections. The resulting in-depth study of Barret's life and work aims to throw light on the career of the prolific but underrated Anglo-Irish artist by understanding him within his social and artistic milieu.

Based on archival research and in order to follow the trajectory of Barret's career as it unfolded against the backdrop of the time in which he lived, this thesis is organized chronologically. The timeline at the beginning of the text helps to establish a summary of the chronological order of major events in Barret's life, set against the context of relevant events taking place during the eighteenth century at large. These

events include the births of Barret's contemporaries and children, as well as important incidents in the British art world, such as the foundation of auction houses and exhibition spaces. Rooted in the chronology of events shown in the timeline, the artist's biography will be used in each chapter to frame the discussions of works he produced during a certain period. In cases where the limited availability of documentation made creating a timeline of works a challenging endeavour, the chronology was established based on an analysis of Barret's painting style, which changed throughout his lifetime. Broadly speaking, each chapter will be divided into two sections, the first part will provide a biographical background for the period in question, before moving on to discuss the works produced for specific commissions during this period in more detail.

Structured according to this model, the first chapter will begin by using a biographical framework to provide a background to the work Barret carried out in Ireland as he began to forge his career. It will discuss the beginning of Barret's life in Dublin, outlining what is known of his schooling at Robert West's Academy as well as his connections with Irish patrons and friends such as Edmund Burke (1729-1797), which led him to focus on landscape painting. The second part of the chapter will look more closely at commissions and works he carried out for his Irish patrons, building up a catalogue of known works carried out in this period.

The focus of the second chapter is Barret's career at the height of his fame as a fashionable society painter after his move to London, where he set up a studio in Orchard Street, a fashionable location between Portman Square and Grosvenor Square. The first part of the chapter will begin with his move, sometime between 1760 and

1764, before going on to analyse his early success with patrons as a result of his involvement with the Society of Artists and the Royal Academy of Art. This section will argue that these societies helped Barret establish a social network through which to cater to a fashionable clientele, while opening the doors to new opportunities with English patrons. The second part of the chapter will provide descriptions of these patrons and the works they commissioned from Barret as a way to understand the quality of his patrons as well as the sheer quantity of projects in which he was involved, and to build up a catalogue of his known works.

The third chapter will contextualise Barret's phenomenal market success through a discussion of works by contemporaries including Wilson and Gainsborough, who Barret viewed as rivals but who have come to dominate the canon of eighteenth-century landscape painting in Britain. In particular the connection and comparisons between Barret and Wilson will be used to argue that while Barret was able to dominate a share of the market for landscape painting far more successfully at the high point of his career, there was a sense that his work was of inferior quality than that of his rival. The chapter will argue that alongside any merit in his work, it was on the basis of Barret's ability to socialise and get on with his patrons that enabled his success and ensures his position in a social history of art.

The fourth chapter will focus on Barret's bankruptcy in 1770, a financial crisis which caused his move to Paddington, a less fashionable part of the city. It will outline the reasons for his financial situation before going on to argue that he began to use his relationships with other artists a way to increase his output and raise his income

through collaborations during this period. The second part of the chapter will focus on what has been seen as one of Barret's major works, providing an analysis of Norbury Park, Surrey (1774-6). Despite being painted during after Barret's bankruptcy, the murals at Norbury park are considered his masterpiece, as well as being his most extensive collaborative project. The chapter will also point to the way that the patron, William Lock, was clearly attempting to provide Barret with financial support.

Chapter Five will explore what might be seen as a more speculative period in which Barret began to travel around Britain, painting Picturesque landscape scenes. Painted in Wales, the Lake District, the Isle of Wight, and Scotland from around the mid 1770s, these works will be seen as an attempt to exploit the recent fashion and growing market for the Picturesque. The first part of the chapter will consider the influence of William Gilpin on Barret's conception of the Picturesque, while also touching on his use of gouache as a way to respond to the Picturesque demand for views made on the spot. The second part of the chapter will discuss the Picturesque works he produced during this period for patrons in the Isle of Wight and Scotland, before moving on to the more speculatively produced gouaches he simultaneously painted in the Lake District.

The sixth and final chapter will discuss Barret's participation in the growing eighteenth-century print trade as a way to expand audiences for his work as his increasing ill health curtailed his travels around Britain. It will also touch on what little is known of Barret's final project undertaken for the Royal Hospital, Chelsea (which was uncompleted at his death and now no longer exists), before discussing Barret's death and legacy through his impact on his artist children. This chapter will argue that

ultimately perhaps he is best seen not as an isolated genius but as the father of a family of artists, and as such creates a new unit of analysis in British art history that adds the category of family of artists to the ensemble of individual, studio, institution and artistic movement.

Through the discussion of the six chapters outlined above and the accompanying catalogue of works, this dissertation intends to show the extent of Barret's prolific output, establishing his works alongside those of his contemporaries in relation both to Anglo-Irish political concerns, often deeply linked to the landscape, and also in light of contemporary aesthetics, notably the philosophical inquiries into ideas of the Sublime, beauty and the Picturesque. His prolific output means that large numbers of works are still being discovered today, making the study both dynamic and a constant work in progress. Barret's paintings regularly appear for sale at auctions, partially as a result of more significant social shifts whereby single owner country house collections are being broken down and dispersed. Because Barret's output is so large, it is impossible to create a definitive catalogue raisonné, but this monographic study provides an attempt to include every piece by Barret discovered to date. This oeuvre includes engravings, drawings and paintings, all of which will be considered here alongside a discussion of Barret's artistic development during the period in which the works were produced. An iconographic analysis of some of his most important paintings will also be included as a way to understand his shifts in subject matter and style. The body of Barret's work discussed here has been sourced from both public and private collections across the United Kingdom, America and Australia.

Methodology

As the first attempt to compile a catalogue of the Barret's work, and because the artist has received so little attention in discussions of 18th century Anglo-Irish landscape painting, the majority of the research underpinning this dissertation has been archival. In terms of first-hand archival research, archives at the Royal Academy, the Society of Arts of Great Britain, the Royal Hospital Chelsea, the Paul Mellon Centre, the Yale Center for British Art and the Courtauld Institute all include primary material on Barret. This ranges from letters to and from Barret and contracts from patrons to exhibition reviews and catalogues and press cuttings. Methodologically, my research has involved looking for, and then at, Barret's artworks, finding and researching their documentation in contemporary eighteenth- and nineteenth-century art journals and criticism, as well as the Barret family's private papers, as a way to reconstruct his career and its social context. Because the secondary literature overlooks Barret almost completely, nearly all the information gathered on the artist has been sourced through archival work. As well as biographical information, the archives revealed the vibrant exhibition culture in which Barret participated. This has provided an as yet undeveloped resource for tracking the artist's critical reception in his own time. What became clear from the archival research carried out for this dissertation is that one of the reasons that Barret may not have received as much attention as other painters during the rise of British landscape studies in the 1980s is that relatively few of his works are accessible in public galleries. The majority of Barret's works have remained in private collections, often with the original families, meaning that they prove difficult to locate and view. At the same time however, this means there has been considerable potential for new archival work to be done during the course of this project in establishing the whereabouts of his paintings and linking works to records in estate papers. The best example of this process is Barret's work in Norbury Park (1774-6), where a decorative scheme with landscape paintings still covers the four walls and ceiling of an entire room. This has never been adequately photographed or documented, an oversight this dissertation has attempted to rectify. Locating works, confirming attribution, checking dating, linking provenance documents, and assembling bibliographies for references in periodical/art world literature from the eighteenth century onwards have therefore been the main practical objectives that have enabled the overall research aims to be fulfilled. On the basis of this primary research, this dissertation has attempted not only to catalogue the works located, but to offer new critical appraisals of the pictures themselves, which engage the discourse of landscape painting in Britain.

Once the archival work of this dissertation began to provide insight into Barret's life and work, theories of "sociability" have offered a paradigm in which to investigate the life of the artist and his artworks within the broader cultural and social milieu of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In *Painting for Money* (1993), David Solkin discussed the emergence of a pre-industrial bourgeois public sphere in the British Isles, alongside aesthetic discourse and art patronage.³ Additionally, the sociological theory of "sociability" formulated by George Simmel (1949) has enabled new understandings of the clubs, associations, and institutions convened in the later eighteenth century for purposes, amongst other things, of creating social networks

³ Solkin, D. (1992). *Painting for Money*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

around literature (in the work of Russel & Tuite), and art (discussed by Baird).⁴ In the case of Barret, his ties of sociability and patronage within the public sphere might be said to be one of his chief assets as a painter and provide promising grounds to investigate Anglo-Irish networks of sociability and their effects on regional and national identities, as well as on the artist's own extensive oeuvre.

Authentication has comprised a significant part of the methodology of this dissertation. Authenticating works by an artist such as Barret raises a lot of interesting questions and problems regarding attribution, connoisseurship, and the compiling of a catalogue raisonné. As far as this research has shown, little scientific analysis has been carried out on canvasses attributed to Barret, and although his palette was clearly distinctive, there is no technological analysis on the pigments he used. The task is made particularly complicated by the fact that "reputed in his day the greatest landscape painter whom Ireland, England or Scotland had to tell then produced," Barret's work is now enjoying a resurgence of popularity and interest, meaning that many previously unattributed works are simply being relabelled as Barret's.⁵ The market for collecting paintings by Barret has grown significantly in the past twenty years, particularly in Ireland, and this has exacerbated the tendency to attribute works to him without due scientific research. As William Laffan argues, eighteenth-century Irish painting is becoming "fiercely competitive because of the rarity of the significant works" as well as

_

⁴ Baird, I. (2014). *Social Networks in the Long Eighteenth Century: Clubs, Literary Salons, Textual Coteries*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Simmel, G. (1949). *The Sociology of Sociability*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 55.

⁵ Bodkin, T. (1920). Four Irish Landscape Painters, Dublin: The Talbot Press Limited.

because shifts in scholarship have established the recognised international importance of the eighteenth-century Irish School of landscape painting.⁶ While this rise in interest is problematic on one level, it is also significant to the attribution of works.

In terms of Barret's work, one of the most apparent identifiers of unsigned paintings is provenance, yet very few paintings by Barret have fully established provenances. One example whereby the history of ownership can be verified is a painting such as A Mother and Children Resting Beneath a Large Beech Tree, Deer Grazing Bevond, Possibly in Norbury Park, Surrey (Fig. 1). Created alongside Barret's work at Norbury Park for William Lock in the mid 1770s, this piece was sold at auction by direct descendants of the Lock family. In this case the task of connecting the work to commission records and descriptions of Barret's work for Lock is relatively easy. In the case of A Mother and Children Resting Beneath a Large Beech Tree, Deer Grazing Beyond, Possibly in Norbury Park, Surrey, another feature that makes the piece easy to identify as a painting by Barret is the fact that it is signed in the lower-left corner with the initials GB and the date '76. This further suggests the authenticity of the piece, given that this method of signature was known to have been adopted by the artist elsewhere. Despite this apparent ease, the authenticity of a painting by Barret by his signature alone is, however, complicated by the fact that he rarely signed his work and, as will be discussed in chapter three, unscrupulous dealers have occasionally added signatures to make pieces more valuable. In my research, I have taken care has been taken to match Barret's signature with one of the four different methods he used when he did sign a

⁶ Laffan, W. (2004). "Ireland's' Collector's': A Historical Perspective", *Apollo Magazine* Vol. 160, Issue 155, September, p. 58-65.

painting. These are simply his initials, "GB", the signature "G. Barret", the signature "George Barret", and the occasional use of an underline to highlight his surname that can be observed in several of Barret's securely attributed works.

Because of the lack of scientific or technical analysis on Barret's work, the only available methodology to identify a painting by Barret is through the process of connoisseurship. This is a controversial practice, involving the eye of an expert based on stylistic analysis of an artist's unique hand. The process of connoisseurship in relation to Barret's work is complicated by persisting confusion in identifying the hands of Barret, Wilson, Hodges, as well as Barret's sons, several of whom became artists in their own right. The use of connoisseurship in the identification and attribution of artworks is known to be problematic. The debates surrounding the practice can be linked to its ongoing use within research recently carried out by the Rembrandt Research Project. In 1992 Ernst van de Wetering, the leader of the project, gave a lecture entitled "The Search for the Master's Hand: An Anachronism?" pointing to the problems raised by "identifying the master's hand" in light of practices that involved collaborators of different kinds.⁷ As this dissertation will discuss, because Barret collaborated numerous times during his career, it is even more difficult to authenticate paintings using connoisseurship. This is because attribution cannot necessarily be based on Barret's painting of figures or animals, for example, since these were often painted by other artists such as Sawrey Gilpin (1733-1807) or George Stubbs (1724-1806).

⁷ Wetering, E. Van de. (1992). "The Search for the Master's Hand: An Anachronism", *Künstlerische Austausch/Artistic Exchange: Akten des XXVIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte, Berlin, 15–20 Juli 1992*, ed. Thomas, W. Gaehtgens, Berlin, 1993, p. 627–630.

In addition to this, theorists such as Gary Schwartz, Otto Pächt and Hayden Maginnis question connoisseurship's ability to come to verifiable conclusions, given that the process rejects more up-to-date rational scientific techniques such as X-ray, UV light, infrared reflectography (IRR), and neutron autoradiography (NAR), and instead relies purely on intuition.8 The criticism of connoisseurship as a method intensified in 2016 after the Ruffini collection sold at Sotheby's became the focus of an alleged Old Master forgery scandal.9 After Sotheby's reimbursed a buyer more than 10 million dollars when a Frans Hals from the collection, identified using connoisseurship, was declared a fake as a result of technical investigation, connoisseurship became highly suspected as a technique. ¹⁰ Despite this, the Rembrandt Research Project, which also uses a combination of cutting edge scientific techniques, has claimed that intuition remains central to their analysis, meaning that it retains some credibility in the contemporary art world. 11 The 21st century most certainly has seen a rise in the interest in connoisseurship by scholars such as David Freedberg, whose article "Why Connoisseurship Matters" (2010) argues for the importance of the method. According to Freedberg, the main issue with the practice is the intervention of the market, which can admittedly provide a corrupting force, albeit one which must be distinguished from

_

⁸ Schwartz, G. (1988). "Connoisseurship: The Penalty of Ahistoricism", *International Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship*, Vol 7, No.3, p. 261–268; Pächt, O. (1990). *The Practice of Art History: Reflections on Method*, London: Harvey Miller Publishers; Maginnis, H. B. J. (1990). "The Role of Perceptual Learning in Connoisseurship", *Art History.* Vol 13, no. 1 p. 104–117.

⁹ Noce, V. (2019). "Old Master Fakes Scandal: Warrant Issued for Dealer Giuliano Ruffini as Painter Lino Frongia Arrested". *The Art Newspaper*. Sept. 13, 2019, retrieved Janurary 20, 2020, from https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/giuliano-ruffini. ¹⁰ ibid.

¹¹ Wetering, E. van de. (2005- 2014). *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, Vols. IV–VI. Dordrecht: M. Nijhoff.

the correct application of connoisseurship.¹²

Overall, the body of literature discussing the relative merits of the process shows that there is currently no consensus around the current use of connoisseurship in authentication. As a result, there is presently no failsafe way to authenticate Barret's work, particularly in its increasing conjunction with market forces. That said, the evidence suggests that connoisseurly strategies remain in use, particularly within the sale of Barret's work at auction. Without the support of more cutting-edge processes, the research underpinning this project has relied on such strategies as the analysis of brushwork, composition, colouring and the handling of the light and shading as well as on the opinions of respected scholars in the field, as a way to uncover and set out the hallmarks of a Barret landscape. In order to help with attributions in this dissertation, the independent art historian, editor and curator William Laffan has provided valuable support. This is particularly true in cases where attribution has been revised, as with the example of River Landscape with a Washerwoman and Travellers (private collection), also catalogued as An Extensive Wooded River Landscape with Figures in the Foreground.

Laffan's work on this painting reveals that there can be confusion between the hand of Barret and other of his fellow Irish landscape painters. In the case of *River Landscape with a Washerwoman and Travellers*, an image of the work was published in Laffan and Brendan Rooney's text, *Thomas Roberts, Landscape and Patronage in*

¹² Freedberg, D. (2006). *Why Connoisseurship Matters: In Munuscula Amicorum: Contributions on Rubens and his Colleagues in Honour of Hans Vlieghe*, ed. K. Van der Stighelen, Vol. 1, Turnhout, p. 29–42.

Eighteenth-Century Ireland (2009), and attributed to Barret. The picture was sold as a work by Barret at Christie's on 8 May 2009. However, Laffan began to question the original attribution after he became aware of a painting by Robert Carver, *River Landscape with Figures Bathing by a Mill*, at an exhibition at Gorry Gallery in 2010.¹³ As a result of close connections between *River Landscape with a Washerwoman* and the Carver painting, the validity of the attribution to Barret became uncertain. As Laffan observed,

In the Gorry Gallery catalogue entry for *Landscape with Figures Bathing by a Mill*, I noted the paradox of the simultaneous distinctiveness of the Dublin Group of Landscape painter and the close similarities in their manner: *Several defining aspects of Carver's art are clearly apparent in the picture – as Anne Crookshank and the Knight of Glin have noted, Carver's pictures are instantly recognizable. But it also rather shows how closely Irish landscape painters resembled one another. In addition to the figures in conversation – very much Carver's hallmark motif – the way in which the standing bather is placed exactly equidistant from either side of the painting is typical of Carver's approach. On the other hand, however, the motif of bathers is much more closely associated with George Mullins, though also appearing in the work of his pupil Thomas Roberts. If the date of the mid-1750s is accepted for this landscape, it gives Carver priority in its deployment as neither Mullins nor Roberts was active until the following decade. 14*

¹³ William Laffan *(Mis)attributing a Barret*, email message to Logan Morse, October 22, 2019.

¹⁴ ibid.

It seems that based on a similar confusion, *River Landscape with a Washerwoman* bore connections to Barret's work, leading to its misattribution. What now appears to be the main difference between Barret and Carver is their different sense of tonality. This means that the autumnal colours dominated by ochre tones in *Landscape with a Washerwoman* is more typical of Carver than Barret, who tends towards a greener palette. In addition to this, Laffan points to how "the spindly trees", centrally placed single figure and the use of aerial perspective, is similar to Carver's *River Landscape with Figures Bathing by a Mill*.

Despite his belief in the misattribution of the painting to Barret and it's reattribution to Carver, Laffan highlights the complications involved in connoisseurship by pointing to the fact that both Barret and Carver painted in the least two different styles. This makes it difficult to make definite comparisons between works and complicates the sure attribution and identification of authorship. In the case of Barret, it is challenging to pin down a set of fixed stylistic components, given that his style was constantly shifting in relation to demands from his patrons as well as in reflection of the aesthetic currents around him. Initially, for example, Barret's oeuvre consisted of landscapes as architectural decorations based on stiff Italianate views and contrived compositions. As this dissertation will show, with the influence of Burke, it took on a more topographical quality as he began to paint specific locations around Dublin, including what were seen as the Sublime features of the Dargle Valley, Powerscourt and Castletown. In England, his work primarily consisted of estate views, and mountainous

¹⁵ ibid.

¹⁶ ibid.

scenery, and his landscape style can be characterized by a distinctly acidic palette of greens and yellows, as well as a romantic approach to topography. Because he deliberately produced such large numbers of works particularly at periods of heightened financial insecurity, there is limited standardization in quality. This means that while certain canvasses show a distinct interest in the atmosphere, others lack depth, drama and even originality. As Barret's career drew on and his insolvency made his position more precarious, there is a distinct fluctuation in compositional freshness and originality. The artist increasingly relied on previously established compositional formulae based on the work of other artists such as Wilson, albeit without Wilson's unique style. In cases of collaboration, the evidence of different hands equally complicates the understanding of Barret's work.

Previously compiled catalogue raisonnés can help to identify if a work is by an artist; however, no such catalogue on Barret exists. This dissertation has therefore relied on the certainty of attributions as established by auction houses, galleries and museums. Attributed to Barret, *Autumn Landscape with Steam* (Fig. 1.2) is an example of a painting being attributed to Barret, where the specialist is a hundred per cent sure of the attribution. Attribution is usually the phase that comes before authenticating a painting which would involve more research about the piece than has so far been done. An auction house may also simply put the artist's name, meaning that in the opinion of their specialists, the work is by that artist. 17 *A Classical Landscape with Figures and a*

¹⁷Boicova-Wynants, M. (2018). "Your Lautrec or Lautrec's Lautrec? Some Notes on Attribution and Authentication", *Art Law*. December 2, 2018.

https://artlaw.club/en/artlaw/your-lautrec-or-lautrec-s-lautrec-some-notes-on-attribution-and-authentication.

Temple in the Distance (Fig. 1.3) is an example of a follower of Barret, which means this painting is felt to be by someone adopting Barret's style but was not necessarily a student. Circle of Barret, A Mountainous Landscape with Hunters Carrying a Deer (Fig.1.4), would mean that the painting is seen as painted most likely during Barret's lifetime but was most likely not by someone working in his studio. *Lake Landscape with Cattle* (Fig. 1.5) is an example of a painting being in the style of Barret, meaning it is believed that it was painted within fifty years of Barret's lifetime by someone who was influenced by his components. A View of Inveraray Castle with the Town of Inveraray and Loch Fyne Beyond (Fig. 1.6) is an example of a painting being in the manner of Barret, meaning that it was painted at a later date by someone imitating the style of Barret. Going Out in the Morning on Foxhunting (Fig. 1.7) is an example of a piece "after" Barret because it is a print that is an exact replica of a painting by Barret. In this case, the print was done by Francesco Bartolozzi (1727-1815), the Italian printmaker active in England during the eighteenth-century. Since there are so many works described in auction catalogues as being affiliated with Barret, however loosely, it is impossible to include every piece. As a result, only works securely attributed to the artist have been included.

Cataloguing

Creating a system to organize Barret's oeuvre of close to 600 paintings, drawings and prints known at the present time was a large part of the task involved in writing this

dissertation. The decision to only include pieces that were believed to be by Barret meant that several paintings attributed to the 'circle of Barret' have not been included. Part of this 'circle' includes works by Barret's children. His three sons became topographical artists, and his daughter became a miniature painter. The most successful artist of the Barret children was George Barret Junior (1767-1842), a topographical painter specializing in watercolours who became an early member of the Society of Painters in Water Colours established in 1804 and published a book on watercolour painting. 18 James Barret (1785–1819) took over the role of master painter of the Chelsea Hospital after his father's death, and he exhibited at the Royal Academy. Joseph Barret was awarded a gold palette from the Society of Arts in 1775. Mary Barret (d.1836) is recorded to have been a student of George Romney (1734–1802).¹⁹ Although the research of this project necessarily touched on the Barret family at large, and Barret's role as the father of a family of artists will be discussed briefly in the final chapter of this dissertation, the focus is on George Barret senior. Cataloguing the work of his children is beyond the scope of this research and has therefore been excluded. The task of differentiating between the attributions to the father and specifically his son, George Barret Junior, has been an important part of this dissertation. Numerous collections have hitherto failed to distinguish between the two artists, given that they share the same name and a similarly inconsistent approach to painting and subject matter.

¹⁸ Barret, G. (1840). *Water Colour Painting*, London: Ackerman and Company.

¹⁹ Walker, R. (1998). *Miniatures. 300 Years of the English Miniature Illustrated from the Collections of the National Portrait Gallery*, London: National Portrait Gallery, p. 59.

Having identified Barret's known work, the vast catalogue of his paintings, drawings and prints were organised using Artsystems Pro. The use of this art management software allowed Barret's oeuvre to be effectively navigated and categorized via spreadsheets that assisted in comparing and contrasting different paintings. The program enabled works to be arranged and sorted by their titles, size, medium, date, location, or patrons, facilitating the management of such a large number of works.

Overall, the methodological approaches adopted in this dissertation arose from an in-depth exploration of the existing scholarly literature, which reveals a distinct gap in attempts to categorize or compile information on Barret's work. This is not least because no catalogue raisonné for the artist exists and he remains relatively overlooked in the scholarly literature on British landscape painting.

Literature Review

This thesis looks to fill a gap in the available critical scholarship on the Anglo-Irish artist George Barret through the archival and site-specific research focused on Barret's artworks and related papers that have been carried out. For better-known artists of the period—Wilson, Gainsborough, Sandby, Constable, Turner, among others—this foundational archival work has already been done through exhibitions, catalogue raisonnés, and critical work in journals and edited volumes.²⁰ Nothing like this exists

²⁰ Some examples include Spencer-Longhurst, P. (2014). *Richard Wilson*. Online catalogue raisonné, retrieved March 3, 2020, from www.richardwilsononline.ac.uk; Solkins, D. (1982). *Richard Wilson: Landscape of Reaction*, London: Tate; Hayes, J. (1982). *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough: a critical text and catalogue*

for Barret. The aim of this thesis is to perform some of this significant research on Barret to construct a catalogue of his work alongside piecing together his biography and role in the 18th century art market and, in the process, to also offer a new critical and conceptual perspective on British art. It will therefore focus particularly in the area of the Anglo-Irish landscape tradition, given the artist's connection to Ireland and the visual politics thereof.

The art and culture of Ireland, and the traffic of ideas between the political/artistic centres of Dublin and London, are underrepresented in the dominant narratives of British art.²¹ Many standard survey works are London-centric. In his study of the Picturesque, Andrews' *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (1989), acknowledges the importance of artists working throughout Britain in Wales and the Scottish Highlands—but Ireland (and Barret) are entirely absent from his discussion.²² The major 1993 survey exhibition of British landscape painting *Glorious Nature* (Baetjer, Rosenthal, & Denver Art Museum, 1993) likewise neglected Anglo-Irish art networks. Recent scholarship has shed more light on Anglo-Irish networks of ideas (predominantly connected to Burke as in the case of Gibbons (2003)), but art itself has generally been lacking. During the 1980s, a wave of critical reappraisals of British landscape painting threw new light on the politics and

raisonné, 2 vols, Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Royal Academy (2012). *Constable, Gainsborough, Turner and the Making of Landscape,* London: Royal Academy of Arts; Solomons, S. (2011) *Gainsborough's Landscapes: Themes and Variations*, New York: Bloomsbury.

²¹ See Laffan, W., Monkhouse, C. and Fitzpatrick, L. (2015) *Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design 1690-1840*, Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago.

²² Andrews, M. (1989). *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

ideology of the land and its representations. Barrel's *The Dark Side of the Landscape* (1980) and Bermingham's *Landscape and Ideology* (1987) remain influential, but in large part, no recent research has picked up on, or developed, these ideas.²³ The work of Kay Dian Kriz (1997) on the idea of the English landscape artist as a national "genius" has been an important.²⁴

The first general history of British landscape painting from 1750 to 1850, Herrmann's *British Landscape Painting of the Eighteenth Century* (1974), set the template for works that did mention Barret, cursorily introducing him alongside his more famous and renowned contemporary, Wilson.²⁵ A similar approach was followed by Harris's survey *The Artist and the Country House* (1979), where Barret receives modest praise for his topographical and botanical accuracy but is relegated nonetheless to a minor part in the overall story.²⁶ Although sources about Barret's life are scarce, the place where he has attracted the most significant attention is in the relatively small field of Irish art studies. Bodkin's 1920 *Four Irish Landscape Painters* placed Barret as the first among them, championing him as the "father" of an Irish national school.²⁷ Anne Crookshank and the Knight of Glin have provided the first detailed, modern survey of Irish painters in which George Barret emerges as a leading

_

²³Bermingham, A. (1987). *Landscape and Ideology: The Rustic Tradition*, *1740-1860*, London: Thames Hudson.

²⁴ Kriz, K. D. (1997). *The Idea of the English Landscape Painter: Genius as Alibi in the Early Nineteenth Century*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

²⁵ Herrmann, L. (1974). *British Landscape Painting of the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁶ Harris, J. (1979). *The Artist and the Country House*, London: Philip Wilson Publishers.

²⁷ Bodkin, T. (1920). *Four Irish Landscape Painters*, Dublin: The Talbot Press Limited.

figure: *The Painters of Ireland 1660-1920* (1978).²⁸ This vital source lays out a ground plan upon which others have built, notably though articles in the journal *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, while a 2015 exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago, *Ireland, Crossroads or Art and Design, 1690-1840*, had at its core an exploration of Irish landscape painting and the demesne landscape.²⁹ In addition to this, Brendan Rooney curated several exhibitions which touch on Barret's work, including "Thomas Roberts 1748 – 1777" (2009) and "Creating History, Stories of Ireland in Art" (2016 in the National Gallery of Ireland). Barret is also mentioned in discussions of the Society of Artists of Great Britain (Hargraves, 2005). Building on the scholarship of Barret's Anglo-Irish compatriots, between 2007 and 2009, Tim McLoughlin collected almost 200 letters to and from James Barry.³⁰ These letters helped to locate Barret within the socio-cultural context of the eighteenth century.

Alongside the primary research conducted for this dissertation, its secondary research has drawn on the texts mentioned above. In particular it has attempted to build on information included in the body of literature generated by Irish scholars, which has focused more specifically on Barret. However, the porosity of links between Ireland and England in the eighteenth century has meant that the more general texts on

²⁸ Crookshank, A. and Knight of Glin, (2002). *The Painters of Ireland 1660-1920*, London: Barrie and Jenkins.

²⁹ Laffan, W., Monkhouse, C., and Fitzpatrick, L. (2015). *Ireland Crossroads for Art and Design 1690-1840*, Chicago: The Arts Institute of Chicago.

³⁰ McLoughlin, T. (2009). *Correspondence of James Barry*, Ireland: National University of Ireland, retrieved December 3, 2019, from http://www.texte.ie/barry/.

British landscape painting have proved invaluable. This is despite their tendency to overlook Barret's specific contribution and to focus on his better-known peers.

Chapter I: Barret in Ireland (1728 - 1762)

Introduction

This chapter will begin by providing a biographical overview, attempting to plot the circumstances of Barret's early life and the development of his career in Ireland before he moved to London at some point between 1760 and 1764. Over a period of approximately fifteen years prior to his move, he appears to have been active throughout Ireland, working for a network of interconnected aristocratic Anglo-Irish patrons, often on their return from a Grand Tour. The chapter will examine the various influences on Barret's work during this period. This ranges from Burke's highly influential treatise to Barret's encounters with the work of Old Master painters in his patrons' collections, alongside a direct observation of the Irish landscape itself. The chapter will argue that his often almost slavish copies of Old Master paintings were criticised by contemporaries such as Burke, who preferred a more direct response to the landscape. However, copying from Old Master's was a technique widely used at the time and, in the case of Barret a necessary means of developing a classical, Italianate idiom that enabled him to cater to the tastes of his patrons. This was particularly true since, unlike them, he had not travelled to Italy to observe the classical landscape at first hand.

As part of an effort to catalogue Barret's commissions and the resulting works these generated, the second part of the chapter will focus on commissions carried out in the period before Barret left Ireland. This section will consider the background of his

patrons, the circumstances surrounding the commission, and a discussion of the known works associated with them.

The analysis of Barret's relationship with Burke in the first part of the chapter positions him, in some sense, at the forefront of contemporary aesthetic theory. However, it seems that unlike Burke, Barret did not dedicate his oeuvre to this single-minded pursuit. As a result, overall, the aim of the chapter is to establish and discuss Barret as a commercial painter-decorator of some brilliance, whose works can be attached to a number of site-specific decorative schemes, on which he relied to make a living. It is for this reason that the works will be discussed in groups, identified by a particular patron or commission. They will also be considered in chronological order by the date they were commissioned. The choice to frame the works by patron is part of an attempt to reveal that rather than providing the basis Barret's own sustained and unique individual preferences, the works frequently conform more substantially to the demands of a particular patron. Arguably, the alternation between Sublime, Italianate or more topographical Irish scenes establish Barret's willingness to adapt to his market.

Barret's Background and Early Life (1748-1761)

The son of a tailor, Barret was born in either 1728 or 1732 in The Liberties, a historically working-class district of Dublin. His name has been variously spelt in his lifetime, both by him and by others, as 'Barret,' 'Barett' and 'Baret.' 'Barret' seems to be the more widely used form, and the artist typically adopted this spelling when he signed his paintings and letters.³¹ Linked with the lack of written documentation surrounding

³¹ Bodkin, T. (1920). *Four Irish Landscape Painters*, Dublin: The Talbot Press Limited.

Barret's early life, as was typical in The Liberties at the time, no record exists of the exact date of his birth. Of the two proposed dates, William Laffan and Brendan Rooney argue that 1732 is more likely to correspond with the year of his birth, based on the date attributed to an early work. This first known painting by Barret is untitled, but depicts a river landscape focused on a central tree with a rocky mountain to the left (Fig. 2). The piece is signed and dated 1747, and was documented as having been painted when the artist was less than sixteen years old.³² The area around the signature and date on the lower right corner has been cleaned, and the signature itself may have been strengthened, suggesting that it may not be original. However, the discovery and attribution of the piece is interesting since it seems that Barret rarely signed his work in the latter part of his career. As such, the addition of a signature to such an early work suggests a kind of youthful enthusiasm, as well as the artist's intention to establish himself and his name, an attempt that appears to have diminished as his career developed.

Given the scarcity of sources relating to Barret's life and work, exact information is limited, but it seems that the piece marked the beginning of Barret's career. At around the same date that the painting was produced, he was apprenticed to a stay-maker in Dublin, which was presumably not his first encounter with art.³³ What is known is that between 23 and 26 May 1747, the Dublin press recorded that Barret was one of "sixteen"

³² Laffan, W. and Rooney, B. (2014). "I Have Treated You as an Artist: A Letter from Philippe de Lutherbourg to Jonathan Fisher", *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies, Volume XVII*, Dublin: Irish Georgian Society, p. 45.

³³ Bodkin T. (1920). *Four Irish Landscape Painters*, Dublin: The Talbot Press Limited, p. 2.

boys under the age of sixteen" who produced drawings for a prize or "premium" of 151 guineas given by the Royal Dublin Society Drawing School, which was to be distributed amongst them. According to the article, "a small bust being placed on a table, they copied the figure, to show their skill before the society." It seems that winning the prize encouraged Barret to pursue his artistic career, and he has been identified as one of the first students to train under Robert West (d. 1770) and James Mannin (d. 1779) at the Royal Dublin Society Drawing School in George's Lane, set up in 1754.35

Based on this account, it seems that the Dublin Society School of Drawing's teaching practice was based on the French academic method, whereby students progressed from copying prints and drawings to studying plaster casts or sculptures, before finally rendering the human form from life. This training provided the basis for those going on to practice in any of the arts, although the school itself did not teach anything but drawing.³⁶ It seems that Barret left his apprenticeship at some point before 1754, and went on to have a relatively successful career at the Dublin Society School. *The Dublin Newspaper* recorded that he won a premium for the best landscape painting at the school on December 23, 1755.³⁷ This success places him among the notable students who attended the school or were awarded prizes by the Royal Dublin Society. These included the artist James Barry (1741-1806), who would later become a

³⁴Hoey, J. and Faulkner, J. (May 23-26, 1747). *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, Dublin: Christ-Church-Yard, p. 93.

³⁵ Bodkin T. (1920). *Four Irish Landscape Painters*, Dublin: The Talbot Press Limited, p. 2.

³⁶ See Turpin, J. (1982). *The Academy Movement in Dublin 1730-1880*, St. Thomas: University of St. Thomas.

³⁷ Dunn, L. (1755). *Universal Advertiser*, Volume II, Dublin: Dame-Street, p. 91.

close friend of both Barret and Burke, Francis Danby (1793-1861), John Hogan (1800-1885), Edward Smyth (1749-1812) and the architect James Hoban (1755-1831), who went on to design the White House in Washington D.C. in 1814.³⁸ In 1754, a year before Barret won the prize, and the Society had established the arts school with five hundred pounds awarded by the government.³⁹ As a student there, Barret supported himself by working for Thomas Silcock, a print-seller on Nicholas Street, colouring, tinting and engraving prints of Old Masters, landscapes and portraits.⁴⁰ It seems that he also supplemented his income by teaching drawing at the school.⁴¹

This close association with draftsmanship placed Barret at the heart of the Dublin Society Drawing School's focus on cultivating a rigorous academic method based on drawing. The school's department of Landscape and Ornament Drawing placed a particularly strong emphasis on draftsmanship, a skill that was considered to be the 'mistress of all the manual arts.'⁴² During the eighteenth-century, mastering landscape drawing was considered one of the essential elements in learning how to draw or paint, a skill it appears that Barret was gaining a thorough grounding in. The school's methods appear to have been rigorously traditional. However, the focus on the landscape since 1787, when the word 'landscape' was introduced for the first time into the school's title

_

³⁸ Berry, H. F. (1915). *A History of the Royal Dublin Society*, London: Green and Company.

³⁹ ibid.

⁴⁰ As seen in Dunn, L. (1755). *Universal Advertiser*, Volume II, Dublin: Dame-Street, p. 91 and, Strickland, W. (1913). *A Dictionary of Artists*, Volume II, Dublin: Irish Academic Press, p. 29.

⁴¹ Bodkin, T. (1920). *Four Irish Landscape Painters*, Dublin: The Talbot Press Limited, p. 2.

⁴² Butler, P. and Davies, M. (2014). *Wicklow Through the Artist's Eye,* Dublin: Wordwell Limited, p. 2.

and prizes and premiums were offered for the "delicate, fragile art of landskip painting," places the subject matter at the forefront of artistic exploration. ⁴³ Landscape was, in fact, a relatively new genre, given that the traditional hierarchy of artistic genres privileged history painting and any depiction of landscape had traditionally been seen merely as a backdrop to more illustrious subjects. The growing popularity of landscape as a genre on its own terms during the eighteenth-century seems to correspond to the ever increasing aesthetic and philosophical interest in nature popular at the time. In this matter, Edmund Burke's (1729-1797) treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) was profoundly influential.

It seems that Barret and Burke first met during the time the philosopher was formulating his influential aesthetic ideas since he was already planning his treatise (1756) during his last year at Trinity College, Dublin.⁴⁴ As such, it seems likely that as a student, Burke would have been attracted to the Dublin Society Drawing School's newly established department of landscape, given his interest in art and his belief that landscape acted as the stage on which nature played out its Sublime forces. Bodkin suggests that Burke must have seen Barret's work at the Dublin Society, since the art school was near Trinity College, where Burke was studying during the same period. Although the circumstances of their meeting is unclear, it is known that by 1755 the two were well acquainted, and it is assumed that Burke introduced Barret to his first patron, Joseph Leeson, whose estate, Powerscourt, was set in what Burke identified as

 43 Turpin, J. (1995). "The School of Ornament of the Dublin Society in the $18^{\rm th}$ century", *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. 26, No. 102, p. 38-50.

the Sublime landscape of the Dargle Valley. 45 Barret's exploration of ideas related to the Sublime in his work appears to reflect the impact of Burke's treatise on his conception of various topographical landscapes around Dublin. 46

In order to understand what Barret was likely attempting to represent in his work at this period, it is helpful to provide some background on Burke's ideas. Burke's A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful was influenced by the Ancient Greek philosopher Longinus' treatise On the Sublime (1stcentury AD). Specifically, Burke was inspired by the distinction between the Sublime and the Beautiful, based on the association of the Sublime with intense emotional states through vastness, which inspires awe. Although the term was becoming popular in the eighteenth century in relation to landscape painting, Burke established a significant link between the ideas of terror and the Sublime. At the same time, he defined this quality against beauty since, for him, both qualities were perceived emotionally. In A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, Burke identified the leading passions as "self-preservation" and "love of society" as a way to make a distinction between the Sublime and the Beautiful. Self-preservation gave rise to "delight" due to a reduction of pain or terror. 47 For Burke, "delight" may develop as a result of contemplating a terrifying situation whether it be natural, artistic or intellectual, so long as this could not harm the spectator, except in the context of his or

⁴⁵ Laing, A. (2001). *Clerics and Connoisseurs, an Irish Art Collection Through Three Centuries*, London: Great Heritage, p. 102.

⁴⁶ Burke, E. (1757). *Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, London: R. and J. Dodsley in Pall Mall.

⁴⁷ ibid.

her imagination. The effect of this imagery induced an emotional response which he defined as 'the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling', and which surpassed the "positive and independent" pleasure provided by beauty.⁴⁸

The effect of Burke's discussion of the emotional response produced through the imaginative contemplation of a terrifying natural situation can be seen in Barret's depictions of the dramatic landscape around Powerscourt Falls. View of Powerscourt Waterfall (Fig. 3) and A Mountainous River Landscape with a Waterfall with Two Figures Preparing to Fish and Another Crossing the River Across the Fallen Tree in the Foreground (Fig. 4) are examples of Barret's representation of the falls. These were presumably painted between 1760 and 1763, and show the effects of Burke's Sublime through their presentation of the vast natural forms of trees, rocks and waterfalls looming over the miniscule figures. At the height of over a hundred meters, Powerscourt Falls, the centrepiece of the Dargle Valley's Sublime features, flows between two mountain peaks. These mountains, known as Djouce and the Great Sugar Loaf, are both significant landmarks in the Wicklow Mountains surrounding the valley. The waterfalls are part of the Powerscourt Estate and had inspired many of the early ideas in Burke's treatise, given his close connection with Joseph Leeson, the patron of the Powerscourt Estate.⁴⁹ As mentioned, although the treatise was not published until 1756, Burke had begun formulating his ideas while he was at Trinity College. 50 Thoughts for the text appear in

⁴⁸ ibid.

⁴⁹ Laffan, W., Monkhouse, C., and Fitzpatrick, L. (2015). *Ireland Crossroads for Art and Design 1690-1840*, Chicago: The Arts Institute of Chicago, p. 86.

⁵⁰ Figgis, N. and Rooney, B. (2001). *Irish Paintings in the National Gallery of Ireland*, Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, p. 14.

a letter Burke wrote to Richard Shackleton about the flooding of the river Liffey as early as 1746.⁵¹ As he wrote, "it gives me pleasure to see nature in those great though terrible scenes. It fills the mind with grand ideas and turns the soul in upon herself."⁵² While it is unknown whether Barret read Burke's treatise, or the notes that predate its publication, it seems that the artist and the philosopher must have exchanged views and even perhaps visited Powerscourt together. Burke's ideas of nature's power and dominance over man clearly influenced Barret's conception of the natural phenomena he observed at Powerscourt, directing his focus towards the depiction of rushing waterfalls, lofty trees and steep rocky ledges. Reflecting Burke's influence in his work for Powerscourt, the artist clearly focuses on the sublimity of nature and the landscape, which dominates over any figures, typically shown as insignificant counterparts to nature's grandeur.

It seems that Barret's interest in his ideas was not lost on Burke, and in Carl Cone's discussion of the philosopher's art collection (1947), he suggests that Burke acquired several paintings from Barret, including *A View of Windermere* (now lost) and *A View of the Dargle* (Fig. 5).⁵³ During the eighteenth-century, Burke's opinion on art and culture was widely respected, and Joshua Reynolds claimed that the philosopher was "the best judge of a picture he ever knew."⁵⁴ This reputation among his contemporaries meant that Burke was in an excellent position to promote Barret and

⁵¹ Samuel, A. (1923). *The Early Life, Correspondence and Writings of the Rt. Hon Edmund Burke,* Cambridge: LID, p. 84.

⁵² ibid.

⁵³ Cone, C. (1947). *Edmund Burke's Art Collection*, New York: College Art Association.

⁵⁴ Bisset, R. (1798). *The Life of Edmund Burke*, London: Cawthorn. p. 154.

introduce him to potential patrons. In reality, however, it seems that although he helped the artist, Burke came to be somewhat disappointed in his friend, whose painting he later described as "lacking in genius." Specifically, in a letter dated to 1767, Burke would criticize the way that Barret had "fallen into the painting of views," referring to the majority of Barret's work which he considered little more than decoration, but which formed the most lucrative part of the artist's business. If Burke lamented Barret's submission to the whims of his patrons, this can be explained by Barret's working-class background. Unlike Burke, the artist lacked the independent means to paint for his own sake, and instead needed to make a living from his painting after leaving the Dublin drawing school. As such, Barret relied heavily on patronage, and many of his paintings were primarily created as part of interior decoration commissions, for which he gained much contemporary commercial success.

Barret's Irish Patrons and Commissions (1748-1761)

Since Barret's work emerges as so adaptable to his market, it is important to consider the identity and requirements of his patrons. Their impact is particularly significant given that Barret was so dependent on patronage for his financial survival and artistic success. This adaptability appears to have been true even in his earliest commissions, which reveal a range of styles combining Burke's ideas of the Sublime alongside more

_

⁵⁵ McLoughlin, T. (2009). *The Correspondence of James Barry*, February 19th, 1767, From Edmund and William Burke to James Barry, Ireland: National University of Ireland, retrieved December 3, 2019, from http://www.texte.ie/barry/view?docId=L_ebwb_jb_[ante-

^{19.02.1767].}xml;query=Barret;brand=default.

^{19.02.1767].}xml;query=Barret;brand=default ⁵⁶ ibid.

classicising Italianate views. Barret's Sublime depictions of Powerscourt Falls for Joseph Leeson, Lord Powerscourt, to whom he was introduced by Burke, led in turn to commissions from neighbouring landowners such as Thomas Cobbe, whose house, Newbridge albeit set in more Picturesque parkland, which contrasted with the Sublime landscape views offered by the Dargle Valley. Patrons such as the Taylours of Headfort and the Conollys of Castletown also began to commission series of topographical paintings featuring their own estates from Barret around 1760.

To understand the sudden demand from Anglo-Irish patrons for landscape scenes that emerged around the middle of the eighteenth century, it is essential to note that following a long period of political and religious turbulence and upheaval, by this period, Protestant dominance in the Ireland had created a sense of stability. This in turn led to a dramatic increase in domestic building projects which can be seen across the country. Fuelled by the fashion for the Grand Tour among the British male elite, Palladianism was established as the dominant style for both country houses and urban projects, and large-scale estates and gardens were constructed. Discussing these projects, Andrews describes that in Ireland, "the noblemen's and gentlemen's residences of the eighteenth-century were the most imposing new houses to be built since the Middle Ages." Such patrons were less interested in Burke's ideas of the Sublime as expressed via the Irish landscape, and more interested in the scenery of the Roman campagna. In order to cater to the design and decoration of these projects, artists such as Barret had to therefore adapt to imported styles gained through the

⁵⁷ Andrews, J. H. (1997). *Shapes of Ireland and Their Makers (1564-1839),* Dublin: Geography Publications.

copying of Old Masters, as well as contemporary works by English and Italian artists and architects.

Barret was ideally placed to provide the new mansions and their patrons with paintings of the surrounding estates, helping them to assert their wealth, status and culture manifested through the latest fashion for landscape painting. As the construction and decoration of their country estates suggests, Barret's patrons belonged to the wealthy aristocratic Anglo-Irish elite and were keen to associate themselves with the vogue for the Grand Tour popular across Britain at the time. In 1744, one of Barret's key patrons, Joseph Leeson, embarked on his first Grand Tour. Less than a decade later, he returned to Italy in 1750.⁵⁸ In 1758 Anton Raphael Mengs painted a portrait of another of Barret's patrons, William Conolly, in Rome on his Grand Tour.⁵⁹ Pompeo Batoni depicted Thomas Taylour, 1st Marguess of Headfort (who would also commission Barret) in Rome in 1782.60 During the eighteenth-century, classically educated British male aristocrats were expected to make the Grand Tour as part of their education in politics and culture, as well as to admire and collect art and objects related to the Classical past and antiquity.⁶¹ This meant that while in Italy, Barret's patrons developed a taste for the classical and for images of the Italianate landscape filled with depictions of classical ruins and figures.

⁵⁸ Black, J. (2011). *The British and the Grand Tour*, Abingdon: Routledge, p. 83.

⁵⁹ Blackstock, A. and Magennis, E. (2012). *Politics and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland, 1750-1850: Essays in Tribute to Peter Jupp, Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, p. 109.*

⁶⁰ Painting is now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas.

⁶¹ Canon, J. (1984). *Aristocratic Century: The Peerage of Eighteenth-Century England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 36.

In order to cater to this taste, the French painter, draughtsman and etcher, Claude Lorrain (1600-1682) spent most of his life in Italy perfecting the art of the idealised landscape. As Dowling observes, "Claude's paintings always had a golden glow whether it was morning or evening," as a result of his "ability to blend the real, the imagined and the ideal."62 Undoubtedly the influence of Claude's Italianate paintings was so powerful among Grand Tourists that, as Martin Sonnabend argues, British collectors bought so much of Claude's work that it is "no exaggeration to say nearly all of his paintings, drawings and to a lesser extent prints have been in British collections at one time or another, or still there today."63 Although many artists, including Barret, had never left Ireland at this point and had certainly not had access to the Grand Tour themselves, the classical tastes of their patrons made it imperative for them to study Claude's work as a way of appealing to the fashion of the time. As Dowling explains, Claude had developed a formula by which to lead the eye of the viewer through the landscape, from a darker foreground, via a softer middle ground, to a darker background. The space was linked by buildings, mountains or waterways which functioned as repoussoirs.64

This means that alongside any influence Burke may have exerted on Barret's depictions of the landscape, in order to cater to the demands of his patrons, he frequently borrowed parts or even whole compositions from Claude, among other

⁶² Dowling, P. (2004). *Paul Sandby: His Place in the British Landscape Art Tradition*, Australia: Hamilton Art Gallery, p. 6-13.

⁶³ Sonabend, M. (2011). *Claude Lorrain: The Enchanted Landscape*, Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, p. 17.

⁶⁴ Dowling, *Paul Sandby: His Place in the British Landscape Art Tradition*, Australia: Hamilton Art Gallery, p. 12.

artists. Barret's imitation of Italian artists extended to include other artists popular among Grand Tourists such as the Italian etcher, engraver, designer, architect, archaeologist and theorist Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778), and the Italian painter and draughtsman Giovanni Battista Busiri (1698-1757).⁶⁵ As a result of the popularity of these Italian artists among Grand Tourists, their works were brought back to Ireland from Rome by patrons and collectors such as Samuel Madden, Joseph Leeson of Russborough and William Connoly of Castletown. Barret would have had therefore access to examples of these artists' work through his patrons' collections, and he would have been encouraged by his patrons to draw inspiration from them.

In addition to these influences, Barret was inspired by the works of other famous European artists. These included the seventeenth-century Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), whose work he was aware of through his patrons' collections, and Francesco Zuccarelli (1702-1788), the celebrated Italian landscape painter who had recently arrived in London. Despite this interest in classicising scenes, Barret's ability to cater to the shifting tastes of his patrons can be seen in the fact that two Sublime landscapes were among the best known works he produced during this period. *View of Powerscourt Waterfall* (Fig. 3) and *A View in the Dargle* (Fig. 5) were both painted in the typical colour range of Barret's Sublime paintings. Commissioned by Powerscourt, *View of Powerscourt Waterfall* (Fig. 3) depicts the waterfall on the patron's land as the main focus of the painting, showing the Sublime force of nature framed by trees and tiny figures in the foreground. The pendant, *A View in the Dargle* (Fig. 5), depicts a Sublime

⁶⁵ Wynne, M. (1994). "Continental European Sources for George Barret", *Irish Arts Review Yearbook*, Vol. 10, p.136-139.

array of trees and rocks around a stream. While clearly inspired by the Sublime, these landscapes also demonstrate the extent of Barret's assimilation of classical influences, even in his depiction of the Irish landscape. This is evident in the way the artist balances objects to create a sense of symmetry, while there is also evidence of Claude's idealised composition of classical arcadia.

The impact of the boom in Italianate house building projects in Ireland during the eighteenth century meant that while living in Dublin, Barret worked extensively on decorative schemes around the country. Despite this, little is known about exactly how many patrons he had during this time. Based on letters, auction records and the provenance of specific paintings, it seems that Barret carried out commissions for at least seven patrons in Ireland, beginning with Burke's introduction to Leeson. Based on a note in John Preston Neale's Views of Seats of Noble Gentlemen (1826), it seems that Barret undertook his first significant commission when Joseph Leeson of Powerscourt (1701-1783), later First Earl of Milltown, requested him to paint a series of decorative paintings for Russborough House (Fig. 6.1).⁶⁶ Although the exact circumstances of the commission are undocumented, writing over eighty years later, Neale records that the library at Russborough House contained eleven paintings by Barret, hung sufficiently high on the wall to allow a seven-foot bookcase to stand below them.⁶⁷ Evidence of this commission also comes from old photographs of the library at the house, showing the paintings arranged relatively high up on the walls in a strongly symmetrical manner,

Neale, J. P. (1826). Views of Seats of Noble and Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones.
 Ibid.

according to the dictates of eighteenth-century tastes for the display of art.⁶⁸ A photograph of the Salon at Russborough house taken in 1935 (Fig. 6.2) shows four of Barret's paintings still displayed on the walls.

Leeson inherited his father's fortune around 1740 and began to build Russborough House (1742-1755), a Palladian mansion designed by Richard Cassle in the southern part of County Wicklow, facing the West side of the Wicklow Mountains.⁶⁹ A year earlier, Cassle had built Powerscourt House in Wicklow for Richard Wingfield, as well as the Hazelwood, Summerhill, Newbridge and several townhouses in Ireland, with which the patron was familiar.⁷⁰ As the son of a prosperous Dublin brewing family, Leeson was also an Irish politician and Member of Parliament for Rathcormack. In 1756 he was created Baron Russborough, becoming Viscount Russborough of Russletown in 1760. By 1763 he had become the first Earl of Milltown. Leeson also completed two Grand Tours, visiting Florence and Rome between 1744 and 1745 and then returning to Rome between 1750 and 1751 to accompany his son and nephew.⁷¹ It seems that these trips inspired the Italianate Claudian works Leeson commissioned Barret to paint at Russborough. The commission itself consisted of twenty decorative landscape paintings in oil on canvas for the library, dining room and saloon, in a range of different

⁶⁸ O'Boyle, A. (2010). "The Arrangement of the Saloon", *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, Vol. X.

⁶⁹ Laffan, W. and Mulligan, K. (2014). *Russborough: A Great Irish House, its Families and Collections*, Cork: The Alfred Beit Foundation.

⁷⁰ Butler, P. and Davies, D. (2014). *Wicklow Through the Artist's Eye: An Exploration of County Wicklow's Historic Gardens*, Dublin: Wordwell Limited.

⁷¹ Bianchi, P. and Wolfe, K. (2017). *Turin and the British in the Age of the Grand Tour*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press and Ingamells, J. (1997) *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701-1800*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

sizes.⁷² Sixteen of these paintings now belong to the National Gallery of Ireland after a bequest in 1902, while the remaining four canvasses hang in private collections today. The works consisted of a combination of original capriccios invented by Barret containing classical architectural features and three Italian scenes showing the Colosseum, the Roman Forum, and the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli, all copied from originals by Busiri in Leeson's collection.⁷³

The copying of such works is typical of Barret's early career. While in Dublin before the 1760s he frequently imitated works by Claude, Rubens, and Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), in order to study their style and methods and recreate the classical decorative effect required by his patrons for their newly built Palladian houses. On his Grand Tours, Leeson had collected a number of Italianate landscape paintings, and it seems that Barret was asked to replicate works in his collection by both Busiri and Claude Vernet (1714-1789). Examples of this include three works for Russborough, all depicting Roman subjects before 1760. In *The Colosseum* (Fig. 14), an idyllic Italianate scene, the monumental and partially ruined structure of the Colosseum occupies the middle ground at the centre of the canvas. A pair of figures dressed in pink and blue can be seen in the foreground. A low, dark wall behind them leads the eyes diagonally back into the image, creating depth of space and focusing attention on the monument. To the left of the foreground, a fountain supports a reclining classical marble figure. Above this,

⁷² Figgis, N. and Rooney, B. (2001). *Irish Paintings in the National Gallery of Ireland*, Ireland: National Gallery of Ireland; Laing, A. (2001). *Clerics and Connoisseurs*, London: English Heritage, p. 47.

⁷³ Laffan, W. and Mulligan, K. (2014). *Russborough: A Great Irish House, its Families and Collections*, Ireland: Alfred Beit Foundation, p. 109.

the overhanging branches of a tree frame the scene, and a warm glowing light suffuses the sky beyond. The palette is warm and earthy, and the work is painted using concealed brushstrokes. *The Colosseum* is a copy of a small painting in gouache of the same subject (Fig. 6.3) by Busiri. Busiri was popular among eighteenth-century grand tourists in Rome during the same period Leeson was on his grand tour in Italy, and he purchased eight small-scale gouaches by the artist.⁷⁴ It seems that Barret was commissioned by the patron simply to enlarge these paintings and was not required to change the compositions. In the case of *The Colosseum*, the only changes Barret made in his version of Busiri's painting are in the addition of the trees and shrubs, which differ slightly from those in the original.

The Roman Forum (Fig. 7) is another copy of one of Busiri's small gouaches (Fig. 6.4) with very minimal differences between the two pieces. The changes are limited to the arrangement of stones in the background, a reduction in the number of figures in the middle of the painting, and the addition of slightly more foliage. Barret depicts the scene using soft colours and tones. A glimpse of the Colosseum is visible in the background, alongside the church of Santa Maria Nova, both of which frame the view of the Roman Forum, which is the main focus of the painting. The two women carrying baskets are also taken from Busiri's original gouache. Panini's *The Roman Forum* (Fig. 6.5) may also have inspired Barret's painting because it are strikingly similar in terms of layout and the soft colours used. Barret's *View of Tivoli with the Temple of Vesta* (Fig. 8) is also painted after one of Busiri's gouaches (Fig. 6.6), with the addition of more

⁷⁴ Figgis, N. and Rooney, B. (2001). *Irish Paintings in the National Gallery of Ireland*, Ireland: National Gallery of Ireland, p. 55.

greenery. The temple at Tivoli, located above a waterfall, was a popular subject during the eighteenth century. The popularity of the subject can be accounted for by the fact that the Earl of Bristol (1730 - 1803) tried to buy the temple in 1777 and transport it back to Downhill House in Ireland.⁷⁵ Pope Pius VI refused Bristol's offer, and in 1785 the Earl built his own version, calling it the Mussenden Temple and using it as a library in Downhill. Leeson's commission of Barret to paint another version of the original image by Busiri, a popular artist among Grand Tourists, may have had more personal motivations, given the proximity of his home, Russborough, to Powerscourt Falls.

It is as a result of the apparent lack of originality seen in works such as these that, as mentioned above, Burke later criticized Barret's work. Attacking the evident lack of "genius" evident in the paintings, Burke pointed to the artist's duplication rather than assimilation of the Old Masters. In a letter to James Barry (1741-1806) written in 1767, Burke said,

Barret is fallen into the painting of views; it is the most called for and the most lucrative part of his business. He is a wonderful observer of the accidents of nature and produces every day something new from that source- and in on the whole a delightful painter and possessed of great resources. But I do not think he gets forward as much as a genius would entitle him to.⁷⁶

Although the letter is written in 1767, it seems that Burke's opinion was a result of a long-held frustration with the trajectory of Barret's career, which was necessarily

⁷⁵ ibid.

⁷⁶ The complete letter can be found in Mansfield, H. (1984). *Selected Letters of Edmund Burke*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.

dominated by decorative commissions, a practice the artist clearly began in Ireland. Despite being singled out in Burke's critique, Barret was not the only artist in Ireland relying on Claudian motifs. John Butts and later William Ashford all also copied other artists' work as a way to assimilate the details of classical landscapes, given that they had visited Italy themselves. As Burke noted, this practice was also largely in response to the demands of the market since, as mentioned above, fashionable Irish patrons were commissioning works of Italianate classism during the eighteenth-century.⁷⁷ The influence of Italianate landscapes is most evident in the works Barret carried out at Russborough, which can be explained by the fact that they were primarily copies after pieces in Leeson's Grand Tour collection.

As if to rebut Burke's criticism, Barret himself claims to have studied other painters in order to arrive at his own classicizing compositions. In addition to Italian artists, he studied the seventeenth-century Dutch school of topographical landscape painting, as well as maintaining a practice of the direct, first-hand observation of nature itself. Evidence of this can be found in an undated letter he wrote at some point most likely after 1770, giving advice to a young artist,

Pay a visit to the pictures in Holer Hall... there is a Rubens in his possession, a landscape, and a Hobbema, which I particularly recommend to your consideration. There are also many other pictures of great merit like Claude etc., from which you may learn much. At Lowther's there are many fine pictures as

⁷⁷ Butler, P. and Davies, M. (2014). *Wicklow Through the Artist's Eye: An Exploration of County Wicklow's Historic Gardens*, Dublin: Wordwell Limited.

well as beautiful scenery for your consideration. Paint from nature, not forgetting the art at the same time—study effects as much or more than mere outlines. Do not be engrossed by anyone master so as to become a mimic but think of all who have been excellent and endeavour to see nature with your own eyes. This was the practice of Sir Joshua, Gainsborough and Wilson—this is all the advice I can give you.⁷⁸

It is clear that the advice given by Barret correlates closely with Reynolds' injunctions in his *Discourses on Art*, a series of lectures given to students and members of the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1790. Reynolds' ideas on landscape painting were that an artist should learn from and study from nature itself while never actually copying it. This was because nature was considered imperfect, and the artist's duty was to adapt and idealize it. The best way to understand this ideal form was by studying Old Masters."⁷⁹ According to Reynolds, it is the "duty of an artist to find beauty and portray it."⁸⁰ Reynolds' own art theory, as expressed in his *Discourses* was influenced by Burke's "*Reflections*". Without a doubt, Reynolds is following a Burkean Maxim when he wrote in his *Reflections on Revolution in France* that one should "never entirely nor at once to depart from antiquity", an idea that Barret appears to present in his own advice.⁸¹ It

-

⁷⁸ The complete letter is in the collection of the Morgan Library and Museum New York in the Literary and Historical Manuscripts. Catalogue number MA3076.

[&]quot;Autographed letter signed with initials to an unidentified young painter written by George Barret".

⁷⁹ Sloan, K. (1986). *Alexander and John Robert Cozens, The Poetry of Landscapes*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 62.
⁸⁰ ibid.

⁸¹ Burke, E. (1790). *Reflections of the Revolution of France*, London: James Dodsley, p. 121.

seems that Barret was aware of the role of Reynolds' discourses in providing practical advice to artists, students and the public, a strategy which he adopted in his letter.⁸²

Other works in the Russborough commission testify to Barret's experimentation based on the assimilation of the Old Masters, and certain works at Russborough show a more diffused classical influence as the artist begins to explore his own compositions based on his study of nature and of the Old Masters. Examples of this can be seen in Capriccio with Remains of Medieval Italian Castle (Fig. 9) and Idealized Classical Landscape (Fig. 10). Although this pair of paintings are covered in a thick layer of yellow varnish, they depict a town visible in the distance. In the case of *Idealized Classical Landscape* (Fig. 10), half of the painting is covered with trees. Towards the left, there is a road on which two people walk. The road leads the viewer past a house and under an arch beside a round tower. On the river visible on the right-hand side of the painting, a man sits in a boat. While the figures add interest to the image, it is clear that the landscape is the dominant subject. In addition to these works, Capriccio with Saint-Agnese Fuori Le Mura and Santa Contanza (Fig. 11) depicts the ruins of a fortress that dominates the entire painting. The background is filled with mountains, while in the foreground, a figure stands at the entrance to the tower, and another in the far-left foreground holds a fishing rod in his hand. None of these works are directly based on

 $^{^{82}}$ Saumarez Smith, C. (2012). The Company of Artists: The Origins of the Royal Academy of Arts in London, London: Modern Art Press, p. 147.

classical prototypes, yet all three clearly betray a classicizing atmosphere in keeping with the style at Russborough.⁸³

Despite the dominance of a classicizing tendency in Barret's works for Leeson, an element of his interest in the Sublime is also evident in a number of paintings at Russborough. An Italian Ravine (Fig. 12) depicts a close-up view of a rocky mountain landscape and suggests the influence of Burke's aesthetic theory in Barret's supposed representation of Italy, which is also curiously infused with a soft Claudian light in the background of the image. Cliffs and Sea with Footbridge (Fig. 13) shows a rocky outcrop reached by a precarious footbridge in the right foreground and equally references Sublime aesthetics in an otherwise tranquil and softly lit Italianate scene. A woman riding side-saddle approaches the bridge, and a dog and a donkey are also visible in front of the trees on the left. On the cliffs on the right, a building perches in the rocks. The cliffs and trees frame a view towards the sea on the horizon. *Classical Landscape* (Fig. 14) is more sincerely modelled on Burke's aesthetic theory with nature taking the focus of the landscape instead of the figures. In the image, a broken tree is visible on the right, dominating the scene. Below the tree, two figures recline on the rocks above a waterfall. One figure points to the cascade, again perhaps a reference to Powerscourt Falls, which apparently locates the work in the landscape surrounding Russborough. In the background, trees cover a building, and further in the distance, another building is visible. Beyond these, mountains can be seen in the far distance. The work appears less

⁸³ For more information about the Russborough Collection refer to Laffan, W. and Mulligan, K. (2014). *Russborough: A Great Irish House, its Families and Collections*, Ireland: Alfred Beit Foundation.

Italianate than the previous images and more directly references the Irish surroundings of the house.

Arguably the works Barret produced for Leeson during the late 1740s and early 1750s tend to oscillate between a decorative Italianate quality and a more Sublime topographical effect that betrays the artist's greater familiarity with the Irish landscape. This tendency is evident in *Grassy Cliffs Near the Sea* (Fig. 15), which shows a road that winds down to the sea between two steep cliffs. In the foreground, wooden bridges are painted over a stream, beyond which a group of figures is visible. The eye is led between the narrow gap formed by the cliffs towards a crowd of people to the left of a church in the background. In the sea, there are three sailing vessels. In this image, the vast scale of nature diminishes and overwhelms the human presence, again suggesting the influence of Burke's idea of the Sublime through the contrast between man and nature. In A River Scene with Rocks by the Seashore (Fig. 16), the rocks and trees are seen on the right, below which a river runs. On the opposite side of the bank, beside a tree stump, are two people, one standing and one sitting. Behind the two figures are a tower and a building arranged along the shoreline. Again, the work betrays Burke's influence. In A River Scene (Fig. 17), Barret depicts a tower and a tree on the right, below which two figures are seen fishing on the bank of the river. In the middle ground, behind a group of trees, are a series of buildings faintly visible in the distance. A River Scene (Fig. 18) depicts two figures on the left of the composition, one fishing in the river, the other pointing at the ruins of a castle on a hill. In the middle distance on the other side of the river, there are two figures sitting in a boat. In the case of *A Landscape with Fishermen* (Fig. 19), the dense foliage frames the painting while two small figures sit fishing on a pond. The composition illustrates Matthew Pilkington's view that "scarcely any painter equalled Barret in his knowledge or execution of details of nature, the latter of which was particularly light, and well calculated to mark most decidedly the true characters of various subjects he represented, forest trees in particular." The harmonious balance of the composition framed by trees on either side as well the golden light on the horizon also suggest the influence of Claude.

The second known commission Barret undertook in Ireland was a series of works for James Fitzgerald (1722-1773), Earl of Kildare, to hang at Leinster House (Fig. 20.1), built by Cassle in 1745 in central Dublin. Like Leeson, Fitzgerald was known for allowing artists access to his art collections as a way to create copies of fashionable Old Masters, including Claude and Rubens.⁸⁵ Although it is known that Barret created paintings for Leinster house, it is unclear exactly which works were part of this commission. Although the specific works have not been identified, they were clearly admired by a contemporary audience, and at the end of the eighteenth century, James Malton (1761-1803), an Irish engraver, listed paintings by Barret alongside those by Rembrandt, Giordano and Claude in his description of paintings at Leinster House, suggesting the significance of his work. As he wrote,

Over the supper room is the picture gallery.... Containing many fine paintings by the first masters, with other ornaments chosen and displayed with great elegance, the ceiling is arched and highly enriched and painted from designs by

84 Pilkington, M. (1824). *Dictionary of Painters*, London: Thomas McLean.

⁸⁵ Laffan, W. and Monkhouse, C. (2015). *Crossroads of Art and Design*, Chicago: The Arts Institute of Chicago, p. 29.

Mr Wyatt. The most distinguished pictures are a student drawing the bust by Rembrandt; the Rape of Europa by Claude Lorrain; The Triumph of Amphitrite by Luca Giordano; two capital pictures by Saint Catharine; a landscape by Barrat; with many others.⁸⁶

Given Fitzgerald's extensive collection, it is likely that Malton would have only mentioned the pictures he regarded of the greatest merit, and therefore it is significant that he included Barret in the list. As Laffan and Rooney argue, the Duke of Leinster's collection demonstrated that Irish painting should be revered for its "native qualities and hung proudly in the same space as a work by Claude," again pointing to the positive perception of Barret by his contemporaries.⁸⁷

Better known are the circumstances surrounding Barret's next commission in 1749 for William Conolly (1662-1729), Speaker in the Irish House of Commons and the wealthiest commoner in Ireland. Barret created several works to hang at Conolly's Palladian style house, Castletown (1722) (Fig. 20.2), attributed to the Italian architect Alessandro Galilei (1691-1737). The reputation of the house's magnificence led Mulligan to claim that "there was no truly great Irish houses before Castletown began in 1722."88 In 1759 Conolly and his wife, Louisa Lennox (d. 1821), began renovations on Castletown, commissioning Barret to paint part of the decorative program. Although

⁸⁶ Malton, J. (1799). *A Picturesque and Descriptive Views of the City of Dublin*, Ireland: Dolman Press.

⁸⁷ Laffan, W. and Rooney, B. (2009). *Thomas Roberts Landscape and Patronage in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, Cork: Churchill House Press, p. 279.

⁸⁸ Mulligan, K. (2020). *Rich Specimens of Architectural Beauty*, Ireland: Churchill House Press, p. 23.

there is no record of the commission itself, accounts from the period mention Barret's presence at the house. In a letter written from Castletown on 7 December 1762, Emily FitzGerald (1731-1814), Louisa Lennox's sister, wrote to her husband "Lord Powerscourt, Mr Marley and Barret, a landscape painter have been here," commenting that "the latter is painting views of this place." 89 Such evidence appears to confirm that Barret was working at Castletown at this time and suggests that he was creating more topographical landscapes than at Russborough. In addition to this, Walter Strickland claims that two of Barret's landscapes, View of Castletown Park and Liffey (Fig. 20) and View of Leixlip (Not photographed), are known to have belonged to Conolly at Castletown. 90 It seems likely that these works were painted around the same time as FitzGerald wrote of Castletown House as being the very "epitome" of Ireland, being built exclusively from Irish marble, metal and wood.⁹¹ By using all Irish supplies, as well as commissioning Barret, an Irish artist, Conolly constructed a clear Irish identity for his house while also helping to support the Irish economy during the mid-eighteenth century.

It seems that the decorative scheme for the house was intended to reflect a specifically Irish topographical aesthetic. As a result, Barret appears to have abandoned the classicizing style of Claude and Busiri and drawn instead on the influence of artists such as Rubens as well as the Sublime theory in his depiction of transient phenomena

⁸⁹ FitzGerald, B. (1949). *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster*, Dublin: Stationary Office.

⁹⁰ Strickland, W. (1913). *A Dictionary of Irish Artists, Volume I*, Ireland: Irish Academic Press, p. 32.

⁹¹ Knight of Glin, and Peill, J. (2011). *The Irish Country House*, New York: Harry Adams, p. 66.

such as rainbows within the Irish landscape. In A River Landscape with Anglers and a Rustic Cottage by a Wooded Waterfall (Fig. 21), a pair of figures is shown on the bank of a river surrounded by foliage. On the far bank is a pair of cows, and in the mid-ground, light refracting off the waterfall creates a rainbow. Rainbows were mainly associated with falling water, and as Philip Luckombe (1719-1784) wrote in his *Tour of Ireland*, waterfalls afforded the "most curious and beautiful representations of the rainbow, on the spray that rises in the air, from the dashing of water against the rock bottom and the whole together presents such a scene."92 During the eighteenth century, art theorists such as Ionathan Richardson and Reynolds explained rainbows as "accidents in nature."93 Richardson discussed his observation of rainbows in Rubens' paintings dating to the previous century, noting that the artist "loved to enrich his landscapes with certain accidents in nature [such] as winds, a rain-bow, lighting."94 It seems, however, that although Barret was aware of Rubens' work through the Fitzgerald collection, he is more likely to have included the rainbow because of its association with the Irish climate, and therefore the rainbow was part of the construction of the Irish identity he undertook at Castletown.95

Beyond this commission, Barret painted multiple landscapes including rainbows in his lifetime, which may be read as pointers to his Irish identity. As the travel writer

⁹² Luckombe, P. (1803). A Tour Through Ireland, London: T. Lowdes, p. 24.

⁹³ Ruff, A. (2015). *Arcadian Visions: Pastoral Influences on Poetry, Paintings and the Design of Landscape*, London: Windgather Press.

⁹⁴ Parris, L. (1973). *Landscape Painting in Britain*, London: Tate Gallery, p. 15; Laffan, W. and Rooney, B. (2009). *Thomas Roberts, Landscape Painting and Patronage in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, Dublin: Tralee, p. 236-40.

⁹⁵ Stewart, R. (2009). *The Town House in Georgian London*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Richard Twiss (1747-1821) noted in 1755, "the climate of Ireland is more moist than any other part of Europe, it generally rains four or five days in a week, for a few hours at a time; thus rainbows are seen almost daily." Barret is not the only known Irish artist to include rainbows as part of the local landscape; Thomas Roberts (1748-1778) and George Mullins (d. 1775) are also known for their depictions of Irish rainbows.

Edward Wingfield, the Second Viscount Powerscourt (1729-1764), became a patron of Barret during the mid-1750s.⁹⁷ Wingfield had bought five early works from Barret, depicting views of Powerscourt House. Powerscourt's country house, remodelled between 1731 and 1742 by Cassels for the First Viscount Powerscourt, was one of the grandest in Ireland. Powerscourt House incorporated the family's former medieval castle into the design and was set in a dramatic landscape. The house's north entrance front was designed by Powerscourt himself and completed sometime before 1743 (Fig. 20.3). In a description of the house, Arthur Young wrote, "you look full upon the house, which appears to be the most beautiful situation in the world, on the side of a mountain... and spreading among woods on either side is a lawn whose surface is beautifully varied in gentle declivities, hanging to a winding river tour of Ireland, Dublin."98 Young described how Powerscourt house was located in a Sublime setting on the side of a mountain beside a river with nothing but nature surrounding the structure.

⁹⁶ Twiss, R. (1776). *A Tour of Ireland in 1775*, London: J. Robson, p. 33.

⁹⁷ Gilbert, J. T. (1859). *A History of Dublin, Volume III*, Edinburgh: John Menzies.

⁹⁸ Young, A. (1780). A Tour from Ireland; with General Observations of the Present State of that Kingdom: Made in the Years 1776, 1777, and 1778, and Brought to the End of 1779, London: George Bonham, p. 133.

Barret's painting *Powerscourt, County Wicklow, Ireland* (Fig. 22) shows a view of the house that was initially attributed to Thomas Roberts before being reattributed to George Barret Junior. I would, however, argue that it seems to be part of the original commission by Lord Powerscourt in 1761 for Barret to depict his house, since "estate portraiture among artists with the academic aspirations commissioned views of aristocratic seat featured prominently in London earliest public art exhibitions."99 As expected country house and estate portraits were frequently commissioned to record improvements to the house or its surroundings. 100 Based on the date of the piece and its stylistic characteristics, I would suggest that it was one of Barret's works for the original commission. In the image, Barret greatly romanticized the view of the Wicklow Mountains by exaggerating the size of the Sugar Loaf Mountain in the backdrop. The view of Powerscourt House is depicted from a high vantage point which, in the eighteenth century, was characteristic of house portraits as a way of suggesting a sense of ownership through the surveying of the land from above. 101 In the middle distance, the entrance to the house can be seen, while in the foreground, two riders enjoy the Picturesque view of the land. Peace is represented by the solidity of the Palladian-style house and by the appropriate language of universal classism that infuses the scene. 102 A third rider is seen below the hill near sheep grazing along the hill. A typical Barret characteristic is to frame his paintings with trees on either side of the canvas, a motif

⁹⁹ Bonehill, J. (2009). *Paul Sandby*, Nottingham: Nottingham Castle Art Gallery, p. 190. ¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Hutchison, J. (1985). "The Romantic Landscape of James Arthur O'Connor", *Irish Arts Review*, Vol 2, No. 4 Winter, 1985, p. 50-55.

¹⁰² Cullen, F. (1997). *Visual Politics: The Representation of Ireland 1750-1930*, Cork: Cork University Press, p. 15.

borrowed from Italianate landscape painters such as Claude, evident in scenes such as *River Landscape at Sunset* (Fig. 23), which also manifests a kind of idealized Claudean light.

Barret's familiarity with the location to which Burke had introduced him some years previously in order to marvel at the sublimity of Powerscourt Falls provided the inspiration for some of his most renowned work. This is partly due to the fact that he was not required by his patron to Italianise the scene. As described earlier in The Powerscourt Waterfall (Fig. 24), in which Powerscourt Falls is seen through the trees from quite a distance. Despite the distance, white foam from the crashing water is visible, painted with rapid brushstrokes in white and cream paint. Barret emphasizes the Sublime character in this painting by placing a group of diminutive figures in the foreground, suggesting their insignificance when compared to the vastness of the waterfall and enormous trees surrounding them. The bold manner used to depict the foliage with dabs of green paint is typical of Barret's style as it developed during his early thirties. The trees are distinct and comprised of a combination of tall, short and twisted forms. The colour range in the painting includes deep greens, terracotta, pink and ochre, causing the work to glow with warmth. In View of Powerscourt Waterfall (Fig. 3), Barret painted into the light, resulting in the waterfall dramatically emerging from a dark green foliated background. 103 By surrounding the almost ice white water with deep greens, he emphasized the rushing fall of water. View of Powerscourt Waterfall (Fig. 3) depicts rocks and figures, including a man in a red coat. The use of red, a

 $^{^{\}rm 103}$ Collins, T. (1997). $\it Decoding\ the\ Landscape$. Dublin: Centre for Landscape Studies.

complementary colour to green, served to exaggerate the intensity of the colours. This picture is likely to have been commissioned by Powerscourt and is thought to be one of the two paintings Barret brought with him to London. Barret showed a painting of the Powerscourt Waterfall in the Society of Artists exhibition in 1764. It is clear that the paintings Barret produced at Powerscourt helped lay the foundation for his reputation, cemented by his upcoming move to London between 1760 and 1764. As Fintan Cullen claims, Barret's "Powerscourt and views of the neighbouring Dargle River in Co. Wicklow are the earliest recorded images of Ireland shown at a public exhibition in London." In London."

Although Barret may have painted more works for Powerscourt, only five are confirmed as being associated with this commission by Powerscourt when they appeared in a sale which took place in April of 1912 at Bennett's in Dublin. This is an unexpectedly low number because during the 1750s and early 1760s, Barret was actively engaged in painting the Wicklow landscape around Powerscourt and was clearly aware of its significance. He advertised this fact by seeking subscriptions for engravings after four of his Powerscourt landscapes which were "scraped" under his direction by John Dixon (1740-1811) of Dublin in 1762. It seems that the project was

_

¹⁰⁴ Crookshank, A. and Knight of Glin, (2002). *The Painters of Ireland 1660-1920*, London: Barrie and Jenkins.

¹⁰⁵ Egerton, J. (1978). *British Sporting Animal Paintings* 1655 – 1867, London: Tate Gallery Publications.

¹⁰⁶ Cullen, F. (1997). *Visual Politics, The Representation of Ireland 1750 – 1930*, Cork: Cork University Press, p.15.

¹⁰⁷ Strickland, W. (1968). *A Dictionary of Irish Artists, Volume I*, Ireland: Irish Academic Press, p. 30-32.

¹⁰⁸ Gilbert, J. T. (1859). *A History of the City of Dublin*, Edinburgh: John Menzies, p. 194.

never realized, though several views of Powerscourt by Barret survive, including two of Powerscourt House in the Yale Center for British Art and four of the famous waterfalls in the National Gallery of Ireland and Walker Art Gallery. Two views of Powerscourt were among the works exhibited at the Society of Artists in London in 1764 once Barret moved to London.

Barret was not the first artist to work at Powerscourt. Van der Hagen and William Jones had painted there in the 1740s. 109 Given that the falls were located not far from Dublin in the Dargle Valley, the setting was renowned for its Sublime beauty from an early date. 110 Drawn to witness Powerscourt Waterfall, "the experience of Wicklow was difficult for any artist to translate into paint. Topographically a fortress until the construction of the military road in the early 1800s, there was no way through it, only around it." 111 Travellers' reports show that although it was not an easy place to get to, the waterfall nonetheless attracted tourists seeking out the Sublime. As Luckombe writes, "the only time to see the most and astonishing water-fall in the highest perfection, is immediately after heavy rains on the mountains above, which add greatly to the conflict springs that rise on the plains or shallow on the top of these mountains: on such increase of the waters, nothing of the kind can exceed the beauty, the almost terrific grandeur of the fall." 112 Undeniably his account reflects how during

¹⁰⁹ Laffan, W. and Rooney, B. (2009). *Thomas Roberts Landscapes and Patronage in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, Ireland: Churchill House Press.

¹¹⁰ Bourke, M. (1999). *Discover Irish Art at the National Gallery of Ireland,* Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, p. 38.

¹¹¹ Monkhouse, C. (2015). *Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design 1690-1840*, Chicago: The Arts Institute of Chicago.

¹¹² Luckombe, P. (1803). A Tour Through Ireland, London: T. Lowdes, p. 24.

the eighteenth century, people began to notice the beauty found in nature, travelling slowly by horse and carriage and admiring the landscape around them. On returning home, they began to employ artists to paint the views they had seen on their journeys. This meant that artists also began to travel more, looking for inspiring sights to paint in the British landscape. As a result, Sublime and Romantic paintings became popular during this time because people were starting to become fascinated by the power of nature, making scenes such as Powerscourt Waterfall a popular subject.

Powerscourt became fashionable in the early eighteenth century because it was close to Dublin and, according to one account, it was "decorated in the most Sublime and Picturesque manner, with rock and wood reaching up to the summits, from whence prodigious masses overhang, and seem to threaten the spectator below with destruction." This combination of horror and awe appealed to the sensibility of the period coinciding with the Romantic Movement and the search for places and views that would evoke emotions of awe and terror associated with the dominance of nature. This complex mixture of emotions was closely associated with Powerscourt, and visitors seeking the Sublime wrote about effusively. As Edward Lloyd wrote in *Month's Tour* (1781),

When we approached the waterfall, we were struck with amazement. The astonishing accounts we had heard of this phenomenon conveyed no idea of it

¹¹³ Butler, P. and Davies, M. (2014). *Wicklow Through the Artist's Eye: An Exploration of County Wicklow's Historic Gardens*, Dublin: Wordwell Limited.

¹¹⁴ ibid.

 $^{^{115}}$ O'Kane, F. (2013). *Ireland and the Picturesque*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 110.

to our minds. It descends from a steep rock of the stupendous height of 350 feet. In its fall, its appearance resembles the drifting of snow, and the spectators are bedewed with the spray at a considerable distance. 116

Another visitor, Major Cosby, published his tour of Wicklow in the form of a poem entitled *The Scalp, Enniskerry and Powerscourt* (1835),

The scalp we pass, where massive stones

Suspended are to break your bones:

On either side rise heap and heap,

So you are glad to make an escape.

This surely is a curious gap,

Formed the traveller to entrap.

Now on we go to Enniskerry,

Elysian Fields without a ferry.

Then close we are to Powerscourt,

Where all of the taste must need resort.

¹¹⁶ Seery, M. (2013). *Enniskerry: Archives, Notes and Stories from the Village*, Dublin: Publibook, p. 72.

In armchair there sat a king

In Ireland sure a rarish thing.

From the saloon, there is a view,

That does all other views outdo:

Undulating grounds, valleys, woods,

And rumbling tumbling noise of floods;

In distance seen that beauteous cone,

By the name of Sugar-loaf well known;

Which does all other views out-top,

Like loaf uncapt in grocer's shop:

Its base enwrapped in dusky blue,

How sweet its top in mountain-dew.

The Deer-park and the waterfall,

May my genius compass all¹¹⁷

 $^{^{117}}$ Seery, M. (2013). Enniskerry: Archives, Notes and Stories from the Village, Dublin: Publibook, p. 74.

It is in the context of such poetic descriptions that Barret's paintings of the famous Powerscourt Waterfall and Deerpark should be seen, given that like Barret, such depictions were equally also influenced by Burke's understanding of the Sublime in relation to this type of landscape phenomena.

Alongside his Irish scenes, Barret continued to work in a more classicizing vein. Around 1755, the Reverend Samuel Madden (1686 - 1765) commissioned the artist to rework a group of classical Italianate scenes by artists, including Claude, for the family estate at Manor Waterhouse (Fig. 35.1). Examples of this include An Italianate Wooded River Landscape with Bathers, Peasants and Ruins and An Italianate River Landscape with Travelers, Revellers and a Waterfall (Fig. 35). The pair of Italianate landscapes is based on an engraving in reverse of Claude's painting Landscape with Rural Dancers (Fig. 35.2) that Barret must have seen before he executed this piece. The paintings appeared in Madden's sale on March 7th, 1787, and were sold to the Duke of Westminster. 118 In the case of An Italianate Wooded River Landscape with Figures (Fig. 36), Barret adopted an airy, Rococo style, which may have been influenced by Zuccarelli, who first visited England in 1752 just before An Italianate Wooded River Landscape with Figures was executed. Zuccarelli became popular for his depictions of Palladian buildings in the landscape. Barret may have seen Zuccarelli's work in the collections of his patrons, although it is not clear where. In *An Italianate Wooded River* Landscape with Figures, Barret portrays the warm summer light and, as Thomas Bodkin wrote of the work, "not Wilson, nor even Claude, could convey the clear level light of a

¹¹⁸ Getty Provenance Index lots 0013 and 0024 both were entitled *Landscapes* http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb.

warm afternoon with a more competent assurance than does Barret."119 It seems, however, that the painting may be a composite of different sources since the washerwoman, the classical ruins and medieval church painted in the background can be traced back to Busiri's *Roman Colosseum* gouache. Stylistically the depiction of the leaf patterns and rocks appear to match Barret's own inventions. The Italianate style of the work can be seen as having been influenced by Madden, who was a keen patron of the arts and helped to found the Royal Dublin Society and its drawing school."120 Madden established the tradition of awarding a drawing prize "which gave the fledgeling academic, professional status."121 In addition, both he and his father were known collectors and had commissioned other Irish artists such as George Mullins, William Ashford and Thomas Roberts to paint pieces to decorate the manor and hang alongside their collection of European paintings. Madden may have seen Barret's work at the Royal Dublin Society and was impressed enough to commission works from him for Manor Waterhouse.

Another key Irish patron was Thomas Taylour, first Earl of Bective (1724-1795), who commissioned a series of decorative paintings for his home at Headfort, Kells, County Meath (Fig. 37.1) during the early 1760s. Between 1760 and 1770, George Semple (1770-1782) had been commissioned to design and build Headford House, while the celebrated architect and designer Robert Adam (1728-1792) created the classically inspired interior in 1771. Leeson and Taylour were both MPs elected within

¹¹⁹ Bodkin, T. (1920). *Four Irish Landscape Painters*, Dublin and London: The Talbot Press Limited, p. 11.

¹²⁰ Cullen, F. (2000). *Sources in Irish Art*, Cork: Cork University Press, p. 163.

¹²¹ ibid.

a few years of each other, and it is likely that their friendship led to Barret's introduction to Taylour in the early 1760s. Unlike Leeson, there is no evidence that Taylour took a Grand Tour and Laffan and Monkhouse suggest that he was content to have works from other Grand Tour collections copied for Headfort. Barret is known to have painted five works for Taylour, all of which are based on classical prototypes and therefore lack any true sense of invention on Barret's part. In *A Landscape Based on the Tempietto at Clituno* (Fig. 37), he clearly based the image on a plate from Piranesi's *Antichita Romane de' Tempi Della Repubblica, e de' Primi Imperatori* (1748) (Fig. 37.2). Piranesi's etching serves as the model of Barret's depiction of the Temple, although he elaborated the foliage a little on the left side. Given Taylour's own lack of a Grand Tour collection, it is likely that he would have seen the vedute elsewhere and wanted to recreate it at Headford. The bridge in *Veduta del Ponte Lugano su l'Aniene* (Fig. 37.3) is also likely to have been influenced by Piranesi's engraving.

In a description of these works, Pilkington admired the manner in which Barret "got all that richness and dewy freshness, that so particularly characterizes the verdure of this climate, especially in the vernal months" which shows the way that It seems that Barret beginning to combine a kind of Italianate classicism with pastoral scenes of cattle and peasants typical of a more Irish landscape. This hybrid style would have been particularly apt given his Irish patron's desire to recreate a kind of grand tour collection

¹²² Laffan, W. and Monkhouse, C. (2015). *Ireland Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690-1840*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

¹²³ Pilkington, M. (1824). *Dictionary of Painters,* London: Thomas McLean.

and is particularly evident in *An Extensive River Landscape with a Drover and Cattle in the Foreground, Fisherman and a Classical Ruin Beyond* (Fig. 38).

Through an introduction from his neighbour Lord Powerscourt, Thomas Cobbe (1733-1814) commissioned a set of four landscapes from Barret in between 1760 and 1762.¹²⁴ One of these pictures was (Fig. 39) *The Sugar Loaf Mountain with Figure* Crossing the Dargle River by a Ruin, which is very similar to Powerscourt Country Wicklow (Fig. 22), painted for Powerscourt. Both paintings depict the Sugar Loaf Mountain in the centre of the composition, while the skies of both images are also alike. Cobbe inherited the large estate of 35,000 acres adjoining the Powerscourt Estate and Newbridge House in his early twenties. 125 He enlarged the house by adding a drawingroom to accommodate his growing art collection. 126 He and his father, Archbishop Charles Cobbe (1686-1765), were advised by the art historian Matthew Pilkington (1701-1774), in creating a collection of Old Masters while Pilkington was simultaneously compiling the first biographical dictionary of artists' lives in English published in 1759.¹²⁷ This dictionary, which covered around five hundred years of art history (and which included Barret), was intended to help establish artists' careers and educate collectors. In the dictionary, Pilkington filled a missing gap in providing information in English about major and minor artists since the Renaissance, and the

¹²⁴ Laffan, W. (2004). "Ireland's Collectors: A Historical Perspective", *Apollo*, Vol. 160, Issue. 551, p. 58-61.

¹²⁵ Laing, A. (2001). *Clerics and Connoisseurs in Irish Art Collection Through Three Centuries*, London: English Heritage, p. 102.

¹²⁶ ibid.

¹²⁷ ibid.

text remained the most significant source in English for more than thirty years. ¹²⁸ The publication was a great success among collectors such as Cobbe, the Duke of Portland and the Duke of Marlborough because Pilkington mentioned works from their collections which he had seen first-hand. Being included in the dictionary established the works' owners as the tastemakers of the period, and it is clear from sales catalogues of the period that that well into the nineteenth-century, it was a selling point for a painting to have a provenance that included Matthew Pilkington. ¹²⁹

The significance of this dictionary to Barret was important, given that it helped to pave his entry into the contemporary art market. Pilkington helped with the formation of the Cobbe collection at Newbridge between the early 1750s and 1760s, working alongside both Archbishop Cobbe and his son Thomas. Pilkington was actively involved in the Dublin art market, and it may have been through his influence that Cobbe's collection had a large number of landscape paintings by Barret. Including Barret's works in the dictionary also made the artist an obvious choice for other potential patrons. Certainly buying paintings was a fashionable pursuit in Dublin during the 1750s and 60s, and alongside this market, a desire for reliable information developed. This meant that artists mentioned in the dictionary necessarily benefitted from their inclusion. Pilkington dedicated the text to Reynolds as president of the Royal Academy to help promote his book at the centre of the emerging commercial art world. The publication coincided with the development of the art market and collectors' desire

_

¹²⁸ ibid, p. 57.

¹²⁹ ibid, p. 59.

¹³⁰ ibid, p. 52.

¹³¹ ibid, p. 55.

to learn more about the art they were buying. Pilkington's dictionary contained a comprehensive list of artists in an easily accessible manner. This text therefore aided in the process of connoisseurship during the late eighteenth-century, enabling an informed stylistic analysis and assessment of various artists' "manner" to occur for the first time.¹³²

Aside from known commissions, a number of other works are known to have been painted by Barret in Ireland before 1763. The circumstances around their commission are unknown, and it is possible they may have been painted more speculatively. These include A Rocky Wooded Landscape with a Peasant, His Wife and Child to the Left and a View of Powerscourt from the River Dargle in the Middle-Distance with Hills Beyond (Fig. 40), which shows an autumnal scene in the Wicklow Mountains, focusing on the two Sugarloaf Mountains. The style conforms to early Barret's Romantic realism. The scene includes a small waterfall, and the rocks in the composition have a gentle character. In the foreground, a group of figures are about to be ferried across the river, and these provide the focal point of the painting. Fishermen are shown on the opposite bank, and Italianate buildings are faintly visible in the background. A View on the Dargle, Called the Dahool (Fig. 41), is listed by Strickland as one of a series of four scenes Barret painted before 1762. The other three are *Powerscourt House* (Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art), Powerscourt Waterfall (National Gallery of Ireland) and View on the Dargle called Castlerock (Private Collection, Ireland).¹³³ An

¹³² ibid, p. 60.

¹³³ Strickland, W. (1968). *A Dictionary of Irish Artists Volume I*, Dublin: Irish Academic Press, p. 32.

engraving by John Dixon of Barret's *View on the Dargle called the Dahool* is in the British Museum.¹³⁴ In the work, Barret paints a charming summerhouse, and the title 'Dahool' roughly translates from Irish as handsome or beautiful. In *An Irish Landscape Inspired by the Dargle Valley* (Fig. 42), the looming cluster of trees to the right almost reaches to the top of the picture plane, offering a marked contrast to the more open view on the left of the composition. The sun breaking through the clouds silhouettes the single slender tree located just off centre. The figures in the foreground are dwarfed by the majesty of the landscape, with the man's red cloak effectively acting as an eye-catcher around which the whole composition revolves. A soft Irish light, applied with a subtlety of touch, pervades the painting.

Based on a stylistic analysis of the waterfall and the handling of the paint, *A Mountainous River Landscape with a Waterfall with Two Figures Preparing to Fish and Another Crossing the River Across a Fallen Tree in the Foreground* (Fig. 4) was painted before Barret's move to London in around 1763 and was most certainly an Irish view. The composition is clearly influenced by Burke's ideas on the Sublime and the Beautiful, with the nature overpowering the figures in the foreground. The enhanced detail of this early painting in the style of Romantic realism creates a Sublime mood. The painting has several characteristics typical of Barret's work, including the framing of the trees inspired by Claude, diffused light, the heavy application of paint and the use of saturated colour. To the right of the composition, a cluster of trees and foliage almost reaches the top of the canvas. In the centre, there is a view of distant hills beyond a waterfall visible

¹³⁴ Illustrated in Crookshank, A, and Knight of Glin (1995). *Irish Watercolours and Drawings*, New York: Abrams, p. 53.

in the middle ground, slightly to the right. The finely detailed figures in the foreground towards the bottom right corner catch the viewer's eye, given the complementary use of red to depict their clothing. One lone figure balance on a fallen tree near two anglers, apparently in conversation. The distinctive brown palette is reminiscent of the seventeenth-century Dutch artist Jacob van Ruisdael (1628-1682), whose work Barret had probably studied under West in the Royal Dublin Society.¹³⁵ A considerable number of Barret's early stylistic features are present in the painting and can be seen in other pictures executed around the same period, suggesting that Barret was already beginning to establish compositional formulae that he could use to generate large numbers of paintings. These repeated traits typically include a dominating tree on one side of the composition, a body of water or waterfall in the centre, or to the right, and a distant view of mountains or hills. For example, an ex-Gory Gallery piece, An Irish Landscape Inspired by the Dargle Valley, must have been painted around the same time. The views are similar in size, composition and, colour palettes. Both paintings have anglers dressed in red and are lit by diffused light. The National Gallery of Ireland's An Extensive Wooded Landscape with Fishermen Hauling in their Nets in the Foreground (Fig. 43) also shares the same basic elements with the overall effect of creating the sublime grandeur of nature as inspired by Burke.

In A Mountainous River Landscape with a Waterfall with Two Figures Preparing to Fish and Another Crossing the River Across a Fallen Tree in the Foreground (Fig. 4), an accomplished and lush landscape, Barret looked at the English landscape painter John

¹³⁵ Figgis, N. and Rooney, B. (2001). *Irish Paintings in the National Gallery of Ireland*, Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, p. 45.

Wootton (1682-1764) for the figures in the foreground, which are based on Wooten's The Chase (Fig. 44.1). 136 Wootton painted four oil paintings of hunting scenes which were then made into engravings and tapestries. The paintings, which survive only in engraved copies, were recorded in a sale from Wootton's collection, from which they were bought by a French-born printmaker Bernard Baron (1696-1762), who paid Wooten £50 per plate. 137 A Rocky Wooded River Landscape with a Waterfall and Figures and Cattle on the Banks (Fig. 44) is most likely a painting of Wicklow. This landscape has rocky cliffs and waterfalls on the back of the river. The landscape is so large that the figures and cattle in the foreground are dwarfed by their surroundings. A Wooded River Landscape with Anglers and a Ruined Mill (Fig. 45) was based on a transparency, and Michael Wynne of the National Gallery of Ireland argues that the present work was most likely painted in Ireland before 1762. 138 An Extensive Wooded River Landscape with Figures in the Foreground (Fig. 46) has also been entitled An Extensive Irish River Landscape with Figures in the Foreground (Fig. 47). The composition suggests that it is a transitional work between Barret's Zuccarelli inspired Rococo Italianate landscapes and works from the 1760s, which include his views of Powerscourt. Dense foliage to the right-hand side of the landscape painting frames a washerwoman standing near the stream in the centre, while to the right, a horseman and his dog are visible. The Entrance to the Dargle Gorge (Fig. 48) is signed and dated. This is interesting given that few of Barret's works are signed, and this picture is not a particularly large work. The presence

¹³⁶ Laffan, W. (2015). "Imitators of One Another: a source for George Barret", *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, Vol 18.

¹³⁷ Quoted in Meyer, A. (1984). *John Wooten, 1682-1764*, London: Kenwood House.

¹³⁸ Recorded from the Frick Art Reference Library Photographic Files Reference Number 79777420.

of a signature suggests that this "Irish" Landscape may have been one of those brought to London by the artist as a publicity image. As mentioned above, Twiss identifies the rainbow with the Irish climate. The depiction of the landscape in *An Extensive Wooded River Landscape, with Anglers Beside Pool Below a Waterfall and a Rainbow* (Fig. 47) suggests the influence of a visit Barret may have made to Snowdonia. The ruggedness of the scene, coupled with the presence of a small ruined fortress in the central middle distance, suggests this can only be a British landscape. Instead of depicting a particular place, however, Barret appears to have contrasted a generalized evocation of Sublime native scenery, populated by fishermen dressed in classical arcadian garments. The idea of a rainbow can only come from Rubens, whose painterly bravura and richly tinted palette Barret also set out to emulate. This landscape in *Landscape with Rocky Arch* (Fig. 49) contains a dramatic shelf of rock-forming a bridge, under which two fishermen and woman are casting rods.

In conclusion, the analysis of works in this chapter has aimed to show the range of Barret's ability to cater to the tastes of his patrons as a way to establish himself as a successful painter of interior decorative schemes in Ireland. It has divided his work based on its association with a particular patron or commission, and the subject matter has been linked with the specific context in which it was produced, frequently dictated less by the invention of the artist than by the demands of the patron. Although there are a number of works that have not been attached to anyone patron or commission, the majority of Barret's work carried out in Ireland can be directly connected with a particular decorative scheme intended for a specific room within a particular house. His work is also marked by its dependence on his patrons' collections of Old Master

paintings as sources, meaning that many paintings can easily be connected with a classical prototype. Despite the apparent closeness of his early connection with Burke, arguably one of the most influential figures of the period in terms of his philosophy of the Sublime in nature, Barret seems to have adapted or curbed these influences in line with the demands of his patrons for more decorative Italianate scenes. At the same time, however, he clearly manifests a genuine interest in the philosophical ideas of the period, and a profound sense of the beauty of the Irish landscape is evident in several paintings, despite their apparently Italianate subjects. These ideas will be explored in the next chapter in relation to Barret's move to London.

<u>Chapter II: London: Barret in Orchard Street (1762-1772)</u> Introduction

Building on the foundations laid in the previous chapter, this chapter will discuss the development of Barret's career after he moved to London at some point probably in 1763. Moving to London with his wife, Frances Percy (d.1810), whom he had married in 1757, marks the middle of Barret's career, and the high point of his contemporary artistic success. In keeping with his aim to project his fashionable status as a popular artist in society, Barret rented rooms on Orchard Street, a fashionable thoroughfare connecting Portman Square to the north and Grosvenor Square to the south. He thereby set up his London studio in one of the most fashionable and sought after areas of the city, establishing himself in the same location as frequented by his potential patrons. It was here that he lived and worked until 1772, when his bankruptcy, largely on account of the expenditure required to maintain his image, forced his move to Paddington, then a village outside the city.

In reflection of his desire to project himself as the fashionable society painter he was, the first part of this chapter will consider the exhibitions he took part in as a member of various artists' societies in the city, as well as his role in the founding of the Royal Academy in London in 1768. Given his apparent lack of loyalty to any single institution and his tendency to exhibit with different societies simultaneously (although this was strongly frowned upon by fellow society members), I will argue that Barret's participation in these institutions can be seen more as a way to gain the attention of

¹³⁹ Walkey, G. (1994). *Artists' Houses in London 1764-1914*, England: Scholar Press, p. 11.

new patrons and make a living than as a mission to help elevate the status of landscape art or artists in Britain.

In order to consolidate this argument, the second part of the chapter will discuss the various commissions Barret undertook between 1762 and 1772, for a group of prominent Whig patrons to whom he was introduced through his membership at the Royal Academy and other artists' societies. I will argue that these works continue to exhibit the influence of the classical idiom discussed in the previous chapter, as well as revealing Barret's immersion in contemporary Picturesque theory. In addition, I will identify a strand of the Picturesque in his depiction of ruins, perhaps as a way to cater to a more patriotic vein in his patrons' intentions to express a form of English identity distinct from the impact of the Grand Tour. Initially introduced to his new patrons through Burke, Barret continued to paint the kind of decorative schemes he had been executing in Ireland. Although he appears to have found some commercial success during this period, Barret's excessively lavish lifestyle and poor handling of his business affairs meant that he was, however, declared bankrupt in 1770, and does not appear to have recovered solvency. As such, this chapter will argue that Barret's large output and his focus on painting decorative schemes was fundamental to the upkeep of his growing family as well as providing him with a financial source for his own expensive tastes.

Barret's Move to Orchard Street, London

As Anne Crookshank and the Knight of Glin have noted in *The Painters of Ireland, 1660–1920* (1978), Barret felt he was already a completely developed and successful painter

before he came to London. 140 Prior to his move in around 1763, he had already received significant commissions from numerous Irish patrons seeking decorative schemes for their houses around Dublin. Despite this apparent success, Strickland argues that Barret may, in fact, have left Dublin when he failed to find a buyer for a set of Powerscourt and Dargle Valley scenes he had painted in 1762, and based on the model of numerous artists relocating to the capital at this time, I would argue that in addition to this, he moved to London in order to seek an expanded market for his work, and consolidate his success. 141 On his arrival in the city, Barret began to exhibit with the Free Society of Artists and the Society of Artists of Great Britain, both of which will be discussed below. During the eighteenth century, collectors would typically stay in London and have artworks brought to them, while artists would have had increasing access to exhibiting their work in annual exhibitions. 142 In Dublin, by contrast, even in cases where works were exhibited, portraiture was privileged in most displays, effectively excluding Barret's landscape subjects. 143

The appeal of London as an artistic centre was intensified with the accession to the throne of King George III in 1760. The new King was a generous patron of the arts and helped begin a revival in the British art world through his assistance in establishing artistic societies. His personal tastes also elevated the position of art in the general

¹⁴⁰ Crookshank, A. and Knight of Glin (2002). *The Painters of Ireland 1660 – 1920*, London: Barrie and Jenkins, p. 133.

¹⁴¹ Strickland, W. (1968). *A Dictionary of Irish Artists, Volume I*, Dublin: Irish Academic Press, p. 29-32.

¹⁴² Wedd, K. (2001). *Creative Quarters: The Art World in London 1700-2000*, London: Museum of London, p. 36.

¹⁴³ Turpin, J. (1995). A School of Art in Dublin since the Eighteenth Century, Dublin: Gill and Macmilian, p. 1.

public eye, expanding its market. Based on these favourable conditions, several Irish artists relocated to London during the mid-eighteenth century, including the portrait and miniature painter Hone, who was to become a founder of the Royal Academy alongside Barret. Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1740-1808) was also a portrait painter who, like Barret, had studied under Robert West at the Dublin Society. Robert Carver (1730-1791), who painted theatre scenes, also moved from Ireland, and in 1769 he became the president of the Society of Artists Great Britain. George Mullins (1763-1775) was a landscape artist who came to London in the early 1770s. It seems that for these artists, London was considered a much better prospect in which to work and make a living than Dublin during the period. In the diary of Reverend Doctor Thomas Campbell (1733 – 1795), he wrote on March 15th 1775, "the worst part of London equalled the best of Dublin", suggesting an improvement in conditions in the English capital. 144 Farington also wrote in his diary that "George Dance described Dublin to be one great stink", again contributing to contemporary views of the city from the perspective of English visitors. 145 Although Campbell never mentions Barret, he does mention several people that Barret knew, including Burke and Barry, as well as patrons associated with Barret, such as the Duke of Cumberland and Rockingham. This suggests that his view was representative of the artists and thinkers in Barret's circle who, like him, had moved to London.

¹⁴⁴ Campbell, T. (1947). *Dr Campbell's Diary of a Visit to England in 1775*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 31.

¹⁴⁵ Cave, K. Farington, J. (1978). *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, November 1, 1795, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 107.

In the case of Barret, it is unclear exactly when he left for London, because it is likely that he would have been travelling back and forth between Dublin and London before he officially moved his studio. However, an advertisement for a sale of his belongings suggests that he finally left around 1763. Between 11 and 15 September 1764, the *Dublin Newspaper* announced that,

An auction for the furniture of Mr George Barret, Barret's house on Leeson-street near Donnybrook corner at Stephens Green, will be held by Nicolas Highly, upholder, on Tuesday the 18th of September and the ensuing days; among which are three capital Landscapes in neat carved and guilt frames, painted by the ingenious Mr Barret, whose landscapes about three months ago won a prize of fifty pounds in London from several competitions and have since sold for hundred-pound sterling also an excellent mahogany screwed pillar and claw desk on castors for study.¹⁴⁶

The notice refers to the "prize of fifty pounds" Barret won in London "three months ago," suggesting therefore that the sale took place after his departure. It may have been as a result of this early success in London that Barret decided to remain in England and therefore authorized the sale of all his furniture alongside the three paintings he had left in Dublin. Apart from the works sold in Dublin in 1764, Barret took several Irish paintings with him to England as a way to gain attention from prospective new English

¹⁴⁶ Hoey, J. and Faulkner, J. (1794, January, 21). *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*, Dublin: Christ Church Yard.

patrons. 147 Barret's 1764 exhibits were the earliest recorded images of Ireland to be shown at a public exhibition in London, and these scenes were thought by contemporary critics to convey an image of the Celtic fringe as a "wild yet noble landscape."148 Keen to make a living, Barret appears to have continued with his hybrid approach to combining elements of the local landscape with Italianate elements as a way to cater to the prevailing taste. This means that despite a sense of the Sublime evident in Barret's depiction of Powerscourt (Fig. 22), for example, which embodied an Anglo-Irish quality with its roots in Burke's treatise, his work also shows an Italianate transformation of the Irish landscape. Laffan and Rooney argue that this is stamped with certain Englishness, suggestive of peace and the taming of nature. ¹⁴⁹ In the case of the Powerscourt work, the Palladian "solidity" of the house is located within a pastoral setting that shows the influence of classical idealisation. ¹⁵⁰ This effect borrowed more from Claudian aesthetics than from Burke's Sublime visions of nature and was likely to appeal to the tastes of the English public, steeped in the vogue for Palladianism and informed by the aesthetics of the Italian Campagna they had encountered on the Grand Tour.

As a result of his new environment and in keeping with contemporary fashion, Barret's work transitioned to an increasingly classical style, which combined Burke's idea of the Sublime and the Beautiful alongside the Picturesque theory as well as the

¹⁴⁷ Laffan, W. and Rooney, B. (2009). *Thomas Roberts Landscapes and Patronage in Eighteenth Century Ireland*, Cork: Churchill House Press, p. 243.

¹⁴⁸ ibid.

¹⁴⁹ ibid, p. 244-245.

¹⁵⁰ ibid.

influence of idealized Italianate scenes by Claude. This clearly develops on what he had started to do in Ireland, where he his depiction of Powerscourt Waterfall and the Dargle Valley contrast with his Lake District paintings. This was recognized by contemporaries: Pilkington wrote of Barret's English pictures that,

Scarcely any painter equalled him in his knowledge or execution of details in nature, the latter of which was particularly light and well calculated to mark most decidedly the true characters of the various objects he represented, forest trees in particular. His attention was chiefly directed to the true colour of English scenery, in which, in his best works, he was very happy, as he got all that richness and dewy freshness that so particularly characterizes the verdure of this climate, especially in the vernal months, and which is so totally different from the colouring of those masters who have formed themselves on Italian pictures. ¹⁵¹

The landscapes dating from this period can be classified by a different tone to that adopted in his previous work and are clearly more classically inspired by Claudean conventions than the more Romantic scenes typical of his work carried out in Dublin. An example of this can be seen in *The North Side of Danson House* (Figure 50), which is much lighter and airier in tone and composition than any of the works completed while Barret was in Ireland

Despite his preference for another Irish artist, James Barry, Burke's friendship with Barret suggests that he again helped him to find a new group of patrons when he arrived in London. This suggests that the artist entered an Anglo-Irish network within

¹⁵¹ Pilkington, M. (1798). *Dictionary of Painters*, London: Thomas McLean, p. 781-82.

the city, as he appears to have maintained close contact with other fellow Irish artists as well as with Burke himself. According to Cross, the connection that Burke and Barret had established in Ireland between 1761 and 1763, continued after Barret's move to London, where Burke introduced him to influential friends, swiftly and successfully enabling him to become established in England. 152 Burke had moved to London in 1750 as a philosopher, statesman, author and public speaker for the Whig party, and many of his Whig colleagues and employers were to become Barret's patrons. These included the Duke of Portland and the Marquess of Rockingham when they became Prime Ministers. As mentioned in the previous chapter, contemporaries respected Burke's opinion of artists, and he was an established patron of the arts, meaning that a recommendation from him would have done a great deal to advance an artist's career.¹⁵³ In some sense, therefore, Barret's early success at Orchard Street could be directly attributed to Burke's support, much as in Ireland in the previous decade. However, although Barret had maintained a strong connection with Burke, he was also keen to exhibit his work more publicly. As a result of this, he became active in three different artists' societies in London: The Free Society of Artists; The Society of Artists of Great Britain; and the Royal Academy of Arts, of which he was a founding member. During the eighteenth-century, the English art scene was undergoing a great deal of reform as a means of buying, selling and displaying artworks opened up to increased possibilities. During the eighteenth-century however, artists' societies enabled artists to participate in exhibitions and represented a turning point in expanding the art

 152 Cross, D. (1939). Edmund Burke and His Literary Friends, St. Louis: Washington University Studies, p. 8.

¹⁵³ ibid, p. 3.

market in England. Before the development of such artist-led societies whose aim was to set up public exhibitions, however, artists had to attract patrons by their reputation, advertisements in the newspaper or by inviting potential buyers to their homes or studios.

Barret's work was first publicly exhibited with the Free Society of Artists (1761-1783), of which he was a member between 1764 and 1782, exhibiting works at three of their annual exhibitions. Showing at the 1764 exhibition soon after he moved to London, he won the first premium for landscape painting, earning him fifty guineas. His painting, titled *A Large Landscape and Figures*, was noted as one of the earliest recorded images of Ireland to be shown in a public exhibition in London. The Society's goal was to connect artists with a market for potential consumers during a period when art dealers were scarce. Lord Dalkeith discovered Barret's work at the Free Society in 1764, as a result of which he commissioned him to paint three views of Buccleuch estates, for which he paid five hundred guineas each. These three views were subsequently displayed and praised at the opening exhibition for the Royal Academy of Arts in 1769.

Alongside the Free Society of Artists, Barret also began to exhibit at the Society of Artists of Great Britain (1760-1791). The Society had helped to transform the British

¹⁵⁴ Figgis, N. and Rooney, B. (2001). *Irish Paintings in the National Gallery of Ireland*, Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, p. 40.

¹⁵⁵ Cullen, F. (1997). *Visual Politics: The Representation on Ireland 1750-1930*, Cork: Cork University Press, p. 15.

¹⁵⁶ Grant, C. (1926). *The Old English Landscape Painters, Vol. I*, London: F. Lewis Publishers Limited, p. 52.

¹⁵⁷ Northcote, J. (1813). *Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, London: Conduit Street.

art world by establishing itself, like the Free Society, as one of the first places in which artists could present works to the public, holding their first public exhibition in 1761.

The Society of Artists of Great Britain was seen as attracting the most important patrons and, in time, grew to mount the most popular and commercially successful exhibitions.

The Society was especially important in facilitating Barret's entry into the market, allowing him to establish and consolidate his reputation in London by exhibiting the pictures he had brought with him from Ireland. It was here that the Duke of Portland and other patrons first encountered Barret's landscape painting in 1764.

As such, the Society played a pivotal role in giving Barret access to new patrons across the United Kingdom, and he exhibited regularly at the Society for several years before he joined in the formation of the Royal Academy with a group of fellow artists.

Writing of an exhibition at the Society of Artists of Great Britain held in 1766, Burke mentioned, "Barret makes a very good figure in this exhibition", an observation which would have no doubt also amplified the artist's favourable perception among other contemporaries. The paintings Burke refers to in the show are *View of Welbeck Park*, the Seat of the Duke of Portland (1766), A View of the Great Tue in Welbeck Park

¹⁵⁸ Ayres, J. (2014). Art and Apprentices: Apprentice Painters and Sculptors in the Early Modern British Tradition, Oxford: Oxbow Books, p. 435.

¹⁵⁹ Hargraves, M. (2005). *Candidates for Fame: The Society of Artists in Great Britain 1760-1791*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 1.

¹⁶⁰ Figgis, N. and Rooney, B. (2001). *Irish Paintings in the National Gallery of Ireland*, Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland.

¹⁶¹ McLoughlin, T. (2009). *The Correspondence of James Barry, From Edmund Burke to James Barry, May 13th, 1766*, Dublin: National University of Ireland, retrieved December 3, 2019, from

http://www.texte.ie/barry/view?docId=L_eb_jb_[c.13.05.1766].xml;query=Barret;bra nd=default.

(1766), and *A Landscape, A Study of Nature* (1766). In another letter dated April 26th, 1767, in which he mentions the Society of Artists of Great Britain's exhibition, Burke wrote, "Barret will be better off than ever. He puts in a night piece in a very noble style & another very beautiful landscape with a part of a Rainbow on a Waterfall. They seem both to be excellent pictures." This note seems to refer to *A View of Creswell, Nottinghamshire, with a Waterfall* (1767), *Ditto of Roach Abbey* (1767), and *A Moonlight, with the Effect of a Mist, A Study from Nature* (1767). Such references seem to suggest Burke's continued interest in and support of Barret's work. Mounting tensions in the Society may, however, be inferred from a letter dated 24th of August 1767, which Edward Burke wrote to James Barry,

Barret has got himself also, little country house, his business still holds strong; and indeed he deserves encouragement for independent of his being a very ingenious artist; he is worthy and most perfectly good-humoured fello; however he has had the ill luck to quarrel with almost all his acquaintance among the artists; with Stubbs, Wright, Hamilton; They are at mortal wars; and I fancy he does not stand very well even with West.¹⁶³

The artists with whom Barret is in "mortal wars," George Stubbs (1724-1806), Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797) and Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1736-1808), stayed loyal to the Society of Artists of Great Britain when the Royal Academy was formed. By this point, disputes over the nature and presentation of the exhibitions led to a schism,

¹⁶² ibid.

¹⁶³ ibid.

forcing artists to choose between different societies.¹⁶⁴ Although Burke's letter does not specify what the arguments were about, its date, a year before the foundation of the Royal Academy, suggests that it is likely that they may relate to the formation of the new academy.

This impression is also suggested by a record in the Society of Artists of Great Britain's archive papers, a letter from Barret dated 25 November 1768, in which he announces that he will be leaving the Society to become one of the founding members of the Royal Academy. Alongside this is a note addressed to Francis Hayman (1708-1776), the President of the Body of Artists of Great Britain, in which he declines the invitation to become a director of the society, a move that signals his aim to leave the group. This suggests Barret was well regarded. The date of this letter is significant since at the end of November 1768, after several years of bitter wrangling within London's artistic community, a group of twenty-two artists signed a formal letter to King George III, requesting his "gracious assistance, patronage and protection" in the formation of a new Academy which would effectively supplant the existing Society of Artists, formed in 1761. Less than a month later, the King assented to the request, and on Saturday 10 December 1968, he signed a document, the Instrument of

¹⁶⁴ Hargraves, M. (2005). *Candidates for Fame : The Society of Artists in Great Britain 1760-1791*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 1.

 $^{^{165}}$ Letters found in the Royal Academy Archives. Reference code SA/18 Letter Book, 10, November to 1768 to December 27th, 1770.

¹⁶⁶ Sandby, W. (1862). *Thomas and Paul Sandby: Some Accounts of their Lives and Work*, London: Seely and Company Limited, p. 46.

Foundation, which set out the rules and regulations of the newly formed Royal Academy.¹⁶⁷

It seems that Barret left the Society of Artists of Great Britain in order to join what he saw as a more prestigious institution funded by the Crown. The new institution received much attention in the contemporary press. *The Gentlemen's Magazine* announced in December 1768 that "the principal object in this institution, is to be the establishment of well-regulated schools of design, where students in the arts may find that instruction which hath so long been wanted, and so long wished for in this country." ¹⁶⁸ The article explained the purpose of the Royal Academy and their annual exhibitions as being "open to all artists of distinguished merit, where they may offer their performances to public view, and acquire a degree of fame and encouragement which they shall be deemed to deserved." ¹⁶⁹ As mentioned, Barret clearly saw this as an excellent opportunity to display his talents and grow his social circle, and indeed his name was listed in the article alongside the first officers and council of the new institution. ¹⁷⁰

As David Solkin noted, it is clear that the movement of artists from the Society of Artists to the Royal Academy caused significant divisions in the artistic community. For Solkin, these divisions were inevitably of class: the Royal Academy style appealed to elite viewers, whereas the Society of Artists appealed to a less culturally

¹⁶⁷ Sandby W. (1892), *Thomas and Paul Sandby: Some Accounts of their Lives and Work,* London: Seeley, p. 47.

¹⁶⁸ *The Gentlemen's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, Vol. 38 (Dec. 1768).

¹⁶⁹ ibid.

¹⁷⁰ ibid.

sophisticated audience.¹⁷¹ Solkin is alluding to a class distinction between the different artist societies since the Royal Academy clearly offered a more direct route to aristocratic patronage. In order to conform to Reynolds' injunctions in his *Discourses*, it seems that Barret's increasingly classical style, apparent in works such as *View of Powerscourt Waterfall* (Fig. 3) and *View of Welbeck* (Fig. 51) from this time, was intended to meet his constant quest for commissions by gaining him the invitation to become a founding member of the Royal Academy, as a source of potentially more lucrative prospects.

Among the forty founding members of the Royal Academy, Barret was one of two Irish artists represented, the other being the miniature painter Nathaniel Hone.¹⁷² The representation of the Irish landscape appeared more frequently in London after about 1775, when William Ashford regularly dispatched landscapes from Dublin to the Royal Academy.¹⁷³ This vogue for Irish landscapes was clearly to Barret's advantage, and his appearance among the founding members of the Royal Academy would undoubtedly have been the subject of much discussion within Irish artistic circles.¹⁷⁴ Reviews by Barret's contemporaries suggest their appreciation of his work, and Campbell notes that "Barret's landskips [...] are superlative."¹⁷⁵ The expansion in

¹⁷¹ Solkin, D. (2001). *Art on the Line, The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 273.

¹⁷² See Morse, L. M. (2022) *Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder*, Volume II, Appendix p. 82.

¹⁷³ Graves, G. (1905-6). *The Royal Academy Exhibitions 1769-1904*. Bath: Kingsmead Reprints.

¹⁷⁴ Laffan, W. and Rooney, B. (2009). *Thomas Roberts Landscapes and Patronage in Eighteenth Century*, Cork: Churchill House Press, p. 26.

 $^{^{175}}$ Campbell, T. (1947). Dr Campbell's Diary of a Visit to England in 1775, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 86-87.

exhibition reviews published in the press resulted in increased mentions of Barret's work. In 1772 a review in the *London Chronicle* claimed,

Mr Barret has been deservedly allowed to profess great abilities as a landscape painter. These pieces, however, are very carefully finished, particularly with respect to the figures, the vessel and cattle. A study of nature, by the fame, this piece has a good effect and is painted with a free-spirited pencil.¹⁷⁶

In the same year, a reviewer in the *Morning Post* wrote,

A Moonlight, one of the best pictures that we have seen of this artist for some year's past. The composition is noble and well-chosen, and the colouring very happily expressed the effects of the moonlight.¹⁷⁷

In 1777 the *London Chronicle* argued, "Mr Barret's are grand scenes, and executed in a masterly manner." ¹⁷⁸ In 1780 a piece in the *London Courant* claimed,

A Moonlight by Barret, this is a most admirable performance. In general moonlight pieces are painted in a dull and dismal style of chiaroscuro, with a taste uniformly of tint which is highly unpleasing and unnatural in the piece before

¹⁷⁶ Dodsley, R. (1772). London Chronicle 1772, Morse, L. M. (2022) Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder, Volume II, Appendix, p. 89.
¹⁷⁷ Bell, J. (May, 13,1778). The Morning Post, Morse, L. M. (2022) Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder, Volume II, Appendix, p. 89.
¹⁷⁸ Dodsley, R. (1777). London Chronicle, Morse, L. M. (2022) Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder, Volume II, Appendix p. 89.

us, that faint and mellow hue observed in nature when the moon "shadowy sets off the face of things" as Milton expressed it is most judiciously represented.¹⁷⁹

Such positive contemporary reviews indicate the extent of Barret's popular success as his association with the Royal Academy deeply enhanced his professional status and helped him to find buyers for his work. 180

As part of the exposure he received in connection with the Royal Academy, Barret was depicted among the founding members in Johan Zoffany's well-known group portrait, *The Academicians of the Royal Academy* (1771-2) (Fig. 52.1), commissioned by King George III to celebrate the founding of the Royal Academy. The work "played a significant role in ways we think of the Royal Academy and its initial membership but also about its early institutional artistic identity." In the painting, the founding artists are shown in the life-drawing room at Somerset House. The members appear to be preparing for a life-drawing class and seem to mostly be having discussions throughout the room. Zoffany depicts clues to what the artists may have discussed by including casts of sculptures and antiquities, while a life model poses nude in the right corner of the room. This emphasis on the figure sketched from life reinforces the traditional hierarchy of the arts despite the fact that landscape was becoming more popular during the period. In terms of Barret's representation in the work, he is located on the left-hand side of the canvas, only his head visible from among a group of artists

¹⁷⁹ Mallet, E. (1780). *London Courant*, Morse, L. M. (2022) *Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder*, Volume II, Appendix, p. 89.

¹⁸⁰ Hemingway, A. (1992). *Landscape Imagery and Urban Culture in Early Nineteenth Century Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 46.

¹⁸¹ Monks, S. (1935). *The Sublime*, Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press, p. 33.

gathered behind an easel. Immediately to Barret's right and the figure that he appears to engage with most directly is the sculptor Joseph Wilton (1722-1803). The visiting Chinese artist Tan-Che-Qua is directly behind Barret, apparently in conversation with the miniaturist Jeremiah Meyer (1735 -1789). To the right of the group are the Sandby brothers, and Paul Sandby (1725 - 1809) had worked with Barret and was most likely working with him when this painting was completed. Directly in front of Barret and obscuring the view of him is Benjamin West (1738-1820), who appears as a full figure, most likely because he was a history painter - he later became President of the Royal Academy. Looking towards Barret from the back left is Giovanni Battista Cipriani (1727- 1785), with whom he also collaborated. 182

The inclusion of Barret's portrait in the work shows that as a founding member of the Royal Academy, he occupied a prestigious position because only forty artists were nominated out of a population of eight hundred living and working in London at the time. Although he was a founding member however, Barret never appears to have taught at the Royal Academy Schools, perhaps because he was frequently occupied by travelling across the country for his patrons. Despite not being directly employed in the schools, it seems that Barret was involved in the institution in other ways, serving on the Academy's council during the years of 1769, 1781 and 1782. In 1769 he was part of the selection committee and the first hanging committee, responsible for arranging exhibitions with Penny, Sandby, George Michael Moser (1706-1783), and Francis

¹⁸² Shawe-Taylor, D. (2009). *The Conversation Piece: Scenes of Fashionable Life*, London: Royal Collection Enterprises Limited, p. 106.

 $^{^{183}}$ Brooks, C. and Curzi, V. (2014). Hogarth Reynolds Turner: British Painting and the Rise of Modernity, Milan: Skira, p. 21.

Milner Newton (1720-1794). ¹⁸⁴ This was a prestigious role, given that it was the Royal Academy's first exhibition, and the arrangement and flow of the pictures would need to have been impressive to make an excellent first impression on the audience. Being a member of the hanging committee was always an important and sought-after position, for its members had complete authority over the quantity, quality and disposition of works for exhibitions. ¹⁸⁵ Artists understood the importance of where and how their works were displayed in each exhibition as this determined their potential for more significant opportunities for sales. During this period, Barret also took on an apprentice, George Englehart (1750-1829), at his studio in Orchard Street and letters from Englehart on Barret's behalf were sent to the bookkeeper of the Duke of Buccleuch requesting payments. ¹⁸⁶ It does not appear that Englehart remained with Barret for long, however, and records show that he moved to Reynolds' studio to continue his studies from 1773 to 1776.

Although Barret was exhibiting yearly at the Royal Academy, it seems that, against the rules of the group which prohibited members from exhibiting their work elsewhere, he was not exclusively exhibiting at Academy exhibitions. A record in the Council Minutes of the Royal Academy dated 9 November 1773 suggests that on at least one occasion, this was perceived unfavourably by the Committee. According to the note,

¹⁸⁴ Hutchison, S. (1968). *The History of the Royal Academy 1768 – 1968*, London: Royal Academy Publishing, p. 55.

¹⁸⁵ Hargraves, M. (2005). *Candidates for Fame: The Society of Artists in Great Britain 1760-1791*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. i69.

¹⁸⁶ National Records of Scotland, Record Number: GD224/628/1.

A letter was read from Barret signifying that his works, which were exhibited with the S.A.G.B., were exhibited without his consent. The council, being satisfied with his apology, ordered that a letter be sent to him for the lectures with the rules of the exhibition relating to a person exhibiting in two places the same year signed by Reynolds and Newton.¹⁸⁷

Indeed, Barret risked expulsion from the Royal Academy by exhibiting elsewhere. However, as the notes show, it seems that the exhibition of these works at the Society of Artists of Great Britain was a mistake, and he continued to exhibit exclusively at the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1782. 188

Reviews of the exhibitions show that Barret's work attracted praise when it was shown, and although it is not clear exactly which works he exhibited in each case, at the Academy of 1775, Campbell described them as "superlative." Barret's painting of Penton Lynn entitled *View of Penton Lynn, on the River Liddle* (Fig. 52) was "especially extolled, James Northcote (1746-1831), then a young man of 23, singling it out as one of the best things in the show." In can be noted, however, that one of Barret's works exhibited that year was in a genre transformed by Stubbs in the previous decade. Barret's *Mares and a Foal in a Wooded Landscape* (Fig. 53) focused on the topographical

¹⁸⁷Royal Academy Notes 9 of November 1773, Morse, L. M. (2022) *Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder*, Volume II, Appendix, p. 78. ¹⁸⁸ See Morse, L. M. (2022) *Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder*, Volume II, Appendix, p. 82 for King George III letter (10 December 1768) containing the establishment and government of the Royal Academy.

¹⁸⁹ Campbell, T. (1947). *Dr Campbell's Diary of a Visit to England in 1775*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁹⁰ Northcote, J. (1813). *Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, London: Conduit Street.

landscape with horses. This connection with other artists and Stubbs, in particular, will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. In addition to this work, it seems that one of the paintings shown at the Royal Academy in 1775 showed Southampton Water. Barret had painted the house of the banker Robert Drummond (d.1804) in Cadland Park by the Southampton River. Such works appear to have been popular among Barret's patrons who wanted their artworks displayed in the Royal Academy because it added a prestige element to their provenance. Such was the prestige that even if the artist was not a member of the Royal Academy, patrons would attempt to send their commissions to be displayed in Royal Academy exhibitions. On April 14th, 1782 in a letter written to the Society of Artists Great Britain, William Ashford noted that "Lord Aldborough had taken his landscape to London in the hope of getting them selected by the Royal Academy hanging committee." 192

Barret's Orchard Street Patrons and Commissions

Despite the foundation of the Royal Academy, which grew out of various other artists' societies, the commissioning of art during this period was dependent on a deeply embedded network of patrons and artists which existed within contemporary society. This meant that as well as becoming a member of such institutions as the Royal Academy, Barret's source of income also depended on his cultivation of an extensive social network, which he used to attract patrons. Pears points to the significance of

¹⁹¹ Graves, A. (1905). *The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760 – 1791, The Free Society of Artists 1761- 1783 Vol. I*, Bath: Kingsmead Press, p. 132.

¹⁹² Hargraves, M. (2005). *Candidates for Fame: The Society of Artists in Great Britain* 1760-1791, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 69.

private patronage during the eighteenth century, given that although the market was enabling artists to paint more speculatively, they still largely depended on private commissions for their livelihood. Success in attracting patrons helped an artist to elevate their status as patrons became advertisements for the artist, as well-known upper class buyers and collectors were newsworthy subjects, and such aristocratic clients might also lead to connections with their friends or relations.

Barret appears to have received most of his commissions through recommendations from people he knew. The foundation of this network of supporters was initially through Burke, who, had strong connections with the Whig party through his position as secretary to Lord Rockingham. Rockingham had founded the Rockingham Whigs, one of the two main political parties in England, and was an important patron of the arts. It could be said that the Whigs dominated British politics at this time, given that Sir Robert Walpole (1676-1745), the first Prime Minister elected in 1721 and staying in power until 1742, was a member of the Whig party. The party was in control for most of the eighteenth-century, meaning that Barret's connection with its members was significant. Although Barret does not appear to have been directly interested in political power, he was aware of the fact that the party was composed of numerous land-owning aristocrats and wealthy middle-class families. Whig party members were significant patrons of the arts in the period, and it is likely

¹⁹³ Pears, I. (1988). *The Discovery of Painting the Growth of Interest in the Arts in England 1600 – 1768*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 150.

¹⁹⁴ ibid, p. 145.

that Barret wished to gain favour with them as a result. 195 Many wealthy members of the Whig party had the time and money to go on a Grand Tour, and, as in Ireland, this experience significantly influenced taste in England. As with Barret's Irish patrons, Whig patrons applied their newfound knowledge of classical art and architecture to the decoration of their estates, resulting in the prevalence of neoclassical architecture in England. As the popularity of the Grand Tour grew, artists and architects also began to travel to Italy in order to meet the needs of their patrons better. Although Barret himself never made the journey, he was connected with those who had. Two of the leading architects of the time, Sir John Soane (1753-1827) and George Dance the younger (1741-1825), had both travelled to Italy, and Soane owned at least one of the artist's works. 196 Alongside his connections with Whig politicians, Barret was part of a strong network of artists and architects through his membership of the Free Society of Artists, the Society of Artists of Great Britain and most importantly, as a founder member of the Royal Academy. This meant that Barret and the people surrounding him could be seen as the tastemakers of the eighteenth-century art world. To some extent, the innovation and tastes of his patrons was fundamental to informing Barret's work, given that he himself had never left Britain.

Barret's pattern of creating paintings primarily intended as part of interior decoration commissions, which had been evident in Ireland, seems to have continued

¹⁹⁵ Rogers, N. (1998). *Crowds, Culture, and Politics in Georgian Britain*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 178.

¹⁹⁶ Bailey, G. (1840). *A General Description of Sir John Soane's Museum, with Brief Notices of Some of the More Interesting Works of Art Therein,* London: Shaw and Sons, p. 40-41.

after his move to London. It seems that the artist secured similarly lucrative decorative commissions, including a commission for ten views of Welbeck Abbey, Nottinghamshire, painted between 1765–7 for William Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, 3rd Duke of Portland (Fig. 54). In 1768 Barret received a similar commission from Henry Scott, 3rd Duke of Buccleuch, to record the mountainous landscapes around the Duke's estate, Dalkeith Park, Lothian, as in *A View of Dalkeith* (Fig. 55). 197 Despite being part of site-specific decorative schemes, these pictures were also exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1771, serving to publicize further Barret's abilities.

Landscape painting had become fashionable in England during the eighteenth-century as a result of the influence of Italianate artists such as Claude. Such works were highly sought after among the owners of the large number of estates being developed in England at this time. According to the Swiss miniaturist painter Jean Andre Rouquet (1701-1758), "landskips are much in taste, and this branch of painting is as much cultivated as any other. There are few masters in this branch, much superior to those landskip painters, who now enjoy the first reputation in England." History paintings began to play less of a role in collections and exhibitions, while portraits, landscapes and genre paintings rose in fashionable taste, and Barret was among the most popular of the day. Such patron is Charles Watson-Wentworth, 2nd Marquess of Rockingham (1730-1782) an enthusiastic art collector as well as a significant political force. Rockingham commissioned numerous works from Barret for Wentworth Woodhouse

 $^{^{\}rm 197}$ The works remain in the private collection of the Duke of Buccleuch.

¹⁹⁸ Rouquet, A. (1755). *The Present State of the Arts in England*, London: J. Norse at the Lamb, p. 59.

in South Yorkshire. Rockingham had made a large expansion in his Jacobean house that he inherited from his father, the 1st Marquess of Rockingham (1693-1750). Although they met through Burke, as the Whig prime minister, Rockingham was also closely acquainted with a number of Barret's other patrons, including the Duke of Grafton and Henry Seymour Conway. Rockingham inherited land in Yorkshire, North Hampshire and Ireland, and Barret was commissioned to paint his different properties across the United Kingdom.

It seems appropriate that Rockingham first commissioned Barret to paint his Irish estate, Coolattin, Co. Wicklow. *Kiltimon Castle* (Fig. 56) shows the tower-house at Kiltimon or Killtyminin in its ruined condition before General Cummingham turned it into a demesne folly, in keeping with contemporary Whig tastes, given that as Barnard argues, "Whigs after 1714 adopted a single and distinctive architectural style-Palladianism- so it is improbable that they all swung to more naturalism and picturesque modes of painting." ¹⁹⁹ It seems that Barret had been employed to draw these early remains of Kiltimon Castle, Co. Wicklow, during the period in which he worked in Ireland before his move to London, as a copy after his drawing survives in the Royal Irish Academy. ²⁰⁰ The Romantic interest in the ruin is typical of the period, which favoured a Gothic taste in the British past, expressed through architecture alongside the more dominant interest in classical antiquity. This sense of pastoral Romanticism is also evident in *A Wooded River Landscape with a Torrent and Anglers in*

¹⁹⁹ Barnard, T. (2005). *A Guide to the Sources for Irish Material Culture 1500-1900*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, p. 37.

²⁰⁰ Crookshank, A. and the Knight of Glin, (2002). *Ireland's Painters 1600–1940,* London and New Haven, p. 134-5.

the Foreground (Fig. 57), a work that depicts a mountainous wooded river landscape in which anglers can be seen by a waterfall. The interest in waterfalls clearly harks back to Barret's Irish landscapes, and it is possible that the work could also represent Rockingham's Irish estate. The ruined tower house, a reference to the Picturesque tradition, is seen in the background and also appears in one of a set of three landscapes painted for Rockingham.

In addition to these Irish landscapes, Barret also painted *An Extensive Wooded Landscape with Fishermen Hauling in their Nets in the Foreground* (Fig. 58), which was bought by Rockingham in 1764 at the Society of Artists for 100 guineas. Based on its stylistic details, such as how the storm clouds frame the sky almost forming a circle, this large-scale atmospheric painting was most likely painted when Barret first arrived in London. As with the Irish pictures, he painted for Rockingham; *An Extensive, Wooded Landscape with Fisherman Hauling in their Nets in the Foreground* displays in the influence of the Dargle Valley. To the left of the composition, there is a rocky riverbank, above which rays of sunlight break through the trees giving a 'sublime' atmosphere to the scene. The circular arched cloud formation in the sky dominates the painting. Barret's bold touch can be seen in the foliage, while the small figures seem naturalistic with details.

The work he carried out for Rockingham opened a range of new opportunities for Barret. His relationship with William Cavendish-Bentinck, 3rd Duke of Portland (1738-1809), is one of the best recorded of his career as a result of the surviving

correspondence relating to the commission.²⁰¹ The Duke commissioned ten views to show of the grandeur of his estate, Welbeck Abbey, between 1765-6.²⁰² Given the surroundings that consist of over 5,000 acres of woodland, several of these works focus on the trees around the estate, which had gained some fame for their age and size. In particular, the forests at Welbeck were known for their oak trees, which were seen as an important symbol of both permanence and Englishness. In 1876 Oscar Browning mentions the trees in Welbeck in the first volume of *Picturesque Europe*: "Welbeck Abbey is noted no less for their spacious parks than for the remarkable trees adoring them. There is a Greendale Oak, an oak estimated to be by one authority 700, and by another 1,500 years old. This oak is probably the Methuselah of his race."²⁰³

Barret seems to be representing such a tree in *The Greendale Oak, Welbeck* (Fig. 59). In the painting only one arm of the vast tree bears foliage, and a tunnel has been made through its large trunk. The first Duke of Portland had made a bet with the Earl of Oxford that he could drive a horse and carriage through a tree. The Greendale Oak was chosen because of its great size. The tree was attacked with axes to create a hole big enough for a horse and carriage to drive through, and the Duke won his wager.²⁰⁴ According to various sources, the arch was opened through the tree in 1724.²⁰⁵ Around

²⁰¹ See Morse, L. M. (2022) *Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder*, Volume II, Appendix, p. 97.

²⁰² Seven of these are on display at the Portland Collection in Nottinghamshire.

²⁰³ Browning, O. (1876). *Picturesque Europe Volume, I*, New York: Cassell Peter Galpin and Company, p. 136.

²⁰⁴ Davis, P. (2011). *The Diary of a Shropshire Farmer*, Stroud: Amberley Publishing, p. 107.

²⁰⁵ Goulding, R. (1936). *Pictures Belonging to the Duke of Portland*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 428-9.

the Oak, a group of sheep lay in the shade and on the left, a boy with six sheep and a goat can be seen. In *The Seven Sisters Oak in Welbeck Park* (Fig. 60), the trunk of the vast tree is divided into seven forks, from which it derived its name. Although the focus is on the tree and there is a short distance above the ground where the tree stems begin, a group of mares and foals can be seen to the right of the scene. A rustic bridge crosses a waterfall on the right of the work, while three peasants and a dog are visible in the foreground above the stream a rainbow. On the left, below a hill, is a hut with a broken mill wheel leaning against the wall. Portland is said to have identified this picture as representing "Airy Force, a waterfall in Gowbarrow Park (in the Parish of Greystock) the property of Hen Howard Esq. of Greystock, County of Cumberland. The Airy loses itself in the lake of Ullswater."206

Hazel Gap, Near Welbeck (Fig. 61) was also painted for Portland and showed a lake with wooded banks in the foreground. At the centre of the lake is a boat, in which two men are fishing. A pair of swans are seen on the left, and a group of horses graze on the right. The plantation can be seen on the hill in the distance.²⁰⁷ It seems that the work was intended to depict a pastoral rural idyll of life in the countryside. A similar idea underpins the rest of the works commissioned by the Duke. As with his previous work for Rockingham, these scenes also reflect the Romantic interest in ruins. As Bermingham argues, the Picturesque attraction of the ruin relates to the larger context of the agricultural revolution, causing artists to hark back to the "old order of rural

²⁰⁶ ibid.

²⁰⁷ ibid.

paternalism" for the benefit of their landed patrons. ²⁰⁸ View of Roche Abbey, with Figures (not photographed) shows a group of ruins on the left, while in the centre is a path that leads through a gate in a low stone wall that crosses the road. A high bank on the right frames the scene, while in the centre foreground, a man and woman with a dog are seen. Painted for 60 guineas for the Duke of Portland, the work shows the ruins of the Cistercian Abbey founded in 1147 in Yorkshire, which is located about 9 miles from the town of Doncaster.²⁰⁹ The work shows a gatehouse, overgrown with trees to create a vaulted chamber, near which are some horses grazing and a cart. In the foreground to the left is a pool in which are reflections of the trees above; on the bank are two boys and a dog, while a family is visible by the side of the road. In the shadow of the large tree, a group of cattle and horses are resting between a bridge on the left and a house on the right. The scene is set before a backdrop of distant hills.²¹⁰ In the middle distance, a bridge in the centre of the composition crosses a winding stream, beyond which is the mansion. In the foreground, a shepherdess, three shepherds and some sheep are shown to the left of a white mare and a foal beneath the shade of a tall oak tree. The work is one of a group of images commissioned to celebrate Portland's vast fortune, status, taste and to establish him as a patron of the arts.

Other works in the group include *View in Welbeck Park* (Fig. 62), which depicts a slope with tall trees and deer above the river winding below. In the middle distance

²⁰⁸ Bermingham, A. (1987). *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860*, London: Thames and Hudson, p. 70.

²⁰⁹ Goulding, R. (1936). *Pictures Belonging to the Duke of Portland*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 428-9.
²¹⁰ ibid.

is a point of land on which a clump of trees and a group of deer are visible at the water's edge. The opposite bank is well wooded, and a building (the old kennels) can be seen in the distance. A View of that Part of the River where Deer Generally Cross, with a View of the House at a Distance, shows the Duke's river winds through the middle distance, while in the foreground, there are two tall trees on the left, two cows in the centre, and a flock of sheep, two boys and a shepherdess towards the right.²¹¹ The Duke of Portland paid 40 guineas for The Great Oak with a View of Sellback House at a Distance (not listed in the illustrations). The image shows a group of deer spread over a hillock in the foreground, with a sheet of water beyond and the abbey in the distance. The warmly lit sky suggests evening.²¹² Such images presented an idyllic image of the Duke's estates and the peasants who lived and worked there. Topical of the romantic vision is Welbeck Park (Fig. 63), which shows a sunset in the background, while in the foreground a wooded slope with deer. The lake and a house in the middle distance can be seen.²¹³

After his work at Welbeck, it seems that Barret began to work for William Petty, Lord Shelbourne, who later became the first Marquess of Lansdowne (1737-1805). Petty was born in Ireland and was a prominent figure in the British Whig Party, becoming Prime Minister in 1782. As a respected collector of the arts, he amassed a collection of antiquities and paintings by artists including Canaletto, Gainsborough and Reynolds. In the 1760s, he commissioned Barret, among other artists, to create landscapes for Bowood House (Fig. 64.1), which hung in the drawing-room built by

²¹¹ Goulding, *Pictures Belonging to the Duke of Portland*, p. 428-9.

²¹² ibid.

²¹³ ibid.

Robert Adam in 1761-1764.²¹⁴ The drawing room also contained landscapes by Deane, Gainsborough and Wilson. According to John Britton, "Three of these pieces were painted at the request of the Marquess with a particular injunction that each artist would exert himself to produce a *chef d'oevre*, as they were intended to lay the foundation of British landscapes the want which has been imitated."²¹⁵ Although the scheme was burned in the fire at the house in 1956, Gainsborough's piece for this commission still survives in the Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio.²¹⁶ Wilson's piece was entitled *Apollo and the Seasons*, while Reverend Richard Warner mentions a third piece in a letter to James Comrie, Esq on September 14th, 1800. As he writes,

A Sea Beach, the joint work of three great modern artists - Barret, Gilpin and Cipriani; in which each seem to have endeavoured to excel the other, the landscape is by the first, the cattle by the second and the figures by the third. This could have been when these three artists met before they began working together on the commission for Norbury Park. The Marquis, a few years later, devised a plan for establishing one landscape by all these artists but were never executed. Had he been properly encouraged; it would have proved a national honour and reflected a lasting encomium on the founder.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Jones, N. (2005). *Architect of England, Scotland and Wales*, London: Greenwood Press, p. 165.

²¹⁵ Anon (1767). *Le Pour Et Le Centre Being a Political Display of the Merit and Demerit of the Capital Paintings Exhibited at Spring Gardens*, London: J. Williams, p. 218. ²¹⁶ Jones, N. (2005) *Architect of England, Scotland and Wales*, Westport: Greenwood Press, p. 165.

²¹⁷ Britton, J. (1849). *Autobiography of John Britton*, London: T. E. Jones, p. 218-119.

This description is interesting in that it points to the increasingly collaborative nature of Barret's work, which will be discussed in the following chapter. As Hayes argues, the commission by Lord Shelbourne marked a watershed in the way in which contemporary landscape painting was regarded in Britain.²¹⁸

After this commission, it seems that Barret was introduced to the 3rd Earl of Albemarle, George Keppel (1724-1772), around 1769, through his Whig patrons. Albemarle too was a member of the Rockingham Whigs and a military commander. He lived on the crown estate of Bagshot Park, located south of Windsor. The Earl's interest in sports is reflected in the work Barret painted for him, *The Long Walk, Windsor with Brood Mares and Foals* (Fig. 64), which included the famous eighteenth-century racehorse "Eclipse" in the landscape depicting Windsor. ²¹⁹

At some point during the period, Barret undertook a commission from Sir William Lowther of Lowther Castle in Westmorland (1707-1788), the largest landowner in Northwest England. He had inherited plantations in Barbados and coal mines along with plenty of land across England. Barret painted scenes around the area of Lowther Castle. A View Looking Towards Knipe Scar from Lowther Park also entitled An Extensive Moorland Landscape with Sportsmen and Dogs in the Foreground (Fig. 65), depicts an extensive moorland landscape with sportsmen and dogs in the foreground. As a collaborative work, the landscape is populated with dogs painted by Stubbs, as well

²¹⁸ Hayes, J. (1982). *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough Volume I*, London: Sotheby's, p. 19.

²¹⁹ Bodkin, T. (1920). *Four Irish Landscape Painters*, Dublin: The Talbot Press Limited, p. 86.

as three sportsmen painted by Philip Reinagle (1749-1833).²²⁰ The sportsmen and horses are well placed to balance the composition, and the overall colour palette is a glowing golden brown with an autumn sky. Painted from Naddle Forest just above Haweswater, Westmoreland, the scene may reflect Lowther's interest in country sport, although the bottom of the valley depicted was soon to be turned into a lake by the Manchester corporation to supply water to Manchester and other Lancashire towns"²²¹. As such, the work may be intended to memorialize the original landscape.

Another of Barret's Whig patrons is Sir George Colebrooke (1729-1809) of Gatton Park in Surrey. Colebrooke was an English merchant banker and chairman of the East India Company in 1769. He was also a Member of Parliament and of the Rockingham Whig party, holding office for the Marquess of Rockingham. Colebrook was a collector of art and commissioned Barret to paint *Prospect at Gatton Park, Surrey, from the Lake, with Rustics in the Foreground* (Fig. 66). The work is painted as a view from the lake onto a rustic scene in the foreground and was bought for 80 guineas. *Prospect of Gatton Park* was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1772, where it is listed as No. 10 in the catalogue under the title *A View of the Mansion House, Part of the Park etc., from the Opposite Banks of the Lake*. As with other of Barret's works, the piece shows the influence of Wilson by locating the lake at the centre as a Picturesque feature within the scene.

²²⁰ ibid, p. 18-19.

²²¹ Whellan, W. (1860). The History and Topography of the Counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland, Comprising their Ancient and Modern History, a General View of their Physical Character, Trade, Commerce, Manufactures, Agricultural Condition, Statistics, Cumberland: W. Whellan and Company.

Perhaps through Colebrooke's connection with the East India Company, Barret began to work for Sir John Boyd (1718- 1800), creating works for Danson House in Kent. Boyd was born in St. Kitts, where he was a sugar merchant and vice chairman of the British East India Club. He studied theology at Oxford and had a keen eye for the arts. In 1762 he commissioned Chambers to build Danson House. He acquired Barret's Morning Scene in Wales from the Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Commerce's Annual Show, also better known as The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts (RSA).²²² It seems that Boyd's collection included four works by Barret, A Landscape with Figures and Buildings, A Morning Landscape in Wales, A Moonlight Landscape in Wales, and A Perspective View of Danson, the location of which will be discussed in more depth in the third chapter. He also had three views of Danson, one by Barret, one by Elias Martin (1739-1818) and one by Wilson.²²³ Barret's North Side of Danson House (Fig. 67), shows a perspective view of the principle front of Danson, picturesquely set on a lawn, surrounded by cattle and figures. In the foreground, Boyd is shown on horseback with his family. This work was commissioned to be a part of a suite of three and hung by the saloon door leading to the library.²²⁴

After working for Boyd, Barret was commissioned by the Whig politician, Charles Hamilton (1704-86), to paint works for his house, Painshill Park. Between 1770 and 1773, Hamilton had created a landscape garden near Cobham in Surrey, which was

²²² Hancock, D. (1995). *Citizens of the World London Merchants and Integration of the British Community*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 349.

²²³ ibid, p. 137.

²²⁴ Higgot, G. and Miele, C. (2011). *Danson House, The Anatomy of a Georgian Villa*, London: English Heritage Society.

considered to rival the great gardens of the period at Stowe and Stourhead. The garden was divided into two parts, one consisting of ornamented pleasure grounds and the other of open parkland arranged in a free, natural style with clumps of trees. Barret painted these gardens in *A View of Lord Hamilton's Landscape Garden at Painshill, Surrey, from the East End of the Lake with Vineyard and Ruined Abbey* (Fig. 68), which shows the pleasure gardens, focusing on the ornamental lake filled with small islands. The work connects Barret deeply with the Picturesque theory that underpinned Hamilton's garden via the smoothness and order of the composition as well as the representation of the lake, follies and gothic features.

Hamilton was inspired to create this garden after his two grand tours to Europe in 1723 and 1732. In 1737 he acquired Painshill Park and eventually moved there in 1738. The garden, just over a hundred acres, had several follies to create different moods while walking through the gardens. In this painting by Barret, it depicts the Gothic Ruined Abbey built-in 1770. The lake in the middle of the painting appears larger than it is by the illusion the arrangement of islands gives. The vineyard to the right of the painting was known for its sparkling white wine. It was rumoured that it was so good that a French ambassador thought it was champagne. Along with the successful vineyard, Hamilton was successful at planting and cultivating 'exotic' plants from places such as the Americas in his gardens. ²²⁵

In addition to Hamilton, Barret worked with a range of other Whig patrons, including James Duff, The 2nd Earl of Fife (1729-1809), a Member of Parliament for

 $^{^{225}}$ Christies Auction House Catalogue June 16th, 2000, lot 55 British Pictures.

Banffshire (1754-1784) and Morayshire (1784-1790). Duff owned substantial land in Aberdeenshire, which was frequently painted by William Tomkins, who exhibited the works both at the Royal Academy and at the Society of Artists. Barret also worked for the Duke of Grafton (1735-1811), a Whig who served as Prime Minister in 1768 and was considered one of "the most powerful men in England." Grafton went on a grand tour between the years of 1753 and 1762, and in 1763 Barret and Stubbs collaborated to create a portrait of Grafton's horse Antinous, with a distant view of the Palladian brick house Euston Hall, Suffolk, in the background. Inscribed on the stretcher are the words Antinous/Jockey Pilkington/by Stubbs/Landscape by Barret. it seems that Stubbs painted the horse while the landscape around the house was by Barret. Named after an antique marble sculpture Grafton admired on his Grand Tour, Antinous raced from 1762 to 1767 and only lost four times. That Barret worked for so many significant Whig patrons of the arts establishes his significance as the landscape painter of choice for these men during this period of 1760s-70s.

Another source of patrons was among those who had made the Grand Tour. These included William Constable (1721-1791), a patron of the arts and a passionate art collector, who had made two Grand Tours, first in 1741-1742 and subsequently in 1769-1771. Documentation in the Burton Constable archives reveals a payment made to Barret in August 1776, "for a journey from London making drawings 63 pounds" and

²²⁶ Sotheby's Auction House Catalogue London 14th July 1999, lot, 00022, British Paintings 1500-1850.

²²⁷ Smith, R. (1972). *Eighteenth-Century English Politics*, Atlanta: Emory University Press, p. 22.

²²⁸ Egerton, J. (2007). *George Stubbs, Painter,* New Haven: Yale University Press.

"a payment of 63 was made to Mr Barret the Landscape Painter for a journey from London making drawings." The following year a further payment of 50 pounds was made on 24 March on account of three landscape paintings commissioned by Constable (Fig. 69 to Fig. 71). The three paintings consisted of different views of the east front of the house, one of the west front, and one of the houses seen from across the lower lake. It that Barret was painting the house seen from the lake before the lake had any water in it since the bed was being dug out until 1777. The Entrance Front Burton Constable (Fig. 69) depicts horses grazing in the landscape as if it was already mature, although Constable's alterations to the west of the house were finished in 1771, and the brickwork was painted yellow ochre.

As well as representing landscapes depicting Constable's estate, Barret created one of his only known portraits for the patron, *William Constable* (Fig. 72). It is unclear as to why he agreed to paint a work that was so out of character, and Barret's landscape speciality dominates the portrait since the lush green background is certainly Barret's hand and contrasts with the awkwardness of the figure itself. Another Grand Tour patron, Charles Townley (1737- 1805), was a compulsive collector who went on three grand tours in 1765, 1772 to 1773 and again in 1777. He is most famous for collecting the Townley Marbles, now in the British Museum. He inherited Townley Hall and

²²⁹ Harris, J. (1979). *The Artist and the Country House*, London: Sotheby Park Bennett, p. 287.

²³⁰ibid.

²³¹ Laird, M. (1999). *The Flowering of the Landscape Garden English Pleasure Grounds,* 1720 – 1800, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

²³² Parris, L. (1973). *Landscapes in Britain 1750 – 1850*, London: Tate.

commissioned Barret to paint a landscape with the Hall slightly visible among the hills in the background in 1777-1778 (Fig. 73).

Barret also gained Royal patronage, underlining his fashionable status. His participation in the Royal Academy introduced him to Prince William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland (1721-1765), son of King George II, an important patron of the arts. After two years in the navy, Cumberland moved to the army. He was particularly famous for his role in the battle of Culloden in Scotland (April 16, 1746). Soon after this battle, he returned to England, where he resided in Windsor, living between Cumberland and Cranbourne Lodges. Barret's The Dukes of Cumberland and York Driving in a Landau in the Windsor Great Park, Virginia Water with a Boat (Fig. 74) is signed with a monogram, GB. It depicts the Duke of Cumberland and his nephew Edward Augustus Duke of York (1739-1767), riding a carriage inscribed with the monogram VW. The lake Virginia Water depicted in the image was created by Cumberland with Thomas Sandby as an improvement to Windsor Great Park. Virginia Water was christened in honour of the Duke's governorship of that colony. As such, the image, which shows the Duke and his nephew driving through the landscape, was intended to honour the work he had done at Windsor and again relates to the fashionable ideas of the Picturesque prominent at the time. This work is seen as one of the most historically important landscapes of Barret's English career and was originally a pendant to William Marlow and Sawrey Gilpin's The Duke of Cumberland Visiting his Stud in Windsor Great Park. As mentioned in the following chapter, Barret was in the habit of collaborating with fellow artists and, although Gilpin almost certainly contributed the deer scene in the work, it is likely that

Barret turned to Richard Cosway to execute the two accurate small-scale portraits of the Duke and his nephew.²³³

It is perhaps through his aristocratic Whig patrons that Barret was introduced to Sir Peter Byrne Leicester (1732-1770) of Tabley House near Knutsford, given that the Irish baronet and a great collector of paintings. According to William Carey's memoirs, "Sir Peter entertained both Wilson and Barret under his 'hospitable roof." In addition to this, he claimed that as "an honoured guest at Tabley House," Barret "often painted the Cheshire Mansion (first painted by Wilson) of Sir Peter Leicester, Father of Lord de Tabley," for whom Barret painted "two of his best landscapes." Leicester owned several views of Beeston Castle, including Barret's *Beeston Castle, Cheshire* (Fig. 75), which shows the Castle perched on a rocky outcrop overlooking a landscape below. Four men can be seen in the foreground, tending a flock of sheep to the left. On the right, two men can be seen surveying the ruins, and the river Gowy is visible in the background. The green tints used to depict the foreground contrast with the blues of the distance to create a sense of aerial perspective.

Another patron Barret encountered was Philip Meadows (1708-1781), the Thames Ranger of Windsor Park under Walpole. Barret was commissioned by

 $^{^{233}}$ Sotheby's Auction House Catalogue, January 14th $\,$ 1994, Lot, 00085, Important Old Master Paintings.

²³⁴ Carey, W. (1826). Some Memoirs of Patronage and Progress of the Fine Arts, in England and Ireland During the Reigns of George the Third and His Present Majesty [George the Fourth]: with Anecdotes of Lord de Tabley, of Other Patrons, and of Eminent Artists, and Occasional Critical References to British Works of Art, London: Harding and Leopard, p. 4.

²³⁵ Grant, C. (1926). *The Old English Landscape Painters*, London: F. Lewis Publisher Limited, p. 87.

Meadows around 1771 to paint Thatched House Lodge, the keepers' lodge in Richmond Park, remodelled by Soane in 1771 (Fig. 76). In addition, Barret painted several views of the river Thames as seen in A View from the Terrace, Richmond Hill (Fig. 77) looks northwest from Richmond Hill down the Thames. The painting displays many of the most distinguished and fashionable houses built on the river. On the right is the Doughty House, owned by Sir William Richardson (1749-1830), who was a member of parliament from 1783 to 1790. To the left is No. 3 The Terrace, with its pediment façade, built-in 1769 for playing card manufacturer Christopher Blanchard, most probably by Sir Robert Taylor. Slightly lower down the hill, to the left, is the house built by the brewer Edward Collins. In the distance, along the river, is Cholmondeley House built by George, 3rd Earl of Cholmondeley, circa 1740, and later purchased by William, 4th Duke of Queensberry, in 1780. The bathing house of Trumpeter's House, or Trumpeting House as it was known in the 18th century, can be seen to the left, after which Asgill House built by Sir Robert Taylor in 1758 for the banker and Lord Mayor of London, Sir Charles Asgill can be seen. A number of these houses are included again in A View of the Thames from the Queen's Terrace, Richmond Hill (Fig. 78), which shows Doughty House, Cholmondeley House, and the bathing houses of Trumpeter's House and Asgill House. As the presence of these houses shows, Richmond was an important source of potential patrons because it was the home of the royal court, meaning that numerous members of court society built their own houses nearby.²³⁶ The house in *The Lodge in Richmond* Park (Fig. 76) was originally the deer-keepers lodge, built for Walpole when he was

²³⁶ Pears, I. (1991). *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interests in Arts in England 1680 -1769*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 72.

Ranger of Richmond Park. In keeping with the tastes of his patrons, the *Thames from Richmond Hill* (Fig. 78) shows that as Barret's career developed, he maintained his interest in painting poetic, idealized landscapes inspired by Claude and Poussin. He frequently bathed such scenes in with the luminosity of sunrises and sunsets. Roget argues that Barret "liked to go to the same site day after day, at dawn and dusk making quick sketches of the gold and rose effects of light only as long as they lasted" as a way of transforming actual views into classicized compositions, as with the *Thames from Richmond Hill*. ²³⁷ These sketches formed the basis for the works he created later in his studio.

This chapter has attempted to argue that in order to establish himself as a successful society painter in London, Barret took great pains to cater to the tastes of a group of elite Whig patrons, adapting his style and approach to combine topographical approaches to the British landscape with Italianate influences made fashionable by the Grand Tour. Building on his Irish connections, and particularly his friendship with Burke, he was able to gain access to the highest levels of British society and as such enjoyed widespread popularity in his time. The extent of the commissions he received has been traced in the second part of the chapter as a way to illustrate Barret's popularity with patrons, while his role and membership in artists' societies in London also shows how he thrived in the eighteenth-century art market. Despite this apparent success however, the next chapter will outline how his work compares to that of other contemporaries such as Wilson, with whom Barret has been paralleled. It will show that

²³⁷ Roget, J. (1891). *A History of the 'Old Water-Colour' Society: Now the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours*, London: Longmans, Green, and Company.

while he initially made a successful living as a fashionable painter decorator, Barret's work fundamentally lacked the qualities attributed to artists such as Wilson or Gainsborough who have rightly come to dominate the canon of British landscape painting of the eighteenth century.

Chapter III: Contextualising Barret Among His Contemporaries

In order to contextualise Barret's work within the milieu in which he operated, it is useful to consider the contemporary artists alongside whom he competed for a share of the market for landscape painting. The notion of rivalry as it is understood in this chapter is based on ideas expressed in contemporary sources given that, as mentioned above, today Barret is no longer typically considered alongside his far better-known contemporaries in narratives of eighteenth-century landscape painting. That said, in a letter to Burke dated August 24th 1767, Barry wrote about Barret's quarrels with other artists whom he saw as rivals as well as, in the case of Wilson, sources of material on which to base his own compositions.²³⁸ This letter provides a sense of Barret's complex relationships with his peers and may suggest how much rivalry and copying existed between the artists at the Royal Academy. In the fiercely competitive eighteenthcentury art market, artists clearly vied with each other for commissions, even in cases where they regarded the quality of their own work as superior to that of a potential rival. Sources suggest that in comparison with Wilson, in particular, Barret's success during his lifetime lay more in his ability to curry favour with his patrons than with his artistry, while Wilson focused more single-mindedly on his art and refused to pander to the demands of potential buyers.

²³⁸ McLoughlin, T. (2009). *The Correspondence of James Barry, from Edmund and William Burke to James Barry, April 26th, 1767*, Ireland: National University of Ireland. August 24th, 1767, retrieved December 3, 2019, from,

 $http://www.texte.ie/barry/view?docId=L_ebwb_jb_24.08.[1767].xml; query=Barret; brand=default.$

This chapter will begin by considering Barret alongside Wilson, establishing comparisons between the two artists' approach to patronage as well as to painting. It will argue that while Wilson was less successful than Barret during their lifetimes, this was often due to their contrasting strategies to marketing their work and client relations. The discussion will consider other painters alongside who Barret worked, before discussing perhaps his best-known contemporary, Gainsborough. The overall aim of the chapter is to distinguish Barret from the narrative of singular genius that has clearly been applied to artists such as Wilson and Gainsborough, and instead to present him as a successful entrepreneur who made the most of his abilities and at least for a while, successfully dominated the market.

Barret and Other Eighteenth-Century Landscape Painters

The following section will consider Barret's work alongside that of some of his contemporaries who shared possession of the landscape painting market in London during the eighteenth century. The best-known artist with whom Barret is compared is Richard Wilson. This is largely because it is thought that Barret studied and recycled many of Wilson's most successful compositions, an opinion held not least by Wilson himself.²³⁹ In his book *The Life of Richard Wilson* (1824), Thomas Wright discusses the complex relationship between Barret and Wilson, commenting that,

Barret was brought to notice by Mr Burk[e]. I was with him for some days in 1779 at Beaconsfield, and he produced several pictures by Barret he had never

²³⁹ Falk, B. (1938). *Turner the Painter: His Hidden Life. A Frank and Revealing Biography*, London: Hutchison and Company, Limited, p. 123.

hung up. I noticed one in particular and said it is much in the style of Wilson, he said it is, I recommended him to imitate him. I said so to Wilson; his answer was that those who follow after will always go behind.²⁴⁰

This report of Wilson's harsh criticism of Barret is reinforced in a remark made by the artist Sir William Beechey (1753-1839), who writes of Wilson, "I have never known him out of temper except when talking of Barret. He used to call his pictures Spinach and Eggs; and said that his own pictures would rise in esteem and price when Barret's were forgotten."²⁴¹ It seems that Wilson considered Barret less a rival than an inferior painter.

A Welsh landscape artist, Wilson was, like Barret, also a founding member of the Royal Academy. He had moved to London in 1729 and worked in Italy between the years of 1750 and 1757. This meant that he had a practical advantage over Barret, since he had seen the Italian landscape at first hand and was able to compose original scenes in the Italianate style. Despite any differences between the two artists, it seems that they maintained a friendship. Wilson lived on Charlotte Street, relatively close to Barret's rooms and studio on Orchard Street, and the two artists went on walks together and visited each other.²⁴² As William Sandby claims, "near to the house was a roped walk between fine rows of Elm trees, and there Wilson would often walk with his

²⁴⁰ Wright, T. (1824). *The Life of Richard Wilson*, London: Spotiswood.

²⁴¹Whitley, W. (1968). *Artists and Friends in England, 1700 – 1799 Volume II,* London: The Medici Society, p. 144.

²⁴² Sandby, W. (1892). *Thomas and Paul Sandby: Royal Academicians; Some Accounts of their Lives and Works*, London: Seely and Company, p. 82.

friend Barret."²⁴³ While it seems that Wilson was seen by contemporaries as the more original painter, Sandby argued that "the irritable temper of Wilson had something to do with his want of success in his profession, at a time when patrons dealt directly with artists."²⁴⁴ This arguably put Barret at an advantage, through his apparent ability to charm his patrons, as well as the efforts he put into emulating their lifestyles.

It seems that this talent paid off since as the contemporary art critic Allan Cunningham (1784-1842) writes, "Barret made at one time and income amounting to 2,000 pounds a year; While Wilson himself, in spite of the great reputation which the pictures he sent for exhibition brought him, lived to see the day when in sheer despair, he inquired of Barret if he knew anyone mad enough to employ a landscape painter." Wilson seems to have been aware of the grim irony of his situation, writing in his memoir that, "the demand for the pictures of Barret was so great, that the income of that indifferent dauber rose to 2,000 pounds a year; and the equally weak landscapes of Smith of Chichester were in high value at the market." In comparing Barret to Smith of Chichester, Wilson cut to the quick of Barret's commercial approach to painting. The Smiths of Chichester were an artistic enterprise of three brothers who worked on the same canvas, churning out a large number of popular Picturesque landscapes of Wales and England, which were similar in style to those of Barret. By contrast to this almost production line method, as Fletcher argues, it was Wilson's

²⁴³ ibid.

²⁴⁴ ibid.

²⁴⁵ Fairholt, F. W. (1859). *The Art Journal*, Volume 5, p. 76.

²⁴⁶ Postle, M. and Simon, R. (2014). *Richard Wilson and the Transformation of European Landscape Painting*, New Have: Yale University Press.

inability to part with his work that, more than anything else, kept him in continual poverty."²⁴⁷ In some sense, therefore, alongside his merits as an artist, Barret's greatest success lies in his ability to have manipulated the market to his advantage.

As mentioned, Wilson and Barret frequented the same social circles, and both artists were close to Lock and Burke. In 1751 Wilson had travelled to Italy with Lock, who kept many of his sketches from the journey. In Britain, responding to the growing popularity of the Picturesque, both Barret and Wilson painted similar locations, creating landscape scenes of views along the Thames at Twickenham, as well as in North Wales, as at Llanberis Lake and Dolbadarn Castle. A Wilson painting today may be more desirable and valuable than a similar Barret landscape, but Bodkin records that during the 1760s, and as a result of their very different marketing strategies, Barret had several patrons while Wilson was "poverty-stricken and at times bartered his pictures for bread and cheese."248 Specifically, it seems that Wilson and Barret may have been in competition for Lock's patronage. Although Lock had been to Italy with Wilson, he did not commission him to paint his house in Norbury Park, preferring to work with the more amiable and sociable Barret. As Murray argues, "Wilson's bad temper and lack of manners were notorious, and probably prevented the friendship that started in Venice from continuing."249 Despite this, Lock clearly admired Wilson's work, of which he had

²⁴⁷ Fletcher, B. (1908). *Richard Wilson RA*, New York: Charles Scribner and Son, p. 123.

²⁴⁸ Bodkin, T. (1920.) *Four Irish Landscape Painters*, Dublin: The Talbot Press Limited, p. 4.

²⁴⁹ Sermoneta, D. (1940). *The Locks of Norbury*, London: John Murray, p. 4.

an extensive collection, with a little over a hundred sketches made during their trip to Italy. In a letter to Britton, dated to 1811, William Lock the younger wrote,

I have always heard my father speak with respect of Wilson's character which was independent and manly, and of his conversations as very assuming, which does not suggest any specific ill-feeling between the two. It is true Lock employed George Barret the Elder, a rival of whose work Wilson had little opinion, to decorate the room at Norbury Park, but this was some years after 1774 (a year after Lock bought the estate) when Wilson was scarcely capable of undertaking such a task. On the whole, it looks as though Lock was not interested in what Wilson could apply, and that the two simply drifted apart.²⁵⁰

Wilson's habit of alienating patrons means that Barret appears to have gained much from the opportunity to take up commissions, as at Norbury Park which will be discussed in the following chapter.²⁵¹

If this scenario can be taken as an example, it seems that Barret's manner was partly responsible for the fact that his work was far more prevalent among eighteenth-century patrons than Wilson's. However at the same time, certain critics such as Bodkin clearly believed in Barret's superior ability, writing that "not Wilson nor Claude could convey the clear level light of a warm afternoon with more competent assurance than does Barret." Other contemporaries record similar impressions, with Edmund

²⁵⁰ Constable, W. G. (1953). *Richard Wilson*, London: Routledge, p. 41.

²⁵¹ ibid.

²⁵² Bodkin, T. (1920). *Four Irish Landscape Painters*, Dublin, The Talbot Press Limited, p.11.

Garvey (1738 – 1813), an Irish landscape painter, writing to Farington to say that "the popularity of Barret's pictures called Wilson to change his manner, in some degree for a more vivid and gay colouring," suggesting Barret's influence on Wilson rather than the contrary.²⁵³ It seems that Farington did not agree, and pointed to the sharp fall in the market for Barret's work, describing how he went to Segar's picture gallery on June 3rd 1807, and the dealer told him, "Barret's popularity was so great as a painter thirty years ago, however he was glad to get what he could for him now." ²⁵⁴ Clearly Barret enjoyed a great deal of success among the painters of his time, although this appears to have been tempered by a general impression of superficiality typical of the period. This idea is evident in Thomas Jones' memoirs which claim that,

There was Lambert, Wilson, Zuccarelli, Gainsborough, Barret, Richards and Marlow in full possession of the landscape business. Barret, superficial though he was, had recently made a most favourable impression on his arrival to London.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Roget, J. (1891). A History of the 'Old Water-Colour' Society: Now the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours, with Biographical Notices of its Older and all of the Deceased Members and Associates, Proceeded by an Account of English Water-Colour Art and Artists in the Eighteenth Century, London: Longmans, Green, and Co; Farington, J. (1793-1821). The Diary of Joseph Farington, 17 Volumes New Haven: Yale University Press.

²⁵⁴ Farington, J. (1793-1821). *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, 17 Volumes New Haven: Yale University Press.

²⁵⁵ Jones, T. (1875). *Memoirs of the Life and Labours of the Reverend Thomas Jones of Chepstow*, London: Eliot Stock, p. 19-20.

This suggests that although Barret had clearly secured an important role in the somewhat overcrowded landscape market, the quality of his work was in question, making his success all the more remarkable.

In order to address caveats as to the quality of Barret's work by his contemporaries even while he clearly dominated a share of the market, it is useful to compare his work to that of Wilson. Stylistically speaking, Barret's paintings were not as detailed as Wilson's, and, as critics (and Wilson himself) note, he had a tendency to use brighter or more acidic greens and yellows. Barret also seemed to scatter different forms across the paintings, rather than maintaining a coherent unifying compositional structure. In addition to this, it was noted that "Barret's style is fuller and more theatrical, and infinitely less subtle than that of Wilson; he quickly fell in with prevailing taste, and with the demand for views, and achieved a rapid success."256 Indeed, it seems that Barret's more decorative approach appealed more easily to contemporary patrons for whom Redgrave notes that Wilson's technique was "too bold and stark for their comfort."257 Ironically however, by the 1780s Wilson became more in fashion with collectors, and the signatures on landscape paintings by artists such as Barret were posthumously "routinely erased by unscrupulous dealers in the hope that they could be passed off as works by Wilson."258

2

²⁵⁶ Hayes, J. (1982). *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough*, London:

Sotheby's, p. 19. ²⁵⁷ ibid, p. 22.

²⁵⁸ Laffan, W. (2004). "Ireland's Collectors: A Historical Perspective", *Apollo Magazine*, Vol. 160, Issue, 155, p. 58.

As mentioned. Wilson had taken a Grand Tour and became a landscape painter on the advice of the Italian artist, Francesco Zuccarelli (1702 – 1788). Zuccarelli was another founding member of the Royal Academy who was born in Italy and moved to London in 1752. This exposure meant that Wilson's classical scenes were rooted in first-hand experience and as Brennaman argues, "Wilson's compositions exploited the contemporary taste for Italianate landscape while Barret produced numbers of views of the picturesque locations.²⁵⁹" The influence of the Picturesque was one of the reasons for the rivalry that developed between Barret and Wilson. Inspired by Picturesque theory, they often painted in similar locations. Given its wild coastlines, mountains and landscapes, Wales was a popular subject for artists, including the native Wilson, seeking to paint the Picturesque during the late eighteenth century. Snowdonia attracted artists because of the Sublime and Picturesque magnificence of its mountainous regions, while Conway attracted tourists with the impressive number of waterfalls located there. Certainly, the popularity of Wilson's Welsh landscapes of the 1760s contributed to the growth of Picturesque tourism in the area from 1770 onwards.²⁶⁰ According to Solkin,

As portrayed in the works of Wilson and other artists... Wales offered itself as a refuge of tranquillity, a place inhabited by happy swains who remained blissfully deaf to the 'voice of discontent.' In Wales, the natural, organic, social structure existed as it had done for centuries, continuing to bring contentment to peasant

²⁵⁹ Brenneman, D. (1995). *The Critical Response to Thomas Gainsborough's Paintings: A Study of the Contemporary Perception ad Materiality of Gainsborough Art*, Dissertation and Thesis: Brown University.

²⁶⁰ Andrews, M. (1989). *Search of the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain 1760 - 1800*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

and landlord alike; here was a true liberty, impervious to the licentiousness that abounded elsewhere. Hence what was presented as a landscape of liberty, actually functioned, when we examine it closely, as a landscape of reaction.²⁶¹

It seems that in the mind of English Picturesque theorists, the native British landscape offered something different from the rest of Europe, as they aimed to set up an alternative to the Italianate, Claudian landscape favoured by Grand Tourists.

According to Wilson, "everything the landscape painter could want was to be found in North Wales."²⁶² Although the condition of the Welsh roads made travel in the area difficult, the Romantic, perilous views made it worth it.²⁶³ Other contemporary artists such as Paul Sandby travelled to Northern Wales making sketches that were later published as *Views in North Wales* (1776). Barret himself is known to have travelled across the United Kingdom, stopping in Wales on his way to England from Ireland, the exact dates are unknown.²⁶⁴ In a letter Barry wrote to Barret in 1765, he urged him to "visit Paris, as it would be no more expensive than going to North Wales."²⁶⁵ This

²⁶¹ Solkin, D. (1982). *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction*, London: Tate, p. 102-3.

²⁶² Andrews, M. (1989). *Search of the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain 1760 - 1800*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
²⁶³ ibid.

²⁶⁴ Brenneman, D. (1995). *The Critical Response to Thomas Gainsborough's Paintings:* A Study of the Contemporary Perception and Materiality of 'Gainsborough Art', Dissertation and Thesis: Brown University.

²⁶⁵ McLoughlin, T. (2009). *The Correspondence of James Barry, from James Barry to George Barret, January 1766*, Ireland: University of Ireland, retrieved December 3, 2019, from,

http://www.texte.ie/barry/view?docId=L_jb_barret_[c.January.1766].xml;query=Barret;brand=default.

suggests that Barret had already been to Wales by 1765. In the letter written in Paris in January 1766, Barry wrote,

I cannot see what hinders your coming over here one summer or other; the journey would not be much more expensive than going into Wales; you would have a pleasant and not un-picturesque country to travel through, and Mrs Barret would have an opportunity of seeing Paris, the fine gardens of the Tuileries and Luxembourg.²⁶⁶

Any of Wilson and Barret's landscapes depicted the same locations around Britain, and in particular Wales, and have be mistaken for one another, as seen from the catalogue history from several auction houses.

It seems that confusion as to the attribution of works by Wilson and Barret arose even during the artists' lifetimes. The art historians Grant and Bodkin point out that only a connoisseur's consideration of the comparatively more accessible and more fluid handling of paint evident in Barret's early work, as well as his stock use of specific tree forms, can be used to distinguish it from Wilson's work.²⁶⁷ Bodkin mentions explicitly two works by Barret, *A View Looking East Towards Knipe Scar from Lowther Park* (Fig. 65) and *Sunset and Ruin* (Fig. 79), as bearing such close resemblances to Wilson's work in terms of paint texture and the treatment of foliage and rocks, that it is difficult to tell

²⁶⁶ McLoughlin, T. (2009). *The Correspondence of James Barry, from James Barry to George Barret, January 1766*, Ireland: University of Ireland, retrieved December 3, 2019, from,

http://www.texte.ie/barry/view?docId=L_jb_barret_[c.January.1766].xml;query=Barret;brand=default.

²⁶⁷ Constable, W. G. (1953). *Richard Wilson*, London: Routledge, p. 136.

the two artists apart, suggesting that the two artists were appealing to the same audiences and potential patrons. In addition, he argues that the representation of the sky and distant hills around Llanberis Lake are reminiscent of Wilson. Despite this, Barret tends to use a brighter, more acidic palette of greens and yellows in his depiction of foliage, the "Spinach and Eggs" of Wilson's description.²⁶⁸ It seems that Barret appears to have been altogether freer in his use of colour, also including touches of complementary shades of red and blue to bring out the colour contrast within his landscapes.²⁶⁹

Wilson and Barret both made paintings of Caernarvon Castle (Figs. 80, 81, 81.2 and 82) from the same angle and even adopted the same composition. Each image is very similar overall, with only the figures and trees varying slightly from painting to painting. The main difference between Barret and Wilson's Caernarvon Castle paintings is that Barret has painted his landscapes in a more florid manner, with the foliage being more exaggerated. *View Near Caernarvon* (Fig. 82) shows Barret's interests in the Romantic landscapes of North Wales. On the right of the road to Caernarvon Moel-Ilhan, one of the vast mountains surrounding Snowdon can be seen. The mountain projects over a river valley. On the left is a view of Callendee, a mass of mountains, which contrast with the low open landscape of the vale. Wilson's version of Caernarvon Castle (Fig. 99.1), (Fig. 99.2) (Fig. 99.3), (Fig. 82) shows the Castle on the water with Anglesea

²⁶⁸ ibid.

²⁶⁹ ibid.

in the distance and a thin tree to the right. This repeated focus on the subject suggests it have been a popular subject among Barret's clientele.

Barret's depiction of this same view of Dolbadarn (Figs. 85 to 90) is very different to Wilson's (Fig. 85.1) (Fig 85.2) and (Fig 85.3) since Barret's paintings are much more dramatic with the landscape overpowering the castle in the background. All of Barret's images depicting Dolbadarn have a lot of mist and are darker than Wilson's in colouring, conforming to a more Sublime aesthetic. Painting after Wilson, Barret was however praised for his ability to paint mist in the Morning Post in 1767, "accuracy with effects of light and mist."270 As Gilpin wrote in River Wye, "fog also vary a distant country as much as light, softening the harsh features of the landscape."271 In A View of Llanberis, with Dolbadarn Castle, Caernaryonshire, North Wales, The Early Morning Mists Dispersing (Fig. 86), Barret demonstrates the influence of the Sublime in nature. The loneliness of the scene is accentuated by the fact that there are no human figures, except a pair of Welsh mountain goats. Barret's interest in North Wales may be due to his early appreciation of similar Irish landscapes. This meant that he was at the forefront in discovering the Picturesque potential of Welsh landscapes. Anne Crookshank and the Knight of Glin argue that Irish painters such as Barret painted Welsh views much earlier than artists such as Sandby (who is regarded as a pioneer in this genre).²⁷² This may have been because it was where they landed on their way from Dublin to London.

²⁷⁰Bell, J. (April 6, 1767). *Morning Post*, London.

²⁷¹ Gilpin, W. (1770). Observation on the River Wye and Several Parts of South Wales, and Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; Made in the Summer of the Year 1770, London: R. Blamire, p. 55 to 66.

²⁷² Crookshank, A. and Knight of Glin. (2002). *Ireland's Painters, 1600-1940*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Wilson's *Snowden from Llyn Nantlle* (1766) can be compared with Barret's *A View of Llanberis, with Dolbarden Castle, Caernarvonshire, North Wales, the Early Morning Mists Dispersing*. Both achieve the atmosphere of remoteness and probably date from the same period.²⁷³ *A View of Llanberis Lake with Dolbadarn Castle, North Wales* (Fig. 87) shows Dolbarden Castle on the right, horses, figures and dogs on the bank in the foreground, and horses in a ferry beyond.

Barret painted at least five different versions of Conway Castle on the North coast of Wales. Each painting shows the castle in a different light under the dramatic sky. It is not known when these works were painted, but Barret exhibited views of Llanberis Pool in North Wales at the Royal Academy in 1776 and 1777, so it is possible these views of Conway Castle could have been painted around the same time. Conway is a medieval walled borough, which was much visited by tourists and artists of the period for its Picturesque potential. Barret may have followed Wilson's lead by travelling to Wales in search of popular subject matter, and in 1765 he exhibited a view of Hawarden Castle in Flintshire, as alongside a dramatic landscape with double rainbows.

Barret's *A View of Snowdon Across the Lake of Llanberis with Dolbadarn Castle* (Fig. 88) can be compared to all four of Wilson's Snowdon paintings (Figs. 88.1 to 88.3). Both artists depict the view once again using a very similar composition and the same angle. The viewpoint for each is from the Eastward view of Snowdon. They are also similar in colouring, although Barret's foliage is more prominent, as is typical of his

²⁷³ ibid.

style. The idealised scene in *Landscape with Ruins* (Fig. 91) depicts a warm coloured sky behind a view of a Romantic ruin, reminiscent of Chepstow Castle on the River Wye, Wales. The castle looms over the figures in the foreground and in small boats on the river. Of the thirty-one paintings Barret exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1782, at least a third depicted mountainous landscape scenes, as seen in this work.

Alongside Wilson, another artist working in the same field and therefore competing with Barret for patrons was Paul Sandby (1731-1809), also a landscape painter influenced by the Picturesque as well as Claude. Both lived in Paddington, exhibited pictures at the Society of Artists and became founding members of the Royal Academy. Both artists also painted scenes of Wales, including Snowden and Chepstow Castle, Conway Castle, Caernarvon Castle, and both painted Roche Abbey. As members of the same society, they shared a very similar social circle. Both artists received commissions from the Dukes of Grafton and Cumberland, and the work of both was engraved by Boydell and William Watts. According to James Gandon (1743-1823), Sandby's "vast store of knowledge" alongside his "high professional character" and "conversational powers" made him appeal both to other artists and patrons and it seems that he hosted a kind of salon at his house on St. Georges Row.²⁷⁴ This gathering which appears to have taken place every Sunday made him a fixture of the eighteenth-century social scene and ensured his access to potential patrons. Sandby painted

²⁷⁴ Sandby, W. (1862). *Thomas and Paul Sandby: Some Accounts of their Lives and Works*, London: Seely and Company Limited, p. 77.

several similar subjects to Barret, including Picturesque scenes of Wales, Scotland and large estates across Britain.

Barret's other rivals included Samuel Scott (1702-1772), a British landscape artist is known for his seascape and river scenes. As discussed, he also collaborated with Gilpin and William Marlow (1740-1813). Marlow was a landscape painter who frequently worked in watercolours, oils and created drawings of both figures and topographical subjects.²⁷⁵ He studied in Scott's studio at St. Martin's Lane in London and travelled to Italy and France in 1756 and 1761. He may also have been a pupil of Wilson, an idea suggested by his firm and confident draftsmanship. Thomas Jones (1742-1803) was a Welsh landscape painter who moved to London around the same time as Barret in 1761 and became a pupil of Wilson. Barret and Jones had several similarities, both exhibiting at the Society of Artists and Royal Academy. Jones also collaborated with other artists who painted figures in his landscapes.

Perhaps the one best-known artist of the eighteenth-century British tradition is Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), known more as a portrait painter than a landscape painter during the eighteenth-century, although today, his work is notable for its success in both genres. Despite his potential connection with Barret through the Royal Academy, Gainsborough was better known as a rival to Reynolds, particularly in terms of his portraits. Gainsborough was also among those who founded the Royal Academy, and he credited Wilson as being "the originator of the eighteenth-century British".

²⁷⁵ Herrmann, L. (1973). *British Landscape Painting,* London: University Printing House, p. 63.

Landscape School."²⁷⁶ An anecdote recounts that Gainsborough told King George III that in the 1780s, "when he painted landscapes, he was starving, but when he painted portraits, people bought his landscapes."²⁷⁷ An example of the actual rivalry between the different artists of the eighteenth-century is seen when "Wilson and Sir Joshua Reynolds were not on the most perfect terms. When the president proposed to the Academics to drink to the health of Gainsborough, as "our best landscape painter," Wilson, in his turn, resorted the health of Gainsborough, as "our best portrait painter."²⁷⁸ The pointedness of this comment highlights how artists propagated a sense of rivalry amongst each other.

Interestingly, Barret, Wilson and Gainsborough appear to have collaborated on a project together for William Petty, the second Earl of Shelburne, who later became known as the Marquess of Lansdowne (1737 – 1805). A Rockingham Whig born in Dublin; Petty was Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1782 to 1783. He had inherited Bowood House in Wiltshire, England. Bowood was divided into two, the "little house" and the "big house", and the Marquess decided to make an extension to connect and unify the two houses with a drawing room designed by Adam in the 1770s. When Petty commissioned Barret, Gainsborough and Wilson to decorate the room, it was considered that "this was no mere furnishing job but an idea more akin to Hogarth's intention at the Founding Hospital, for 'three of these pieces were painted at the request

²⁷⁶ Woodall, M. (1939). *Gainsborough Landscape Drawings*, London: Faber and Faber, p. 1.

²⁷⁷ Hamilton, J. (2017). *Gainsborough: A Portrait,* London: Orion Publishing Group, p. 64.

²⁷⁸ Wright, T. (1824). *Life of Richard Wilson,* London: Spotiswood, p. 70.

of the Marquess with a particular injunction that each artist would exert himself to produce the chef-d'oeuvre, as they were intended to lay down the foundation of British Landscapes."²⁷⁹ According to John Hayes, the Marquess' commission "marks a watershed in the way in contemporary landscape painting was regarded in Britain.²⁸⁰" After the drawing-room was completed, he commissioned landscapes by Barret, Wilson and Gainsborough as part of a "plan for establishing landscape that was never carried into execution. Had it been properly encouraged, it would have proved a national honour and reflecting a lasting encomium on the founder."²⁸¹

It seems that the Marquess must have owned another work in which Barret was involved given that in a letter dated September 14th, 1800, Reverend Richard Warner wrote to James Comrie Esq, describing how the Marquess has "A Sea Beach, the joint work of three great modern artists – Barret, S. Gilpin and Cipriani; in which each seems to have endeavoured to excel the other. The landscape is by the first, the cattle by the second and the figures by the third."²⁸² It seems that this painting, as well as Wilson's Landscape with Figure or known as Apollo and the Seasons, is lost, and the Bowood drawing-room was demolished by the 8th Marquess in 1955. Gainsborough's contribution to the project, *The Road from the Farm Market* (Fig. 91.1), now belongs to the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio.

²⁷⁹ Anon (1767). *Le Pour Et Le Centre Being a Political Display of the Merit and Demerit of the Capital Paintings Exhibited at Spring Gardens*, London: J. Williams, p. 218.

²⁸⁰Hayes, J. (1982). *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough, Volume I*, London: Sotheby's, p. 19.

²⁸¹ Britton, J. (1801). *The Beauties of Wiltshire, Displayed in Statistical, Historical and Descriptive*, London: J. D. Dewick, p. 218-219.

²⁸² Warner, R. (1801). *Excursions from Bath*, London: R. Cruttwell, p. 208.

Although not typically compared in the canons of art history, both Gainsborough and Barret depicted similar series of wagons. Gainsborough first did a version of Harvest Wagon (Fig. 92.1) when he was living in Bath from 1758-1774. To gain exposure, he would send paintings to London to be exhibited at the Society of Artists, including *Harvest Wagon*, shown in 1767 at the Society of Artists of Great Britain. An anonymous critic wrote of the piece that the "trees are hard and the sky is too blue." 283 Even later on, art critics such as Walpole wrote in 1769, "the landscape is rich, the group of figures delightfully managed and the horses well-drawn, the distant hire is one tint too dark."284 It seems, however, that the artist himself strongly disagreed with this when Gainsborough claimed it was the "best he ever did" in a letter to Hon. Edward Stratford on the 21st of March 1771. Gainsborough must have been proud of this piece because he signed and dated it, which was rarely done in the eighteenth-century. He also painted a second version of the same subject matter, Harvest Wagon, in 1784, the same year Barret died. The two paintings show the evolution of Gainsborough's paintings during his lifetime. The second work has an almost spotlight effect that focuses attention on the people in the wagon. The figures have been changed by Gainsborough, who has added two more infants, while the keg in the first painting has been replaced by a jug of water. The sky of the first painting has more of a Rococo feeling compared to the later work. Both paintings have similar Rubenesque backgrounds.

²⁸³ Hayes, J. (1982). *The Landscape Painting of Thomas Gainsborough, Volume I,* London: Sotheby's, p. 98.

²⁸⁴ Graves, A. (1906). *The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Works from its Foundation 1769-1904*, London: Henry Graves and Company Limited and George Bell and Sons, p. 98.

In 1774 Gainsborough moved to London. This may have been around the same time Barret painted his versions of the *Harvest Wagon*. The main difference between Barret's works Timber Wagon on Rough Road (Fig. 92) and Harvest Haymaking Scene (Fig. 93) is that they were painted in a different medium from Gainsborough. Barret painted them with gouache instead of the more common practice of oil on canvas. Barret's wagon paintings were likely done within the same month because Harvest Haymaking Scene (Fig. 94) seems to be depicting the beginning of autumn with the autumnal sky colour, while in A Timber Wagon (Fig. 93), the colours of the leaves are a deep red that also gives a feeling of autumn. Barret must have seen Gainsborough's Wagon paintings in the exhibition in 1767 because the layout is very similar to Gainsborough's, particularly in the composition of the sky, trees, and location of the wagon and figures more on the left of the paintings. Barret's Harvest Haymaking Scene (Fig. 94) scene shows a country road winding through the landscape and framed by trees. It is painted in earth colours against a blue ground. On the left, a small wood stands out against the vivid blue sky, which is scattered with red clouds in the autumn evening light. Buildings are visible on the horizon, and in the centre, two men draw a hay cart on which a fiddle player and a boy sit. On the right, a group of figures dance alongside other workers.

In conclusion, this chapter has attempted to trace Barret's connections with other contemporary eighteenth-century landscape painters as a way to locate his work within the milieu of its time. While it seems that he often copied the compositions of artists such as Wilson and Gainsborough, Barret's easy manner with patrons clearly gained him favour in some instances over Wilson. The chapter has considered the

relationship of his work to other artists working in the Picturesque eighteenth-century landscape tradition in order to frame Barret within a social history of art, as well as to explore the ways his works intersected with dominant trends of the time. By comparing Barret's much lesser-known work with works by Gainsborough, an artist who is far better-known today, this chapter has aimed to locate Barret within his immediate context and to show the extent of his achievements. As such, it has attempted less to reassess the hierarchies of values attributed to various artists, but instead to create a kind of social history in which Barret emerges as dominant over some of his contemporaries. It is in this context that Barret can be seen as a genuine rival. What has not been mentioned in detail in this chapter is that the social conditions of the period meant that Barret's efforts to gain patrons necessitated vast expense, leading to the artist's bankruptcy by 1770. This in turn led to him move from Orchard Street to Paddington, as well as to increase his collaborative works with other artists as he sought to increase his overall output in response to his financial crisis.

Chapter IV: Barret in Paddington (1772-1784)

In December 1770, close to ten years after Barret's arrival in England, he was declared bankrupt. ²⁸⁵ The following year he sold the entire contents of his Orchard Street house and studio.²⁸⁶ By 1772 a Royal Academy catalogue gives a new address for the artist at Westbourne Green, a village near Paddington.²⁸⁷ It seems that the artist's move to Paddington, then a rural village outside London, combines two primary motivations for the artist. In the first instance, given that it follows immediately after his declaration of bankruptcy and subsequent sale of his Orchard Street possessions, it is likely to have been much less expensive than his previous address at the fashionable centre of the city. In the second, living at Paddington provided Barret with direct access to the surrounding Picturesque rural landscape, as well as greater access to a group of artists operating outside Academy circles with whom to collaborate. Chief among these, from Barret's perspective, were Sawrey Gilpin (1733-1807), and George Stubbs (1724-1806). Both were renowned as sporting painters, whose specialization in the depiction of animals excluded them from membership of the Royal Academy, but which linked well with Barret's own specialism in landscapes.

This chapter will discuss the circumstances surrounding Barret's bankruptcy before going on to argue that as a result, he actively sought to collaborate with other artists to

²⁸⁵Kimber, E. and Kimber, I. (1770). *London Magazine, or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, 1747-1783, 39, 679–679.

²⁸⁶ Barret's Sale 9th of May 1771 in Langford and Sons House in the Great Piazza, Covent Garden, London, England, Getty Provenance Index Database Sale Catalog Br-A875, refer to Morse, L. M. (2022) Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder, Volume II, Appendix, p. 95.

²⁸⁷ The Exhibition of the Royal Academy MDCCLXXII the Fourth, p. 4.

increase his income by increasing his output and appealing to a wider circle of patrons. The first part will therefore focus on the social circumstances leading up to his bankruptcy before his transition from Orchard Street to Paddington. These include the requirements of an artist to maintain a certain lifestyle, as well as the necessity of their participation in entertainment programs associated with the societies of which they were a part. The second part will discuss Barret's best-known work, the painted room at Norbury Park, commissioned by William Lock, on which he collaborated with Gilpin, Giovanni-Battista Cipriani (1727-1785) and Benedetto Pastorini (1746-1808). The chapter will also examine other collaborations with Gilpin, before going on to discuss Barret's collaborations with Stubbs. In the case of Norbury Park, alongside discussing its iconography and in particularly its Picturesque influences, the commission will also be framed through his relationship with the patron, William Lock, who clearly sought to help Barret in the wake of his financial crisis.

Barret's Bankruptcy

Despite his prolific output, membership at prestigious artists' societies, and evident popularity in Whig circles, Barret's financial stability seems to have been precarious. By 1770 he was declared bankrupt, a situation from which he was not to fully recover. This was partly due to what contemporaries note was his ongoing expenditure and his inability or unwillingness to economise. The situation must be framed within the context of the period as a whole, which was dominated by the rise of consumer capitalism. The growing middle class in eighteenth-century Britain meant that for the first time, people began to buy what they had previously inherited from their

parents.²⁸⁸ Objects once only accessible to the rich, began to infiltrate further down the social scale.²⁸⁹ This climate of consumption meant ironically that in the eighteenth century, bankruptcy was at an all-time high, and bankruptcy lists were published in the daily newspapers and debtors' prisons became increasingly overpopulated.²⁹⁰ The overpopulation of debtors' prisons was as a result of the fact that individuals could be arrested for debts as low as 40 shillings simply on the oath of the creditor, and if the debt was not settled immediately and bail could not be paid, the offender was imprisoned awaiting trial.²⁹¹

It is in this context that it makes sense to view Barret's own bankruptcy. As a fashionable society artist, it seems that he felt the pressure to keep up with the opulent lifestyles enjoyed by his patrons, a habit that Barret continued to indulge even after his move to Paddington, and which continually put Barret into debt. As Farington wrote in his diary on June 1807, "Barret carried himself very high," suggesting that the artist was in some sense living beyond his means. ²⁹² This is combined with the fact that an artist's studio during the eighteenth century would function like a workshop meaning that the studio was located in the artist's home and it was important that the address be fashionable, as a way to attract potential patrons to visit. ²⁹³ As Walkley argues, "a

²⁸⁸ Mckendrick, N., Brewer, J. and Plumb, J. H. (1982). *The Birth of Consumer Society the Commercialization of Eighteenth Century England*, London: Europa Publication Limited, p. 1.

²⁸⁹ ibid, p. 11.

²⁹⁰ Riding, J. (2010). *Mid-Georgian Britain 1740-1769*, London: Shire Publications, p. 9.

²⁹¹ Lineham, P. J. (1974). *The Campaign to Abolish Imprisonment for Debt in England,* 1775-1840, New Zealand: University of Canterbury, p. 3-14.

²⁹² Cave, K., Farington, J. (1978). *The Diary of Joseph Farington, Vol. II,* June 6, 1807, New Haven: Yale University Press p. 146.
²⁹³ ibid.

decent address on an artful trade card did much to seduce the latest client", and artists were forced to establish themselves in the same exclusive parts of the city as their clients in order to gain commissions and appear professional.²⁹⁴ In light of this knowledge, Barret had rented a house and studio on Orchard Street on his arrival in London, consciously choosing an address at the heart of fashionable eighteenth-century London, which was known to be shared by a number of other "wealthy squires." 295 The street runs directly between Grosvenor Square and Portman Square, closely linking it with the address of two of Barret's major patrons the Duke of Portland and Lord Rockingham, both of whom had houses on Grosvenor Square. Equally crucial to the location was the physical appearance of the exterior and interior of the studio., the artist's success largely depended on maintaining these appearances, as "a fashionable client would prefer to enter a stylish, well-maintained studio."296 In keeping with this, artists like Barret were often led to live and appear like their patrons as a way to encounter them through their everyday routine. In efforts to fit in to the social elite for whom he wished to paint, Barret went as far as maintaining a carriage, and according to Beechey, "Barret, who was the great favourite, universally patronised, rode his carriage" from which to see and be seen.²⁹⁷

Barret's investment in his carriage would have been viewed as essential to his image, given that finding patrons relied heavily on the artist's network of friends. To

²⁹⁴ Walkley, G. (1994). *Artists' Houses in London, 1764-1914*, England: Scholar Press, p. 3.

²⁹⁵ ibid, p. 11.

²⁹⁶ Lippencott, L. (1983). *Selling Art in Georgian London: The Rise of Arthur Pond*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 33.

²⁹⁷ Whitley, W. (1928). *Artists and their Friends*, London: Medici Society, p. 381.

maintain these, cultivating a sense of gentility was paramount, particularly perhaps for an artist who was born and raised in the Liberties in Dublin. It was Barret's job to keep up with his social life by being involved in as many societies as possible. As McKendrick argues, such societies were useful in organising men, building up savings and mobilising financial resources, as well as helping members' credit if they went into debt.²⁹⁸ The combined benefits of club membership attracted so many applications that prestigious societies became increasingly selective.²⁹⁹ According to Wedd, this meant that the ability to gain entry to a club or society "was an admired personal quality", which implicated itself into the relations between artists and potential patrons.³⁰⁰ It seems that to this end, Barret may have attempted to join the prestigious Dilettanti Society, founded in 1734, with which several of his patrons were associated. Joseph Leeson was elected into the society in 1754, the Marquess of Rockingham was elected in 1755 (the fourth in his family to join), the Duke of Buccleuch was elected to the Dilettanti in 1767, alongside other of Barret's patrons who include Colebrooke, Charles Townley, the Duke of Cumberland, the Earl of Bedford, the Duke of Portland and Lord Lansdowne.³⁰¹ Barret wrote a letter to the society but seemed to have been refused membership on the grounds that "it has rarely been the custom of the society to elect more than one professional painter as a member."³⁰² In addition, another qualification

-

²⁹⁸ McKendrick, N., Brewer, J. and Plumb, J. H. (1982). *The Birth of Consumer Society the Commercialization of Eighteenth Century England*, London: Europa Publication Limited, p. 231.

²⁹⁹ ibid, p. 228.

³⁰⁰ Wedd, K. (2001). *Creative Quarters: The Art World in London 1700-2000*, London: Museum of London, p. 36-39.

³⁰¹ Cust, L. (1914). *History of the Society Dilettanti*, London: Macmillian and Company Limited, p. 108.

³⁰² ibid, p. 224.

that Barret lacked in the eyes of the Dilettanti was not having undertaken a Grand Tour, given that according to Horace Mann, the "normal qualifications for the Dilettanti was having been to Italy." 303

Despite Barret's lack of success in gaining entry to the Dilettanti, as artists' societies became more established, the Society of Artists set up a dining club at the Turks Head Tavern on Gerrard Street, Soho, meeting on the King's birthday (June 4th) and on St. Luke's Day.³⁰⁴ The Turks Head had a reputation in the art world for being the place that artists gathered, and it was there that several of the principal artists of the period met to "petition King George III to become a patron of a Royal Academy."³⁰⁵ The Society was the first artists' group to develop a regular dining calendar, and from the mid-1760s, the society also celebrated the Queen's birthday and the anniversary of the award of its Royal Charter in January of 1765.³⁰⁶ However, on October 5th 1770, the Royal Academy formed an informal dining club that would meet every Friday night at the same venue, which became known as the *Friday Night Clubs*.³⁰⁷ These diners surpassed those of the Society of Artists in sumptuousness, social tone, political complexity and cultural significance, and the members were known as the "Sapientae"

³⁰³ ibid, p. 36.

Hoock, H. (2003). "From Beefsteak to Turtle: Artists Dinner Culture in Eighteenth Century London", *The Huntington Library Quarterly: San Marino* Vol. 66, p. 34.
 Timbs, J. (1872). *Clubs and Club Life in London*, London: John Warren Old Bond

Street, p. 348.

Hoock, H. (2003). "From Beefsteak to Turtle: Artists Dinner Culture in Eighteenth Century London", *The Huntington Library Quarterly: San Marino* Vol. 66, p. 34.
 Saumarez Smith, C. (2012). *The Company of Artists: The Origins of the Royal Academy of Arts in London*, London: Modern Art Press, p. 159.

on account of their taste.³⁰⁸ The Royal Academy club consisted exclusively of members of the Academy, who had to pay "two guineas a year for an admission ticket" to the club.³⁰⁹

Barret's membership and presence at these evenings would have been necessary given that the Royal Academy was rooted in a social function, as enabling artists to "meet one another, and sometimes collectors connoisseurs as well." Societies were significant locations in which to discuss business, and obtain employment and commissions, while also enabling access to a wider arena of patronage. Ironically this expenditure increased after his move to Paddington, since Barret "felt the need to join central London societies to avoid social isolation." Attending Royal Academy Dinners also highlighted an artist's growing professional independence and rising social status within an increasingly formalised institutional system. At these dinners, artists were able to develop a new context in which to "link art and patriotism." Dinners would often be followed by private viewings for

³⁰⁸ Hoock, H. (2003). *From Beefsteak to Turtle: Artists Dinner Culture in Eighteenth Century London*, The Huntington Library Quarterly: San Marino Vol. 66, p. 34, 135. ³⁰⁹ Timbs, J. (1872). *Clubs and Club Life in London*, London: John Warren Old Bond Street, p. 348.

³¹⁰ Saumarez Smith, C. (2012). *The Company of Artists: The Origins of the Royal Academy of Arts in London*, London: Modern Art Press, p. 164.

³¹¹ Clark, P. (2000). *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1802*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 230.

³¹² ibid, p. 209.

³¹³ Hoock, H. (2003). "From Beefsteak to Turtle: Artists Dinner Culture in Eighteenth Century London", *The Huntington Library Quarterly: San Marino* Vol. 66, p. 34.
313 Saumarez Smith, C. (2012). *The Company of Artists: The Origins of the Royal Academy of Arts in London*, London: Modern Art Press, p. 30.

distinguished guests and friends of the Academicians.³¹⁴ Hoock argues that attending a Royal Academy dinner was the most publicly visible way for individuals or political groups to endorse the Academy and its mission.³¹⁵ Such dinners enabled artists, Royalty and politicians to establish a new "cultural state."³¹⁶ An example of this is the attendance of the Duke of Cumberland, one of Barret's significant patrons, at a Royal Academy dinner on January 14th 1771, held to celebrate its new location for display.³¹⁷ Although it is unclear whether or not Barret himself was present, it is likely that he would have been expected to attend as a founding member of the Academy.

Despite the success of such dinners in cultivating business, they also exerted a considerable expense on the artists, who bore the financial burden of entertaining their potential patrons. Many upper and middle-class men, like Barret, would belong to three to four societies, all of whose costs they shared.³¹⁸ In December 1770, Barret's name was listed under the bankrupts' section in *The London Magazine* and in *Town and*

³¹⁴ Hoock, H. (2003). *From Beefsteak to Turtle: Artists Dinner Culture in Eighteenth Century London*, The Huntington Library Quarterly: San Marino Vol. 66, p. 34.

³¹⁴ Saumarez Smith, C. (2012). *The Company of Artists: The Origins of the Royal Academy of Arts in London*, London: Modern Art Press, p. 38.

³¹⁵ Hoock, H. (2003). "From Beefsteak to Turtle: Artists Dinner Culture in Eighteenth Century London", *The Huntington Library Quarterly: San Marino* Vol. 66, p. 34.

³¹⁵ Saumarez Smith, C. (2012). *The Company of Artists: The Origins of the Royal Academy of Arts in London*, London: Modern Art Press, p. 54.

³¹⁶ Hoock, H. (2003). "From Beefsteak to Turtle: Artists Dinner Culture in Eighteenth Century London", *The Huntington Library Quarterly: San Marino* Vol. 66, p. 34.

³¹⁶ Saumarez Smith, C. (2012). *The Company of Artists: The Origins of the Royal Academy of Arts in London*, London: Modern Art Press, p. 54. ³¹⁷ ibid, p. 163.

³¹⁸ Clark, P. (2000). *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1802*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 448.

Country Magazine.³¹⁹ He also wrote a letter to the Duke of Portland about his financial troubles, claiming that, "I have flattered myself that a word from your Grace to him would gain me the time I want in order to raise him the money which is about a hundred and fifteen pounds".³²⁰ On May 9th 1771, Barret sold 74 paintings and drawings in London through the auction house, Langford, in an attempt to recoup his losses, as well as the content of his Orchard Street house and studio.³²¹

Barret's Collaborations

Having moved to Westbourne Green, Paddington, in 1772, Barret developed his career outside, to some extent, the fashionable circles he had previously cultivated in London. As a way to develop his output and cater to new patrons alongside those who continued to favour his work he began to collaborate with a group of other contemporary painters. As Dalzell points out, "the custom of more than one artist working on the same picture seems to have died out in the eighteenth-century, but before that, it is an accepted tradition."³²² From what is known of Barret's collaborative work, it seems that in commissions where he worked with other artists, he designed and painted the overall composition of the landscape setting, relying on an artist who specialised in the depiction of animals, such as Stubbs or Gilpin, to populate the scene. I would argue that

³¹⁹ Kimber, E. and Kimber, I. (1770). *London Magazine, or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, 1747-1783, 39, 679–679.

http://piprod.gettv.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb

³²⁰ Refer to Morse, L. M. (2022) *Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder*, Volume II in Appendix, p. 98.

³²¹ Getty Provenance Index

³²² Dalzell, W. R. (1960). *Living Artists of the Eighteenth Century*, London: Hutchison of London, p. 90.

such collaborations were motivated by his need to increase his productivity and thereby his income rather than any artistic necessity. Barret's early Irish landscapes provide considerable evidence of his accomplishment in executing works complete with figures and animals without collaborating. Barret was evidently relatively interested in the depiction of wildlife and exhibited a painting entitled A Bull (1770) (now lost) at the Royal Academy in 1770, which focused on the representation of the animal in keeping with the contemporary interest in animal husbandry, which flourished as a result of the agricultural revolution. In a more general sense, some of Barret's landscapes, for example (Fig. 68), A View of Lord Hamilton's Landscape Garden at Painshill, Surrey, from the East End of the Lake with the Vineyard and Ruined Abbey, show a concern with agricultural improvement in line with the desires of patrons who were involved in developing their estates according to the latest technologies of the time. That said, the focus of this chapter is on Barret's collaborations and a more formal analysis of why the artist chose to work with other artists. Although Barret was able to paint both figures and animals and therefore did not need to collaborate, it seemed that based on his recent bankruptcy, he elected to work alongside other artists as an opportunity to access a larger group of patrons, specifically perhaps Gilpin's patrons, the Duke of Cumberland, Thornton and Samuel Whitbread.

Norbury Park

Barret's work for William Lock at Norbury Park carried out between 1775 and 1778 is perhaps his best-known interior decorative scheme. Lock was an enthusiastic art collector, connoisseur and critic who went on two Grand Tours in the mid-

eighteenth century and began collecting art in Rome in 1751. He returned to Italy between 1767 and 1774.³²³ On his return, Lock hired the well-connected artist and architect Thomas Sandby RA (d. 1798) to build a house at Norbury Park, Surrey, in which to house his extensive Grand Tour collection.³²⁴ The house's Picturesque location, on top of a hill in the middle of the park with views up and down the valley, was chosen to complement Lock's Grand Tour art collection as well as to conform to fashionable tastes for Picturesque theory popular at the time. Redgrave described Norbury Park in relation to its landscape setting, both as part of the landscape and "command[ing] a noble view both up and down the valley." ³²⁵ He highlights the antiquity of the landscape from the giant old oak and ash, beech and yew trees, which he claims "may have sheltered the dark rites of the pagan Druids." ³²⁶ In his conclusion, he literally transposes the real landscape into art, via his claim that "Such a country must ever be a paradise to the landscape painter." ³²⁷

Redgrave's description clearly embeds Norbury Park into the English landscape tradition. It seems that for the interior decoration of the house, Lock may have been inspired by the frescoed rooms he had seen in Italy and wished to create a distinctly English example of this tradition. According to Berger, Lock was known for his taste, and, under the influenced of Gilpin, he was fascinated by the "essentially picturesque,"

³²³ Ingamells, J. (1997). *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travelers in Italy (1701 -1800*), New Haven: Yale University Press.

³²⁴ This was largely dispersed in 1821, in a single owner sale at Sotheby's; Sandby, W. (1892). *The History of the Royal Academy of Art from its Foundation to Present Time*, London: Seely and Company Limited, p. 23.

³²⁵ Redgrave, R. (1981). *A Century of British Painters*, Cornell: Cornell University Press. ³²⁶ ibid.

³²⁷ ibid.

natural and romantic" understanding of the landscape.³²⁸ As a result, in 1775, he commissioned Barret, Gilpin, Cipriani and Pastorini to paint one of the great rooms in the house. While Barret painted the landscape setting which filled the majority of the wall space, Gilpin was commissioned to paint the cattle, Cipriani painted the grisaille statues and figures (one of which, a little girl nestling at the foot of a statue, is said to be based on Amelia, Lock's youngest daughter), and Pastorini was hired to paint the ceiling as a sky seen through a circular trellis, which acted as the unifying framing device for the main scenes in the room.³²⁹

The scenes on each wall of the room, as painted by Barret and his collaborators, were intended to create a panoramic view of the countryside. The scheme consists of four scenes, one painted on each wall, framed by painted pilasters, which appear to support the trellis painted on the ceiling, which gives views of the sky overhead. The view to the south is realistic, focusing on the vale enclosed by Fox-Hill on one side and the hills of Norbury and Dorking on the other. The scene represented on the west wall is a trompe l'oeil image of the lakes of Cumberland. It is not intended as an exact representation, but instead, it depicts an idealised British landscape with woods used to balance and harmonise the composition by framing the lakes and conforming to the ideas of the contemporary vogue for the Picturesque movement. As John Timbs described, this wall "introduced an assemblage of the lakes and mountains of Cumberland and Westmoreland blended together... expressive at the most majestic

³²⁸ Berger, V. (1997). *Arcadia Revisited, The Place of Landscape*, London: Black Dog Publishing, p. 176.

³²⁹Sermoneta, D. (1940). *The Locks of Norbury*, London: John Murray.

idea of rural grandeur."³³⁰ The east landscape depicts a sylvan plain, bisected by a stream, leading to the sea in the distance. To the north, two landscapes are visible, given that the wall is divided by the large pier-glass over the fireplace. To the right of the mantel is a harbour, while to the left, there is a darker view of large rocks, as well as a contrasting placid scene of evening calm that included a shepherd talking to his lover. The two scenes continue the scenes of the eastern and western walls, to which they connect on either side. This breaks down the solid boundaries of the room itself, intended to create the impression of openness and exteriority.

As Berger describes, the painted landscapes of Barret's "wrapped room" did not stop at the windows. ³³¹ Instead, the scenes provided Lock's visitors, many of whom were, like him, well versed in Picturesque theory, with the ability to appreciate the landscape both in and then outdoors. ³³² The novelist, diarist and play write Frances Burney (1725-1840) also recalled the "saloon with trellised ceilings, where the landscape of George Barret cunningly completed the magnificent view from the windows. ³³³ This suggests the intention to break down the walls and create a sense of illusionistic space that fused the interior space with nature. The light depicted in the scenes and in the sky reflects the illusionism of the scene and suggests that the landscape view is shown at sunset. In the northeast corner, a ray of sunshine breaks

³³⁰ Timbs, J. (1822). *A Picturesque Promenade Round Dorking in Surrey*, London: John Warren Old Bond Street.

³³¹ Berger, V. (1997). *Arcadia Revisited, The Place of Landscape*, London: Black Dog Publishing, p. 43.

³³² ibid.

³³³ Burney, F. (2018). *The Collected Works of Frances Burney*, Chicago: Musacium Books, p. 415.

through the clouds, and all four landscapes share the same light source, further unifying the decorative scheme.³³⁴

If the full-size mural scale of the project was necessary for the magical illusionism that Barret and his collaborators aimed at, the sheer scale of the commission at Norbury Park made it one of Barret's most extensive projects. As Farington wrote in his diary,

He painted about eleven months, but it was three years in hand, and the work was protracted by his repeatedly wholly altering the design when a new idea struck him, instead of improving that which he has begun; and frequently it was a change not for the better. He laboured under an asthmatic complaint.³³⁵

It seems that perhaps the struggles of Barret and his collaborators arose from the fact that they were unused to painting on the scale required at Norbury Park and that maintaining unity throughout the room, particularly given the collaborative nature of the project, which relied on the input of several artists, posed a complicated problem.

The successful illusionism of the scene was praised by contemporaries. According to John Timbs, "Mr Lock's painted room soon became a subject of much conservation among the lovers of Picturesque, and has long been a powerful object of attraction, especially as it is the only successful attempt of the kind in this country." 336

³³⁴ Manwaring, E. (1925). *Italian Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century England*, London: Frank Cass and Company Limited.

³³⁵ Cave, K., Farington, J. (1922). *The Diary of Joseph Faringto, Volume III,* July 27th, 1805, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 94

³³⁶ Timbs, J. (1822). *A Picturesque Promenade Round Dorking in Surrey*, London: John Warren Old Bond Street.

Barry wrote about Norbury Park that the skies showed an "improvement on Claude's."³³⁷ As Henry Angelo (1756-1835) wrote of Barret's role in the collaboration, "his friend and very liberal patron, the late Mr Lock of Norbury Park, near Dorking determined to afford Mr Barret a field for the display of his talent. Erected a spacious apartment at his seat, which this artist painted somewhat in the manner of a panorama, describing the romantic scenery of one of the lakes in Cumberland, which said by all the connoisseur to be a work of great ability, and of extraordinary effect."³³⁸

The decoration was also much admired by tourists, including the poet James Woodhouse, who wrote in a verse about Norbury Park in 1803,

while Barret, jointly leagu'd with skilled Compeers, like necromantic art, the landscape rears, and spreading all the spells of light and shade, makes fancy sway while reason sleeps betray'd for as the eyes, at one devouring view, drink in deception, dress'd in shape and hue.³³⁹

The verse captures some of the magic of the novelty of the commission, and the scheme appears to associate the English landscape of Norbury Park explicitly with the idealised

³³⁷ Manwaring, E. (1925). *Italian Landscapes in Eighteenth-Century England*, London: Frank Cass and Company Limited.

³³⁸ Angelo, H. (1828). *Reminiscences of Henry Angelo, with Memories of His Late Father and Friends, Including Numerous Original Anecdotes and Curious Traits of the Most Celebrated Characters that have Flourished During the Last Eight Years*, London: H. Colburn, p. 229-230.

³³⁹ Woodhouse, J. (1803). *Norbury Park, A Poem; with Several Others, Written on Various Occasions*, London: Watts and Bridgewater.

landscapes of Italy via Claude Lorrain. Thus, it seems to operate on a similar level to Barret's earlier landscape series linking British or Irish estates with Grand Tour landscapes.

This appreciation of the work is also evident in Farington's diary entry of July 5th, 1803, in which he writes, "At one o'clock we went to Mr Lock's and saw the house (Norbury park). We saw the room which Barret painted. The lake scene (an evening) is very ingeniously executed, much superior to other parts." It seems that even in the collaboration, Barret's work was isolated for special praise.

The Reverend William Gilpin (1724-1804), one of the critical theorists of the Picturesque movement, describes how the room was painted to resemble "a bower or arbour, admitting, a fictitious sky through a large oval at the top, and covered at the angles with trelliswork, inter-woven with honey-suckles, vines, clustering grapes, and flowering creepers of various kinds."³⁴¹ Of the four views on the walls, Gilpin noted that the one "towards the south is real, consisting of the vale inclined by box-hill and the hills of Norbury."³⁴² Gilpin's poem on Landscape painting also mentions the panoramic room at Norbury Park,

... If taste correct and pure,

Grounded on practice, or, what more avails

³⁴⁰ Cave, K., Farington, J. (1922). *The Diary of Joseph Farington, Vol. II*, July 5th, 1803, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 192.

³⁴¹ Woodhouse, J. (1789). *Norbury Park a Poem; with Several Other, Written on Various Occasions,* London: Watts and Bridge Water.

³⁴² Gilpin, W. (1798). *Observations on the Western Parts of England, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty*, London: T. Cadell and W. Davis, p. 15

Then practice, observation justly formed
Of Nature's best examples and effects,
Approve the landscape; if judicious, Lock
See not an error he would wish removed,
Then boldly deem thyself the heir of fame.³⁴³

It appears that Gilpin saw the room at Norbury Park as fully conforming to Picturesque aesthetics. As he noted, the scheme creates a plausible and skilfully executed sense of illusionism in order to unify the composition. This was evident in the autumnal tones used throughout, as well as in the inclusion of rainclouds with patches of sunshine. As mentioned, there was also a single light source "corresponding overall to a particular time of day (here, shortly before sunset)."³⁴⁴ Gilpin also drew attention to the illusionistic representation of perspective as well as to the overall essence of the Picturesque as adding an "inviting atmosphere and spatiotemporal focus that is primed to link the artificial with the real."³⁴⁵

The success of the scene was, however, something that Gilpin appears to attribute to Lock, the patron, rather than to the artists, Barret, Gilpin's younger brother Sawrey, or their Italian collaborators. Lock frequently corresponded with Gilpin, discussing issues related to Picturesque theory, and in 1782 he wrote, "I really think

³⁴³ ibid.

³⁴⁴ Roskill, M. (1997). *The Languages of Landscape*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

³⁴⁵ ibid.

you have more Picturesque erudition than any man I know."346 Gilpin dedicated three essays to Lock about Picturesque Beauty Picturesque Travel and On Sketching Landscapes of the Picturesque (1792), flattering the patron that "the best observations are yours."347 Burney noted that "Mr Lock was cultured, kind and was a genuine connoisseur who had brought the Discobolus of Myron to England, while his son William a youth of seventeen, was to become a capable historical artist."348 Her sister Susan Burney (1755-1800) wrote to the English classical scholar, Thomas Twining (1723-1804), describing Lock as "one of the most superior of men in knowledge and taste, and artists all bow down to Lock's judgement in sculpture, painting, architecture and antiquities."349 This evidence and the commission at Norbury Park places Barret at the heart of the Picturesque movement in England. Roskill argues that the room's attraction lay in its unique conception, the choice and arrangements of landscape elements to recall the key elements of the Picturesque, and in the apparent breakdown of interior and exterior space to create a sense of continuity between the painted scenes and the views from the windows.350

Despite the success of the project with contemporary English critics steeped in aesthetic theory, later scholars thought that compared to Italian frescos, the paintings

³⁴⁶ Percy, J. (2001). *In Pursuit of the Picturesque*, West Byfleet: Surrey Gardens Trust, p. 66-84.

³⁴⁷Gilpin, W. (1798). *Observations on the Western Parts of England, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty*, London: T. Cadell and W. Davis.

³⁴⁸ Burney, F. (2018). *The Collected Works of Frances Burney*, Chicago: Musacium Books, p. 415.

³⁴⁹ Olleson, P. (2012). *The Journals and Letters of Susan Burney: Music and Society in Eighteenth-Century England*, Nottingham: Ashgate Publishing, p. 26.

³⁵⁰ Roskill, M. (1997). *The Languages of Landscape*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

at Norbury Park seem somewhat dull in terms of tone.³⁵¹ The technique employed by Barret and his collaborators is different from Italian models, given that they painted in oils on stucco, rather than using the true fresco technique in which colours are bonded with the wet plaster onto which they are applied, permeating the surface layer of the wall to create a more luminous, chalky effect. In this sense, they are perhaps more accurately compared with Venetian wall paintings, also frequently carried out in oil on canvas, given that the damp conditions of the island made true fresco an unpopular choice. Because the oils simply remained as a surface layer on the walls, the colours at Norbury Park lack the luminosity of true fresco, and, in addition, the tone is likely to have darkened with age.

In terms of the composition, the murals at Norbury Park also differ from Italian prototypes given that Barret's *trompe l'oeil* landscapes continue to floor level, which is uncommon in the case of Italian frescoes, which often maintain the solidity of the walls at the lower level are conventionally painted above a dado rail, as a way of framing the scene as a view from which the observer is physically separated. This is unusual, considering that as a pupil of Antonio Domenico Gabbiani (1652-1726), a late Baroque Florentine fresco painter renowned for his ceiling frescoes at Palazzina Meridiana and Palazzo Pitti, Cipriani would have been well aware of the technique and its conventions.³⁵² Cipriani had painted a fresco ceiling in Buckingham Palace, and

³⁵¹ Sermoneta, D. (1940). *The Locks of Norbury*, London: John Murray, p. 17.

³⁵² Rose, J. (1857). *New General Biographical Dictionary Volume VI*, London: Kings College, p. 327; Davis, B. (1983). "Some Works by Florentine Cortoneshi", *The Burlington Magazine* Vol. 125, No. 968, Nov 1983, p. 685-689.

Goddison described him as "possessing a fine instinct for decorative composition." Pastorini, too, would have had experience with frescos in Italy, he had also been involved in decorating ceilings for the Adam Brothers, and in 1775 and 1776, he exhibited drawings for the ceilings of the Royal Academy, again making it likely that he was accomplished in the fresco technique. It seems likely, therefore, that Barret, who had never travelled to Italy or seen frescoes at first hand, may have been responsible for the overall layout of the design, given that his Italian collaborators Cipriani and Pastorini would have been well aware of true fresco techniques and compositional conventions. That said, it is unclear how much control Barret would have had if it was Lock who was ultimately responsible for the scheme. What is clear however, is that there was no intention to emulate Italian frescoes, and the praise attracted by the room's décor suggests that the collaboration was intended to create something entirely unique.

The amount of Barret's attention that Norbury took up is apparent in the number of other works associated with the Norbury Park. In 1776 Barret exhibited a watercolour entitled *A Group of Trees in the Park of William Lock, Esq. in Surrey* at the Royal Academy summer exhibition. The fact that he only exhibited one picture that year – *A View of Norbury Park* – suggests that Barret was fully engaged in working on the project for Lock, given that the previous year he had exhibited five canvases. Barret also exhibited works related to Lock's commission for Norbury Park at the Royal Academy in 1777. These include *A Study from Nature in Park of Mr Lock* and a scene he

³⁵³ Goodison, I. (1914). "Painted Decoration III, The Georgian Period", *The Architectural Review*, Jan 1, 1914, Vol. 35 (206), p. 2-6.

sketched in his notebook entitled *A View on Richmond Hill, Queens Terrace*. The last piece Barret ever exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1782, *A Wooded Scene with a Group of Beech Trees in Norbury Park, Belonging to Mr Lock*, was also related to the commission.

The project appears to have taken eleven years to complete, and during this time, Lock and Barret appear to have developed a close relationship, Lock helped the artist during his financial crisis in the early 1770s. According to Farington's diary,

Mr Lock spoke of Barret RA. He said he was a good-natured man and cheerful but careless of expense. While he resided in Orchard St. London, his affairs were in such a state to cause his creditors to determine on sale of his effects. Mr Lock interfered and compromised with them by paying eight shillings and 6d. in the pound. Mr Lock soon after went abroad, leaving Barret free of debt, but instead of practising economy, he took a house near Paddington, and got a Phaeton and horses, and lived in such a way as speedily to be again involved in trouble.³⁵⁴

Although Farington points to Barret's house in Paddington as an expense, it was clearly less expensive than Orchard Street. That said, it seems that Barret did not attempt to economise and his precarious financial state immediately after his bankruptcy recurs in discussions of the artist by his contemporaries. His inability to curb his spending may also reveal why his work alone was not sufficient to cover the costs of a relatively lavish lifestyle, again pointing to why Barret may have focused on more collaborative projects

³⁵⁴ Cave, K., Farington, J. (1978). *The Diary of Joseph Farington:, Vol. II.*, July 5th, 1803, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 192.

during this period. The relationship between Barret and Lock appears to have endured after the artist's death when Lock continued to employ his family to work on the maintenance of the main room. Barret's son Joseph Barret (1759 -1830) varnished the painted saloon in 1789, and Barret's son George Barret Junior (1767-1842) writes in his book *Water Colour Painting* (1840) that he "saw a painting by Claude Lorrain for the first time" at Norbury Park.³⁵⁵ The warmth of the relationship between Lock and Barret is evidenced by the fact that Barret named his seventh child, born in 1771, Will Lock Barret, in honour of his patron, and the support he had offered the artist.

As mentioned, a number of more minor works appear to have been carried out during the realisation of the general commission at Norbury Park. These include *A Mother and Children Resting Beneath a Large Beech Tree, Deer Grazing Beyond, Possibly in Norbury Park, Surrey* (Fig. 1), which is signed with initials at the lower corner: "GB" and dated "76" in the lower-left corner. *A Landscape View* (Fig. 95) was signed and is a preliminary design for a room in Norbury Park. This painting is very similar to *Study of Norbury Park* (Fig. 96), and both depict different views of the same bridge; and *A Landscape View* has more trees along the edge and rocks in the centre of the picture. It may have been a study for work at Norbury Park or a private commission for Lock. In addition, *A Herd of Deer in Mr Lock's Park, Norbury* (Fig. 97), painted by Barret and Gilpin, is similar to several other paintings that the two artists created. The figures in *Deer on Wooded Hillside* (Fig. 98) are precisely the same, although the landscape in the background is done differently using body colours instead of oil on canvas. A work

³⁵⁵ Barret, G. (1840). *Water Colour Painting*, London: Ackerman and Company.

entitled *Red Deer Grazing Beneath Trees* (Fig. 99) is also similar due to the group of trees in the centre of the painting. The background was painted by Barret while the figures were completed by Gilpin.

A sketchbook associated with the Norbury Park commission (Fig. 100), shows the artist's definite preference to focus on landscape, with animals and figures only very basically sketched. The horses depicted in the sketches have been criticised by Thomas Roberts as "bandy-legged beasts often lacking the naturalism of his human figures." 356 This may have been because Barret was collaborating with Sawrey Gilpin to depict the animals in his landscapes at Norbury Park, and therefore did not feel the need to sketch them in detail. It seems that this is the sketchbook that Barret used while working on Norbury Park because inscribed on the last page is the words "belonging to my Geo. Lock." Inside the notebook, Barret has signed the first page, but most of the pages are blank, with only a few studies of plants, animals, people and people on a wagon on each. There is one sketch of a view looking downstream towards Richmond Hill in Surrey and a watercolour drawing of a brown cow. There is also a lake landscape that is similar to Barret's paintings of Snowdonia. In addition to this, the book contains three landscape scenes in a flat park with different figures. The strangest sketch depicts two faces close up of a man and a boy. The faces are done in great detail, but the bodies are unfinished, and the drawing does not appear to be in the style of Barret, meaning that it was arguably painted by Gilpin with whom he was collaborating at Norbury Park.

³⁵⁶ Laffan, W. and Rooney, B. (2009). *Thomas Roberts Landscapes and Patronage in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, Dublin: Churchill House Press.

Collaborations with Gilpin

In reality, Barret's collaboration with Gilpin predates their work together at Norbury Park. Although there does not seem to be any surviving correspondence between them, and it is not known precisely when Barret first met Gilpin, they worked on multiple commissions together sometime after 1768 and before 1770. Including Broodmares and Colts in a Landscape (Fig. 101), Red Deer Grazing Beneath Trees (Fig. 99), and Gentleman Riding Horse with a Grey Stallion on a Leading Rein (Fig. 102). In 1777 there is a record for the sale of a painting entitled *Broods and Mares* at Greenwood Auction House, and the artists listed are Barret and Gilpin.³⁵⁷ Gilpin and Barret also shared many patrons. Colonel Thomas Thornton (1751 -1823) commissioned the two artists to create Anglers Landing a Catch on Lake Windermere (Fig. 103), Two Greyhounds in Close Pursuit with Horsemen Following (Fig. 104), and Colonel Thornton with his Pointers, Juno and Pluto (Fig. 105), all painted in 1770 near Lake Windermere. The connection between Barret and Gilpin was clearly formed sometime after Barret arrived in London, and it is likely that the two artists met through the Duke of Cumberland, who had commissioned both artists to paint views of his property and racehorses around 1767.358

Gilpin was born into a family of artists in Scaleby, Cumberland. He was known to be remarkably sweet-natured and became one of the best-known painters of animals

³⁵⁷ Getty Provenance Index, Sale Catalog Br-A1134, Lot 00296, http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb.

³⁵⁸ Saumarez Smith, C. (2012). *The Company of Artists: The Origins of the Royal Academy of Arts in London*, London: Modern Art Press, p. 104.

during the eighteenth century, specialising in historical and sporting scenes.³⁵⁹ In 1749 he was apprenticed to Samuel Scott (1702-1772), a maritime artist. His earliest known animal drawings were copies of works by James Seymour (1702-1752) and John Wootton (d. 1746). These drawings were published in 1760-61, attracting the attention of the Duke of Cumberland, who commissioned Gilpin to paint his stud horses in Newmarket and in Windsor.³⁶⁰ In 1762 Gilpin also exhibited at the Society of Artists, like Barret.³⁶¹ In 1786 he showed 2 paintings in the Royal Academy and became a member in 1797. Lacking in confidence in his landscapes, he asked several different artists to paint the backgrounds and figures in his work.³⁶² At the same time, under the influence of his brother, he considered that the Picturesque was a quality that makes objects chiefly pleasing and the correct way to portray nature.³⁶³ Alongside Barret, the artists with whom he collaborated to depict the landscapes in his work included Richard Cosway (1742-1821), Joseph Farington (d. 1821), George Garrard (1760-1826), William Hodges (1744-1796), William Marlow (1740-1813), George Romney (1734-1802), Paul Sandby (1731-1809), Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), James Ward (d.1859), Henry Walton (d.1865), Francis Wheatley (1747-1801), Johan Joseph Zoffany RA (1733-1810), and Philip Reinagle (1749-1833). Barret himself became one of Gilpin's main collaborators, and, as Bodkin argues, "collaborations are

³⁵⁹ Cave, K., Farington, J. (1978). *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, Vol. IV, February 20, 1807, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 46.

³⁶⁰ Egerton, J. (2007). *George Stubbs, Painter*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

³⁶¹ Saumarez Smith, C. (2012). *The Company of Artists: The Origins of the Royal Academy of Arts in London*, London: Modern Art Press, p. 104.

³⁶² Barbier, C. (1959). *Samuel Rogers and William Gilpin, Their Friendship and Correspondence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 1.

³⁶³ Wilton, A. (1993). *Great Age of British Watercolours, 1750 – 1880*, London: Royal Academy of Art, p. 36.

proof of Barret's friendly intercourse with his fellows, rather than his incapacity of his own work." ³⁶⁴ After Barret's death, Gilpin collaborated with his son James Barret (1767 -1842), evident from James Barret's exhibitions at the Royal Academy of Scottish landscapes between 1785 and 1819. In 1796 James Barret exhibited *Grantley, the Seat of Lord Grantley; the Horses by S. Gilpin* and *A Scene in the Highlands of Scotland – The Portraits by Mr Reinagle, and the Animals by Gilpin* at the Royal Academy.

Examples of Barret and Gilpin's collaborations include *Wooded Landscape with a Boy and His Dog* (Fig. 106), which depicts a man throwing a stick to his dog in a landscape. In an auction in 1862, this painting was explained that the figure of the boy and the horses were painted in another hand obscured the dog subsequently identified as being by Gilpin.³⁶⁵ *A Horse Frightened by a Lion in a Rocky Wooded Landscape* (Fig. 132) is inspired by Stubbs's paintings of a *Horse Frightened by a Lion* (1770). It has been suggested that the horse and the lion could be by Gilpin. *Broodmares and Colts in a Landscape* (Fig. 107) is set in a clearing in a wood; four broodmares and their foals are grouped under the shade of a copse of tall trees, as seen in the foreground on the right. On the left, a rider talks to a labourer, and other mares and foals are visible in the background.³⁶⁶ Barret and Gilpin painted *Deer in Park* (Fig. 108), initially entitled *Wooded Landscape with Deer*. It exemplifies Barret's landscapes painted around the mid-1770s, in which the autumnal glow of the leaves is visible, surrounding Gilpin's

³⁶⁴ Bodkin, T. (1920). *Four Irish Landscape Painters*, Dublin: The Talbot Press Limited, p. 13.

³⁶⁵ Yale Center of British Art Paul Mellon Collection notes B1981.25.30FR.

³⁶⁶ Egerton, J. (1978). *British Sporting Painting and Animal Painting, 1655 – 1867,* London: Tate Gallery Publications.

painting of deer. In the distance, a glimpse of a mansion can be seen. The work is similar to the Richmond Park paintings commissioned by the Earl of Fife painted by Barret. This painting is an example of Gilpin's speciality in painting deer. The provenance of *Deer in Park, Probably at Castle Howard, Yorkshire* (Fig. 109), can be traced to George Howard, MP for East Cumberland between 1874 and 1885, and trustee of the National Gallery, from an auction at Sotheby's on November 15th, 1986.³⁶⁷ Gilpin and Barret's peaceful scene in *Evening at Rest* (Fig. 110), is accompanied by a verse at the foot of the canvas. The pair's *Mares and Foals in Landscape* (Fig. 51), is included in the *Dictionary of British Equestrian Artists* (1985), and Sally Mitchell illustrates a similar composition entitled *Horses and a Foal in an Extensive Landscape*. Barret's *Horses and a Foal in an Extensive Landscape* (Fig. 111), shows the same horses lined up, but the trees and sky shown in the background are slightly different.

Collaborations with Stubbs

In addition to working with Gilpin, Barret also collaborated closely with George Stubbs. This is despite the fact that there was rivalry between Stubbs and Gilpin, who were in competition for patrons and at the Society of Artists and the Royal Academy. Based on the evidence of the Welbeck records, Barret and Stubbs are reported to have collaborated on at least one work. In 1765 the 3rd Duke of Portland commissioned Barret, who, like Stubbs, had previously worked for Lord Rockingham at Wentworth

 $^{^{367}}$ Sotheby's Auction House sale on November 15th 1989, 00070, *British Paintings* 1500-1850.

³⁶⁸ Mitchell, S. (1985). *Dictionary of British Equestrian Artists*, London: Antiques Collectors Club, p. 236.

³⁶⁹ Egerton, J. (1978). *British Sporting and Animal Paintings 1655-1867*, London: Tate.

Woodhouse, to paint twelve views of Welbeck Park.³⁷⁰ Presumably included in this commission is the painting exhibited under Barret's name as *Portrait of a Dog Belonging to Lord Edward Bentinck* (1768), which was shown at the Society of Artists in 1768. Elsewhere the work was described as *Water Spaniel Who Seems Pursuing Ducks* (Fig. 112).³⁷¹ Evidence of collaboration between the two artists on this commission has survived in a mezzotint of the subject by Caroline Watson, published by John Boydell in 1768 (Fig. 112.2), which credits both Barret and Stubbs.

Barret and Stubbs also collaborated on a series of works for Lord Rockingham's house at No. 4 Grosvenor Square. This proposal related to the decorative scheme installed in 1766, when it seems that the large front room was hung with eleven contemporary British paintings. Of these paintings, seven were collaborations by Stubbs and Barret and were hung in matching frames.³⁷² The commission seems to have been significant given that the room was an important space because it held meetings of political allies.³⁷³ Fordham suggests that that this room contributed to Rockingham's reputation as a "thoroughly progressive artistic patron."³⁷⁴

In addition to their work for Rockingham, it seems that a number of significant collaborations between Barret and Stubbs were carried out under the patronage of George Byng, 4th Viscount of Torrington of Southill Park in Bedfordshire (1740-92). Only six paintings are known to have been commissioned by Torrington in his lifetime,

³⁷⁰ Egerton, J. (2007). *George Stubbs, Painter*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

³⁷¹ ibid.

³⁷² Fordham, D. (2010). "Stubbs, Zoon, Politikon", Oxford Art Journal, Vol. 33 (1), p. 7.

³⁷³ ibid, p. 18.

³⁷⁴ ibid, p. 7.

three by Stubbs and three collaborations between Stubbs and Barret.³⁷⁵ Torrington sold the three paintings by Stubbs and Barret from January 23rd to 24th, 1778. The three paintings were listed in the sale catalogue as lot sixty, *Portrait of Two Horses and Pony Belonging to Lord Torrington*, noted to be in remarkably fine condition and worth 25 gns, pieced, lot sixty-one, *Ditto its Companion* worth twenty-six guineas, and lot sixty-three, *A View of Roach Abbey in its Present State, in which is Introduced the Portrait of Lady T* worth twenty-five guineas.³⁷⁶

In order to understand reasons why Barret and Stubbs may have collaborated together, it is helpful to consider similarities in their backgrounds. Like Barret, Stubbs also needed to make money from his work, given that he was the son of a leather dresser, born in Liverpool. From an early age, Stubbs had studied the anatomy of horses to the point where he could create naturalistic portraits of animals which functioned as both "serious pieces of art, and as carefully observed and systematically conceived scientific representation of the animal concerned." This passion would make him one of the best painters of horses in British art, based on his accuracy and naturalism of depiction. During the Enlightenment period, Stubbs' paintings of domestic animals showed how they could be used as "extensions of the social order by making visual signs of the owners." Paintings of racehorses became signs of status and ownership as well

³⁷⁵ Russell, F. (1980). "Lord Torrington and Stubbs", *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 122, p. 250-253.

³⁷⁶ Christies Auction House. Jan 23- 24th 1778, Can be seen on Getty Provenance Index, http://piprod.getty.edu/starweb/pi/servlet.starweb.

³⁷⁷ Potts, A. (1990). "Natural Order and the Call of the Wild: The Politics of Animal Picturing", *Oxford Art Journal*, 13(1), 12-33. p. 13. ³⁷⁸ ibid.

as "portraits of the professionals who tended and trained them."³⁷⁹ His subject matter meant that Stubbs had access to a wealthy group of patrons in which Barret would have been interested. In 1754 he went on a Grand Tour to Italy, sponsored by Lady Nelthorpe. It has been argued that Stubbs' intention for undertaking the trip was to prove to himself that nature was superior to even Greek or Roman art.³⁸⁰

Ozias Humphrey noted that while Stubbs was in Rome, he did not copy a single picture or antique sculpture.³⁸¹ However, his work *Horse Attacked by Lion* (1762) was influenced by his visit to Rome, where he would have seen the large marble of a lion attacking a horse at the Palazzo dei Conservatori.³⁸² By 1759 Stubbs had moved to London, establishing his studio in the fashionable area of Marylebone. In 1766 he published the first book focusing on the *Anatomy of Horses*. According to Potts, this book appealed to all those interested in either anatomy or horses and Stubbs intended it to "provide amusement" and "accurate knowledge of the structure of his beautiful and useful animal."³⁸³ In addition to this, he helped to establish the "horse portrait as an eighteenth-century innovation," and "the definitive eighteenth-century English contribution to the history painting."³⁸⁴ From 1700, this new genre of the picture began

³⁷⁹ ibid.

³⁸⁰ Ingamells, J. (1997). *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travelers in Italy (1701, -1800*), New Haven: Yale University Press.

³⁸¹ Humphry, O. (2005). *A Memoir of George Stubbs,* New York: Pallas Athene.

³⁸² Ingamells, J. (1997). *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travelers in Italy (1701, -1800*), New Haven: Yale University Press.

³⁸³ Potts, A. (1990). "Natural Order and the Call of the Wild: The Politics of Animal Picturing", *Oxford Art Journal*, 13(1), 12-33. p. 24.

³⁸⁴ Landry, D. (2004). "The Bloody Shouldered Arabian and Early Modern English Culture", *Criticism*, 46 (1), 41-69. p. 42.

to appear on the walls of country houses and in popular prints.³⁸⁵ Despite this, Stubbs was excluded from becoming a Royal Academician as he was categorised as a sporting painter due to his focus on animals, meaning that his works did not fit within the rigidly stratified hierarchy of genres characterised among the High Arts of the period. Barry was, however, clearly impressed by his work, writing in a letter that he "paints horses and other animals with surprising reality."³⁸⁶

Although it is known that Stubbs and Barret worked together, at some point, they seem to have fallen out. This is mentioned by Burke in a letter to Barry written in 1767, during the period in which Barret and Stubbs were collaborating, in which he wrote, Barret "has had the ill-luck to quarrel with almost all his acquaintances among the artists; with Stubbs, Wright and Hamilton; they are mortal wars; and if I fancy he does not stand very well [....] even with West."³⁸⁷ It is likely that the two other artists mentioned in the letter were Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797) and Hugh Douglas Hamilton (1736-1808), an Irish painter from Dublin who moved to London and then to Italy where he painted English and Irish travellers on the grand tour.

Despite this quarrel, many collaborations between the artists focus on equestrian subjects. *Antinous, a Horse Belonging to His Grace the Duke of Grafton* (Fig. 113), is probably the best-known and preserved collaboration by Stubbs and Barret.

³⁸⁵ ibid.

³⁸⁶ McLoughlin, T. (2009). *The Correspondence of James Barry, Letter from James Barry to Dr Joseph Sleigh, 17, June 1767*, Ireland: University of Ireland, retrieved December 3, 2019, from, http://www.texte.ie/barry/view?docId=L_jb_sleigh_[ante-17].06.1765.xml;query=Barret;brand=default.

³⁸⁷ ibid.

Edgerton credits Barret with painting the landscape background of the work. She also suggests that he added the landscape background to Stubbs' *Portrait of the Stallion Sampson in Three positions* (1764) (Fig. 114) for the Marquess of Rockingham. The black stallion is portrayed from three different angles while the background is very much in the style of Barret. In addition, she mentions a painting formerly in the Portland Collection catalogued in 1810 *As a Dog by Stubbs and Barat.* It is important to note that 'Barat' was a common misspelling for Barret. *A View Looking East Towards Knipe Scar Lowther Park* (Fig. 115) was also entitled *An Extensive Moorland Landscape with Sportsmen and Dogs in the Foreground*. It belongs in the collection of James William Lowther, P.C., D.C.L., L.L.D. Speaker of the House of Commons and Viscount Ullswater. It was painted from nature in the Naddle forest just above Haweswater in Westmoreland by Stubbs and Barret.

Other dog paintings by the pair include *Water Spaniel, who Seems Pursuing Ducks*, exhibited at the Society of Artists in 1768. The work is now lost, but a mezzotint of the piece was published by John Boydell in 1768. This engraving depicts a dog that may be a water spaniel-poodle crossbreed. The dog has startled a duck at the water's edge. Barret's hand can be recognised in the rather melodramatic thicket of plants, but the portrait of the single dog on such a scale was uncharacteristic of his work, which at Welbeck consisted entirely of landscape paintings. Equally, such a large and eccentric dog portrait is also unknown in Stubbs' work.³⁸⁹ Only one other painting by Barret

³⁸⁸ Egerton, J. (2007). *George Stubbs, Painter*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 203.

³⁸⁹ ibid.

shows a similar representation of a dog standing alone in a landscape, *Bentinck Dog* (Fig. 112), inscribed in the lower right corner, 'Geo Stubbs/ pinxit 1770. This painting was also engraved by George Townley Stubbs, published on 20 September 1770.

A White Horse Frightened by a Lion (Fig. 116), painted in 1770 by Stubbs and Barret for Rockingham, shows the extent to which Stubbs went to in order to be as realistic as he possible with the depiction of the white horse from the Royal Stables. According to Dalzell, he deliberately intended to frighten the animal by "dragging a bush along the ground" before depicting the horse's "terrified" reaction.³⁹⁰ The evidence of Barret and Stubbs collaborating on this piece is from a letter from King George III's surgeon Dr John Hunter (1728-1793) to the physician Dr Edward Jenner (1749-1823), in which he claimed to want "high-quality visual records of exotic animal species" meaning that it was "not uncommon for him to turn to Stubbs." 391 Hunter wrote to Jenner while in London on March, 29th 1778, "I have a picture of Barret and Stubbs, the landscape by Barret; a horse frightened at the first sight-seeing of a lion by Stubbs. I got it for five guineas. Will you have it? I have a dearer one and no use for two of the same masters. But do not have it accepting you would like it, for I can get money for it."392 This painting was so popular that it "was later turned into a version that was engraved on a metal plate, and the prints proved to be so popular, and sold so readily, that the

³⁹⁰ Dalzell, W. R. (1960). *Living Artists of the Eighteenth Century*, London: Hutchison of London, p. 93.

³⁹¹ Potts, A. (1990). "Natural Order and the Call of the Wild: The Politics of Animal Picturing", *Oxford Art Journal*, 13(1), 12-33. p. 13.

³⁹² Paget, J. (1897). *John Hunter: Man of Science and Surgeon*, London: T. Fisher Unwin, p. 139.

plate on which Stubbs had engraved became worn out and he had to engrave it again".³⁹³

Lord Torrington's Hunt Servants Setting Out from Southill, Bedfordshire (Fig.117) was painted in 1769 and was commissioned by George Byng, the 4th Viscount of Torrington. This painting shows himself accompanied by a group of servants on three horses with two dogs before leaving on a hunt with the village shown in the background with the façade of the West Tower of All Saints Church. Stubbs described the picture to Ozias Humphrey nearly thirty years later as "depicting his coachman grooms and hunter with a few dogs out a hunting a whipper-in the village of Southhill³⁹⁴." Stubbs always painted figures first, and it seems that Barret added the background later. Stubbs' painting process was to paint the horses first, secondly paint people and lastly the background.³⁹⁵

There is evidence from the Getty provenance database that Barret collaborated with other artists, and there was a sale of *A Pair of Landscapes* by Barret and Ashford. This sale was on May 12th, 1817, at the Herbert Auction House in Dublin, while another piece sold in Thomas James' Auction House in Dublin on March 1st, 1809, was entitled *Landscape and Birds* and attributed to Barret and Josef Franz Adolph.

In conclusion, this chapter presented Barret's bankruptcy as instigating a subtle shift in his career towards working in collaboration with other artists. It should be

³⁹³ Dalzell, W. R. (1960). *Living Artists of the Eighteenth Century*, London: Hutchison of London, p. 93.

³⁹⁴ Egerton, J. (2007). *George Stubbs, Painter*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 275.

³⁹⁵ Lloyd, J. (2019). *George Stubbs: All Done from Nature*, Milton Keynes: M. K. Gallery.

mentioned that Barret was not the only artist to have suffered the vicissitudes of the eighteenth-century art market, and contemporaries such as Wilson were equally subject to financial ruin. As a period in which an artist's popularity fluctuated on the current of fashion, after initial success it seems that artists were often cast aside. As Ruther argues in relation to Wilson, "Such evidence as exists tends to show that Wilson's first years in London were his most prosperous, but that each year his sales dwindled, until after 1776 they fell away to almost nothing."396 This chapter has attempted to show that while Barret lost a number of the patrons of his Orchard Street period, his Paddington period was nonetheless characterized by support from a core group of supporters, most notably Lock, in the case of Norbury Park. The chapter has also argued that through his collaborations with other artists, a trade practice in the eighteenth century, Barret sought out other artists to increase his output and thereby improve his financial position. The aim to maintain his lifestyle as best as he could also arguably characterizes the increasingly speculative works carried out in the Lake District which will be discussed in the following chapter, as Barret attempted to exploit the cult of the Picturesque which was increasingly dominating British artistic tastes.

³⁹⁶ Ruther, F. (1923). *Wilson and Farington,* England: Frederick A. Stokes Company, p. 25.

Chapter V: Barret in Wales, the Lake District, the Isle of Wight, and Scotland: **Speculative Painting (1768-1784)**

Although Barret did not take a Grand Tour in Europe, he clearly travelled extensively around Britain, visiting Wales, as well as Ireland, Scotland and various parts of England at various points throughout his career. During the eighteenth century the growing appeal of the Picturesque had made the English landscape popular among artists and patrons, and this chapter will argue that, like many of his contemporaries, Barret's work was strongly influenced by William Gilpin's texts on the Picturesque, just as he had begun by being influenced by Burke's A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757) in the previous decades.³⁹⁷ The concept of the Picturesque "embodied the values and worldview of the wealthy landowning class," and Picturesque landscapes were popularized in guidebooks as well as through the practice of painting and sketching in Plein air, which represented a "democratic" landscape vision.³⁹⁸ Although Barret had shown an interest in such trends throughout his career, given his growing financial concerns, I will argue that by the 1770s he used the fashion for the Picturesque as a foundation from which to produce a relatively large quantity of speculative paintings to cater to a wider audience alongside his more specific commissions. In other words, he was painting for sales via exhibition at the Royal Academy, as well as for commissions.

³⁹⁷ Gilpin, W. (1776). *Observations Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty*, London: Blamire.

³⁹⁸ Bermingham, A. (1987). Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860, London: Thames and Hudson, p. 85.

The idea that many of the works Barret painted during this period were speculative is suggested in a letter Barry wrote to Joseph Fenn Sleigh (1733-70), a Quaker, art connoisseur and friend of Burke. In the letter he recommends Barret's work. According to Barry,

My friend and countryman Barret does no small honour to landscape painting amongst us; I have seen nothing to match with his last year's premium picture. It has discovered to be a very great want in the aerial part of my favourite Claude's performances. You know his skies are clear and uniform, without object, except now and then a small light cloud skirting in his horizon or zenith: while Barret presents you with such a glorious assemblage, as I have sometimes seen amongst high mountains rising into unusual agreeable appearances, whilst the early beams of the sun sport themselves, if you will allow the expression, through the vast arcades, and sometimes glance on a remote farm-house or great lake, whose ascending vapours spread themselves like a veil over the distance.³⁹⁹

The fact that Barry is recommending works implies that Barret is in need of buyers for works he has already painted. This is particularly true of works in gouache produced during a trip to the Lake District in the 1770s, some of which were then exhibited at the Royal Academy in the hope of attracting a buyer. The first part of this chapter will consider Barret's links to the Picturesque as rooted in Gilpin's Picturesque theory,

³⁹⁹ McLoughlin, T. (2009). *The Correspondence of James Barry, Letter from James Barry to Dr Joseph Fenn Sleigh, June 17th, 1765,* Ireland: University of Ireland, retrieved December 3, 2019, from, http://www.texte.ie/barry/view?docId=L jb sleigh [ante-

17].06.1765.xml;query=Barret;brand=default.

which clearly influenced Barret's oeuvre. It will also touch on the type of media the artist used while painting outside his studio, en plein air. The second part of the chapter will move on to consider the works Barret produced in response to the various landscapes he encountered while travelling around Britain in the 1770s and early 1780s. Some of these are connected with specific patrons but others seem simply to have been produced speculatively with no specific patron in mind.

Barret's Links to the Picturesque

William Gilpin built on Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) to introduce a third category to the original pair of concepts (sublime and beautiful) and begin writing about what he called the "picturesque" in landscape scenery and painting. During the 1760s and 1770s, he travelled to Northern Wales, the Lake District, and Scotland and around the British countryside, searching for views of the Picturesque in order to devise his concept of the aesthetic ideal. 400 For Gilpin, "nature gives rivers, lakes, trees, ground, mountains and use material of landscape; woods: but leaves us to work them into pictures, as our fancy leads." 401 In *Observations on the River Wye and Several Parts of South Wales, and Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; Made in the Summer of the Year 1770* (1770), he defined the Picturesque as "a term of that particular kind of beauty, which is agreeable in a

⁴⁰⁰ Hebron, S. (2006). *The Romantic and British Landscape*, Michigan: University of Michigan, p. 6.

⁴⁰¹ Gilpin, W. (1770). *Observation on the River Wye and Several Parts of South Wales, and Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; Made in the Summer of the Year 1770*, London: R. Blamire, p. 11.

picture."⁴⁰² As Wolcott argues, Barret and Philip Jacques de Loutherbourg were among the first to introduce Picturesque subject matter into painting.⁴⁰³ It is not known if Gilpin travelled with Barret at any point, but the artist painted many of the same places Gilpin described in his manuscript *Observations*, written on the trip but not published until 1809. Barret must also have known Gilpin through Lock and his work at Norbury Park.

Gilpin's formulation of the Picturesque landscape's characteristics of roughness, irregularity and variety, closely related to wilder parts of the country, and the specific places he highlighted were visited and studied by contemporary tourists and artists following the fashion for the Picturesque. In his text, Gilpin explained the Picturesque as a mediator between the Sublime, which was represented as embodying the awe and terror inspired by certain aspects of nature and natural phenomena, and the beautiful, which related to all that was soft and aesthetically pleasing in nature. For a painting to be considered Picturesque, Gilpin highlighted that the texture and the composition were subject to specific conditions: the texture was to be rough and without straight lines, while the composition needed three main elements, including a dark foreground with a side or front screen, a brighter middle distance and a less distinctive background. Was common to add an abbey or ruin to the scene in order to create a "consequence," a term Gilpin used to refer to the Picturesque objects added to the

⁴⁰² ibid, p. 60.

⁴⁰³ Pindar, P. (1794). *The Works of Peter Pindar, Esq.*, United Kingdom: John Walker.

⁴⁰⁴ Andrews, M. (1989). *The Search for the Picturesque Landscape: Landscape Aesthetic and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 158. ⁴⁰⁵ ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ ibid, p. 158.

painting.⁴⁰⁷ The Picturesque tendency to represent scenes painted from a low viewpoint also created a somewhat overwhelming effect, recalling Burke's definition of the Sublime, and yet not going as far as provoking terror.

In order to capture the irregularity, roughness and variety required of a Picturesque scene, artists and amateurs began to travel around the country to paint what they saw. Although throughout his career, Barret had worked mainly in oil on canvas in his studio, after his bankruptcy when he began to focus on creating speculative Picturesque scenes on his travels, he began to use the more portable medium of gouache. The use of the water-soluble medium is likely to have been as a result of working en Plein air. The technique was largely used by Barret in his depictions of Picturesque views made in the Lake District and may have been chosen as a way to capture the spectacular effects of the weather. Gouache allowed him to show the Sublime elements of nature, given that it was lighter in tone and more brilliant in terms of colour. The medium is similar to watercolour in that the artist may rewet the paint. It was also different because the particles are larger while the ratio of pigment to binder is much higher, and additional white filler is added to thicken it.⁴⁰⁸ The white filler is usually a chalk base, which allows the paint to dry quickly and as a different value or tone from the wet pigment. During the 18th-century, gouache painting was popular in Italy, France and England. In England, gouache became popular after Marco Ricci (1676-1729) introduced the practice from mainland Europe. Barret would have

⁴⁰⁷ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Cohn, M. (1977). *Wash and Gouache,* Cambridge: Centre for Conservation and Technical Studies.

seen this technique used at the Royal Academy by Zuccarelli (1702-1788). Sandby (1731-1809), who had studied under Barret, also knew Zuccarelli, and he was known to paint in the medium.

By the end of the 18th century, watercolour had increased in popularity, and George Barret Junior describes how his father also used watercolour specifically to create studies en plein air,

Many persons imagine that watercolours are not permanent; they are, on the contrary, perfectly durable when properly applied with a liberal supply of the material and without any previous preparation of grey. To prove this, I am able to state that I have many studies which were painted by my father more than seventy years ago and that are now as fresh in colour as if only done yesterday.⁴⁰⁹

Barret would paint watercolour with a monochrome tint created by the use of Indian ink and at times washes of pale blue, painted on a small scale.⁴¹⁰ Although many of Barret's drawings no longer survive today, a few remain in the Victoria and Albert Museum, as well as in private collections. The use of watercolour may also testify to the speculative nature of these works, since during the eighteenth century, watercolour paintings were thought to lack the gravitas of oil painting, testified in the description of these as 'sketches'. According to Pasquin, Barret's "sketches were more perfect than his

 ⁴⁰⁹ Barret, G. (1840). Water Colour Painting, London: Ackerman and Company, p. 118.
 ⁴¹⁰ Bodkin, T. (1920). Four Irish Landscape Painters, Dublin: The Talbot Press Limited, p. 8-9.

oil paintings."⁴¹¹ In addition, the speed of execution afforded by watercolour would have not only allowed Barret to respond to changing atmospheric conditions en plein air, but also to increase his production of works at a time when he was in financial crisis. Water colour sketches would have likely been aimed at a different market to large works in oil on canvas, suggesting the artist's attempts to cultivate new sources of income. Painting with gouache allowed Barret to cater to the new market for watercolour sketches of Picturesque places travellers had been to, almost in the manner of contemporary postcards.

Barret's Work Produced Around Britain

Between 1770 and 1775, Barret visited the Isle of Wight, following in the footsteps of Gilpin's trips there during the late 1760s and early 1770s. In response to this landscape Gilpin would publish a poem entitled *Observations on the Western Parts of England, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; to which are Added a Few Remarks on the Picturesque of the Isle of Wight (1798).*⁴¹² It is likely that he encouraged Barret to visit the Isle of Wight and that the artist's *View in Shankline Chine, Isle of Wight* (Fig. 118) was painted during this time. The image shows a path running between the high ranges of cliffs, located on the east coast of the island, the composition of which is indebted to Gilpin's Picturesque theory. The area was known for its Picturesque views seen from the top of the cliff, evident in Barret's work with a path winding down to the sea. In

 $^{^{411}}$ Pasquin, A. (1796). *An Authentic History of Painting in Ireland*, London: H. D. Symonds.

⁴¹² Gilpin, W. (1770). Observations on the River Wye and Several Parts of South Wales, and Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; Made in the Summer of the Year 1770, London: R. Blamire.

terms of Gilpin's description of the Picturesque painting, this image is a good example of the influence of the Picturesque movement because of the dark foreground and a lighter middle ground. Another Picturesque element is the man in the foreground of the painting, who unites the Picturesque interest in labour and rural life since "Picturesque genre painting commemorated the virtues of an older rural life and labour."⁴¹³

Several of Barret's works painted round this time demonstrate Picturesque ideas. *Cadland Park, in Hampshire* (Fig. 119) creates a Picturesque view of Robert Drummond's (1711-1776) house in Cadland Park, located on the banks of the Southampton River with views of Spithead, the Isle of Wight, and the surrounding wooded countryside. It seems that Barret had been able to obtain the commission from Drummond (1711-1776), in order to paint the area around Cadland Park, which was also known by Gilpin for its Picturesque views. The painting shows Barret adopting Picturesque features by framing the scene with trees and bushes. The symmetry of the house provides the main focus of the painting, which is otherwise in line with the demands of the Picturesque. As Gilpin wrote,

A piece of Palladian architecture may be elegant in the last degree, the proportion of its parts- the propriety of its ornaments- and the symmetry of the whole may be highly pleasing. But if we introduce it in a picture, it immediately becomes a formal object and ceases to please... Should we wish to give it Picturesque beauty, we must use the mallet instead of the chisel: we must beat

⁴¹³ Bermingham, A. (1987). *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860*, London: Thames and Hudson, p. 81.

down one half of it, deface the other and throw the mutilated members around in heaps. In short, from a smooth building, we must turn into a rough ruin. 414

This analysis suggests that the qualities of the architecture as ruin are as significant as the landscape in contributing to the Picturesque nature of the scene, since ruins were thought to possess a Sublime potential which could be interleaved in the Picturesque experience.

As well as working in the Isle of Wight, Barret painted a series of Picturesque scenes in Scotland, which he had first visited in October of 1768, principally under the patronage of Henry Scott, Lord Dalkeith, the Third Duke of Buccleuch (1746-1812). Between the years of 1775 and 1780, Barret returned to Scotland to paint Picturesque views of Melrose Abbey and Dalkeith for the Duke of Buccleuch. The third Duke of Buccleuch was the governor of the Royal Bank of Scotland from 1777 to 1812 and was a founder of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and he commissioned the paintings to show Dalkeith House and the Picturesque parklands around it. The influence of the Picturesque movement can be seen in the idealization of nature and the romantic naturalism evident in the paintings, as in the case of the representation of the foliage and trees. Twenty-two letters from Lord Buccleuch detailing payments prove that Barret spent time between the years 1765 and 1774 in Scotland working on his commissions there.⁴¹⁵ There is also evidence that the miniature painter George

⁴¹⁴ Gilpin, W. (1794). *Three Essays on the Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel;* and On Sketching Landscape, London: Blamire, p. 7.

⁴¹⁵ See Morse, L. M. (2022) *Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder*, Volume II, Appendix, p. 100.

Engleheart (1750-1829) was studying under Barret at the time because he had written some of these letters for Barret to Lord Buccleuch.⁴¹⁶

A view of Melrose Abbey was a Picturesque scene Barret painted on more than one occasion. The ruined gothic manor abbey was built between 1136 and 1146 by Cistercian Monks from Roxburghshire, and greatly appealed to Picturesque taste which revelled in the ruin. 417 The Duke of Buccleuch was granted the land and lordship on the abbey in the early eighteenth-century.⁴¹⁸ In *Picturesque Tourist of Scotland* (1861), Black claimed that the "Duke Buccleuch is not the custodian of the abbey and to him, the public is much indebted for its careful preservation."419 The Duke's residence was three miles west of Melrose Abbey, making it easy for Barret to visit. In his *Dictionary* of Eighteenth-Century British Painters in Oils and Crayons (1981), Ellis Waterhouse referred to these paintings by Barret as his most memorable surviving paintings, providing a "conscious attempt at providing a native British type of landscape composition in opposition to Richard Wilson's Italianizing patterns". 420 The Ruins of Melrose Abbey (Fig. 120), The Ruins of Melrose Abbey, with Figures Resting in the Foreground (Fig. 121), and Melrose Abbey, South Front (Fig. 122), are all paintings depicting Picturesque views of Melrose Abbey from the East front of the building. These

⁴¹⁶ See Morse, L. M. (2022) *Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder*, Volume II, Appendix, p. 101.

⁴¹⁷ Black, A., and Charles, P. (1861). *Black's Picturesque Tourist of Scotland*, Scotland: Adam and Charles Black, p. 106.

⁴¹⁸ ibid, p. 108.

⁴¹⁹ ibid.

⁴²⁰ Waterhouse, E. (1981). *The Dictionary of British 18th Century Painters in Oils and Crayons*, Woodbridge: Antique Collectors Club, p. 40.

three paintings look very similar except for the figures in the foreground, the clouds in the sky and the giant tree to the left of the paintings. In *The Ruins of Melrose Abbey* (Fig. 120), the tree is bare but what is odd about this is that none of the other trees in the painting shows that the season is changing. *The Ruins of Melrose Abbey* (Fig. 120) is the same tints of colours as The Ruins of Melrose Abbey, with Figures Resting in the Foreground (Fig., 121) and Melrose Abbey, South Front (Fig. 122). The Ruins of Melrose Abbey (Fig. 120) and The Ruins of Melrose Abbey, with Figures Resting in the Foreground (Fig. 121), have the exact same figures in the foregrounds; the only difference is the tree. In The Ruins of Melrose Abbey, with Figures Resting in the Foreground (Fig. 121), a woman and her son are visible, while the other two paintings have a mother and her child speaking with two boys and a dog lying under the tree. *Melrose Abbey, South Front* (Fig. 123) depicts Melrose Abbey from the South front showing the buttresses and pinnacles on the building. Melrose Abbey, the River Tweed Beyond (Fig. 124), depicts the abbey as a distant view from the Southeast. Evidence shows these were not the only paintings painted for the Duke of Buccleuch. Another Picturesque scene, *The Ruins of* Melrose Abbey, with Figures Resting in the Foreground (Figure. 121), is signed by G. Barret on the bottom left. In 1769 Barret exhibited Part of the Melrose Abbey on the River Tweed by Moon-light, Belonging to His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch, at the Royal Academy, although the work is untraced today.

In addition to his views of Dalkeith which closely conform to accepted contemporary definitions of the Picturesque through their carefully constructed landscapes, it seems that Barret was one of the first landscape artists to be inspired by the Lake District. During the second half of the eighteenth century, the Lake District,

also known as "the Lakes" or "Lakeland," became a popular tourist destination for visitors searching for sublime and picturesque landscapes.⁴²¹ A number of popular publications are responsible for developing the reputation of the mountainous region of Northwest England. The first known article, John Brown's letter about the Lake District, was published in the *London Chronicle* in 1766. In 1770 Arthur Young published his *Six-Month Tour Through the North of England*, which described the Romantic, Picturesque and Sublime elements of the Lake District. Gilpin's famous *Observations* poems were published in 1782 and added to the region's popularity. In 1775 Thomas Gray (1716-1771) published a journal of his tour of the Lake District in 1769.

The Lake District was also famous for having the largest and deepest lakes in England, Westmoreland and Windermere, along with England's highest mountain or fell, Scafell Pike. From the 1770s onwards, the region posed a challenge to the aesthetic supremacy of the European Grand Tour.⁴²² During this period Barret began to exhibit scenes of the Lake District at the Royal Academy. In 1770 he showed *A Study from Nature on the Lake Ullswater in Cumberland*; in 1772 he exhibited *A Study from Nature in the Mountains of Keswick, Cumberland*; and in 1781, a *View of Windermere Lake in Westmoreland- the Effect of the Sun Beginning to Appear in the Morning with the Mists Breaking and Dispersing* was submitted to the exhibition.⁴²³ The exhibition of these

⁴²² ibid.

⁴²¹ Andrews, M. (1989). *Search of the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain 1760 - 1800*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 153.

 $^{^{423}}$ The last work may be the painting now in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Accession Number, 4712-3, in the 19th century European Paintings

works at the Royal Academy suggests that they were likely to have been painted speculatively, rather than as part of a commission, and exhibited in the hope of finding a buyer. Barret's choice to paint and exhibit scenes from the Lake District suggests that he was aware of the area's widespread popularity among contemporary audiences.

In the eighteenth-century, interest in the Picturesque qualities of the Lake District went so far that each lake in the area was associated with a particular Picturesque characteristic. These characteristics were derived from one of the three preeminent Masters of Landscape Art of the previous century: Claude, Poussin and Salvator Rosa.⁴²⁴ Writing in 1794, Anne Radcliffe describes how,

Windermere was distinguished by diffusive stately beauty, and, at the upper-end magnificence, and, like Coniston, its leisure expanse, with no abrupt angles, and its border of grand but not thrilling Sublime fells, suited it for the tender and elegant touches of Claude's brush. Poussin paintings were more like Windermere Lake due to the nobleness of Ullswater.⁴²⁵

Windermere was the largest of all the lakes, and its scale caused problems for artists attempting to follow the compositional rules of the Picturesque since they had to invent

Gallery, retrieved February 12, 2020, from

https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/work/3765/.

⁴²⁴ Andrews, M. (1989). *Search of the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain 1760 - 1800*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

⁴²⁵ Hutchinson, W. (1774). Excursion to the Lake in Westmoreland and Cumberland, London: J. Wilkie, p. 182; Radcliffe, A. (1794). A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794 Through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return Down the Rhine: to Which are Added Observations During a Tour to the Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland and Cumberland: London: Printed for G. G. and J. Robinson, Paternoster-Row.

a foreground with bushes or trees. The romantic ideas associated with Rosa were perceived as characterizing Lake Derwent. These associations conformed to the taste of the Picturesque.

The canvasses Barret painted in the Lake District contrast with his earlier work. In general, they are lighter with more brilliant colour, possibly reflecting the openness of the scenery or his method of differentiating between the Sublime lighting effects of his earlier work and the brighter associations of the Picturesque. Although they were not carried out in collaboration with artists known to have contributed figures to Barret's landscapes, these paintings tend to include figures as a counterpoint to the Picturesque qualities of nature. There is also a very high atmospheric sense of distance as evident in A View in the Lake District (Fig. 125), and varied light effects are used to show the ideas of Picturesque theory and its relationship to Burke's ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful. 426 Representing Lake Windermere, the canvas shows a herdsman with sheep and cattle on a rural road in the area while two horses wait to board the horse ferry at the water's edge. A folly perches on an island in the middle of the lake, and several buildings are seen close to the water. The sky is partially lit by yellow sunlight breaking through the storm clouds. Barret evokes awe through the depiction of the rugged mountains, which overwhelm the smaller, more quotidian, human elements of the scene. The inclusion of mountains is interesting, given that Barret was one of the first artists to paint the mountains in the Lake District. In the London Courant in 1781, A View in the Lake District was praised as being "equal to any master ancient

⁴²⁶ Crookshank, A. and Knight of Glin (2002). *The Painters of Ireland 1660-1940*, London: Barrie and Jenkins.

or modern. The sun is beginning to appear in the morning, with the mists breaking and dispersing an effect."⁴²⁷

Other Picturesque works speculatively painted in the Lake District include Figures Waiting for a Ferry on the Shore of a Lake with Mountains Beyond (Fig. 126), in which Barret returns to the depiction of a mountainous lake landscape with figures waiting for a ferry. Sunrise Over Ullswater (Fig. 127) and View of Ullswater, Cumberland (Fig. 128) show the lake surrounded by a range of mountains. The Picturesque images are likely to be inspired by Keswick seen from Dunmallet in 1780, at the foot of Ullswater, from where there is a great view of the lake, extending to Hollin-Fell. On the top of Dunmallet, the ruined remains of a fort are visible, again appealing to Picturesque taste. This is one of the few works by Barret painted in gouache. The view is handled with skill and confidence. Middiman describes it as showing "the vast chaos of mountains that guard the head of the lake." Using a palette of blue, purple, green, white and brown, Barret creates a broad view of the lake, with a ferryboat transporting men and cows. There are three yachts on the lake, and the surrounding mountains reflect the light white clouds in the sky. Barret's sweeping view of Ullswater is painted in the manner of a Classical landscape inspired by Claude, as the eye is led through the scene by subtle shifts in colour. The warm autumnal tones of the trees in the foreground give way to blue as the lake winds into the distance. The work has a light, airy feeling, which contrasts with the more brooding oils Barret painted at the same time, such as *Lake* Ullswater, Westmoreland: A Party of Tourists Gathering to Enjoy the Prospect at the Head

⁴²⁷ Mallet, E. (May 1, 1781). *London Courant*, London: Fleet Bridge.

of the Lakes (Fig. 129) and Lake Ullswater, Westmoreland with Elegant Figures Enjoying a Picnic, a Ferry Crossing the Lake and Horses (Fig. 130). However, the gouache does resemble some oils painted in his early Irish period. The view of Ullswater was painted on a tour Barret took of the Lake District in the 1770s. The figures in the scene reference the way that tourism was gaining popularity in the period. Lowell Libson argues that instead of concentrating on the naturalism of the view, Barret focused on creating a sense of monumental grandeur, transcribing the effects of light, and emphasizing the unreal qualities of the Picturesque landscape.⁴²⁸

James Barry, wrote in 1765 to Dr Joseph Fenn Sleigh (1733-1770) describing how *Lake Ullswater, Westmoreland: A Party of Tourists Gathering to Enjoy the Prospect at the Head of the Lake* (Fig. 129) painted in gouache on paper "presents you with such a glorious assemblage, as I have sometimes seen among high mountains rising into unusual agreeable appearances while the early beams of the sun sport themselves ... through the vast arcades and sometimes glances on a great lake whose ascending vapours spread themselves like a veil over the distance." His description of "high mountains" and "great lake" suffused in "early beams of the sun" accurately reflects Barret's view of Ullswater. In the gouache, a ferry is seen crossing the lake while a group of figures on the right can be seen picnicking in a tent. This view again draws attention to the tourism that was becoming popular in the area as a result of Gilpin's ideas of the

⁴²⁸ Libson, L. (2015). *British Art*, London: Lowell Lisbon Limited, p. 16.

⁴²⁹ McLoughlin, T. (2009). *Correspondence of James Barry, Letter from James Barry to Dr Joseph Fenn Sleigh, June 17, 1765*, Ireland: University of Ireland, retrieved December 3, 2019, from http://www.texte.ie/barry/view?docId=L jb sleigh [ante-17].06.1765.xml;query=veil;brand=default.

Picturesque. When Barret first moved to England, he specialized in wild, mountainous landscapes. However, this developed, and his late gouaches are lighter and more brilliant in colour than his earlier oil paintings. The scene of Ullswater celebrates one of the Lake Districts most beautiful lakes, fringed by dramatic mountains. In Barret's representation, the mountains surround the lake, while in the foreground, a group of figures picnic on Soulby-Fell, a hill covered with ferns. A ferry carries cattle across the lake. On the other side of the lake, the mountain with a watermill rises up against the sky in (Fig. 130) Lake Ullswater, Westmoreland with Elegant Figures Enjoying a Picnic, A Ferry Crossing the Lake and Horses. Westmoreland is displayed in the drawing Windermere Lake (Fig. 131). This view of Lake Windermere shows several wooded islands rising from the lake. The largest island, in the centre, is represented in the morning light. In the background, the mountains of Fairfield and Rydal head are visible. In the front of the small figures are visibly crossing in the ferry.

In *Cattle in a Clearing, a Church Beyond* (Fig. 136), painted using pastel and paper on canvas, Barret emphasizes the Picturesque importance of the cloudy sky, dark and ominous mountains, and vast waterfalls. The exact location of this sketch is unknown, but the characteristics of the landscape relate it to Barret's Powerscourt subjects. *Deer on a Wooded Hillside* (Fig. 98), appears to show Barret's facility with the medium of gouache. The group of deer appeared to be well represented, and Anne Crookshank and the Knight of Glin have observed that it is strange that he felt the need to collaborate with specialist animal painters such as Gilpin, which likely points to other, potentially

financial, motivations since Barret was clearly not lacking in artistic ability.⁴³⁰ The scene itself appears to have been painted in Norbury Park and shows a group of the estate's fallow deer on a Picturesque wooded hillside. The scene in Farm-Labourers Conversing in a Field (Fig. 137) depicting an extensive landscape with cattle shows Barret using gouache as a way to effectively depict high summer. The work is also known as Extensive Landscape with Figures and Cattle. The Pictures que view appears to represent the West side of the lake at Hewell Grange in Herdsmen and Cattle in Woodland Overlooking the Lake at Hewell Grange, Worcestershire (Fig. 138). Another smaller version is recorded in a private collection, and a related signed watercolour shows a view of Dalkeith House in the Buccleuch Collection, Drumlanrig. This Picturesque work features the same exact horses as seen in Mares and Foals in a Landscape (Fig. 53). Landscape with Figures (Fig. 139) shows a boy driving sheep alongside two seated figures in the foreground and a castle on the top of a hill. It is closely based on an engraving after a painting by Gaspar Dughet (1615-1675) at Houghton, *The Cascade*, first published in 1741. The only difference is the figures, which have been turned into Picturesque contemporary rustics through the addition of hats and modern dress. Binyon states that this drawing was purchased in August 1861.

Storm Clouds Over and Irish Lake at Dusk (Fig. 140) is similar to A View in the Lake District (Fig. 125), depicting Ullswater in Cumberland, in the collection of the National Gallery of Ireland. Like this painting, the Ullswater view, which is signed, is

⁴³⁰ Crookshank, A. and Knight of Glin, (2002). *The Painters of Ireland 1660-1920*, London: Barrie and Jenkins.

represented from a high viewpoint and shows an extensive view. The work shows Barret's confident use of gouache to emphasize the Picturesque quality of the passing storm, and it seems that Barret began painting in gouache when he began to paint speculatively in a Picturesque style during his trip to the Lake District. His interest in spectacular atmospheric effects is evident in his deployment of the medium. The Picturesque Farmhouse in the Moonlight (Fig. 141) is signed by George Barret. In 1778 an article published in The Morning Post wrote of a similar work by Barret, "A moonlight, one of the best pictures that we have seen of this artist for some years past. The composition is noble and well-chosen, and the colouring very happily expressed the effects of moonlight."431 The London Courant described in 1780 "A moonlight by Barret; this is the most admirable performance. In general, moonlight pieces are painted in a dull and dismal style of chiaroscuro with a taste uniformly of tint, which is highly unpleasing and unnatural. In the piece before us, that faintly and mellow hue observed in nature when the moon "shadowy sets off the face of things" as Milton expresses it is most judiciously represented."432 This fascination can be explained by the fact that moonlight scenes had become a fashionable element of the Picturesque.

This chapter has attempted to locate Barret's interest in the Picturesque in Gilpin's theorization of the aesthetic, connecting him with its philosophical roots in much the same way as the first chapter attempted to establish links between Barret and

⁴³¹ Bell, J. (May, 13, 1778). *Morning Post*, See Morse, L. M. (2022) *Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder*, Volume II, Appendix, p. 89. ⁴³² Mallet, E. (May 4, 1780). *The London Courant*, London: Fleet Bridge, See Morse, L. M. (2022) *Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder*, Volume II, Appendix, p. 89.

Burke's ideas of the Sublime. Although arguably the works he produced around Britain and particularly in the Lake District were in an attempt to increase his income, this is not to undermine what was evidently a genuine interest in the Picturesque. The shift in Barret's style and medium shows his sensitive response to the requirements of painting en plein air, even if these can also be explained by more practical and financially motivated concerns such as speed of production and the risk of painting speculatively. The second part of the chapter has attempted to outline that the artist's interest in the Picturesque predates his bankruptcy, however it is likely that the reduction in demand for his work in London left the artist free to travel, and he used the opportunity to his advantage. As the next chapter will discuss however, Barret does not seem to have recovered from his bankruptcy and aside from an unfinished project at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, he seems to have had to turn to other more speculative forms of production such as printmaking towards the close of his career.

Chapter VI: Barret's Final Years and Legacy: The Artist Family

Barret was reported by Redgrave and Bodkin to have earned the sum of £2,000 a year at the height of his career during the mid-1760s, although he still managed to frequently exhaust his funds. 433 As discussed in the third chapter, in December 1770, his name was found under the bankrupts' section in *The London Magazine* and in *Town and Country Magazine*. 434 He also wrote a letter to the Duke of Portland about his financial troubles, and when Lock commissioned Barret to work at Norbury Park in 1775, letters between the artist and his patron reveal that Barret was already once more deeply in debt.⁴³⁵ In 1775, the decline in prices for his work listed in the Royal Academy catalogue suggests that he must have been in some financial need.⁴³⁶ During the 1780s, it appears that Barret was once again in a financial crisis. This chapter will consider the projects Barret undertook in the final years of his career before his death in 1784, at the age of 52 or 56, depending on the year of his birth. It will touch on his attempt to exploit the burgeoning growth of eighteenth-century print culture, which allowed him to quickly and inexpensively circulate images of his works to a wider audience, as well as an unfinished final commission for the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, completed by his son on his death. The chapter will argue that Barret was never to recover from his bankruptcy of 1770, although he clearly attempted to ingeniously exploit the means at his disposal

⁴³³ Redgrave, R. (1981). *A Century of British Painters*, Cornell: Cornell University Press, p. 47.

⁴³⁴ Baldwin, R. (December 1770). *The London Magazine* and in *Town and Country Magazine*, London: Pater North Row.

⁴³⁵ From the National Records of Scotland, record number, GD224_628_1.

⁴³⁶ Bodkin, T. (1920). *Four Irish Landscape Painters*, Dublin: The Talbot Press Limited, p. 5.

to improve his situation. Instead perhaps his legacy can be seen in his establishment of a family of artists, given that of his nine children, three of Barret's sons became topographical artists and his daughter became a miniature painter. The first part of this chapter will discuss his prints, while the second half will consider the Royal Hospital commission and his death and legacy via an outline of the work carried out by his children to establish the family of artists as Barret's unique contribution to the eighteenth-century landscape tradition in Britain.

Barret's Exploration of Print Culture

Barret had had early experience with engraving, living in Dublin while working with John Dixon, an Irish mezzotint engraver. During the period, engravings had become an important commercial enterprise, and prints were an increasingly popular form of income for artists. In the case of Barret, printmaking created another form of income from the paintings favoured by his wealthy aristocratic patrons. According to Henry Angelo, the market for prints helped to "produce a great deal of ready cash." Prints could be exploited as a way to create a steady income and painters commissioned prints of their best work to enhance their reputation and find work. Several of Barret's contemporaries including Barry, Stubbs, Gainsborough and Blake had prints made of

⁴³⁷ Knight, C. (1865). *School History of England*, London: Bradbury and Evans, p. 63.

⁴³⁸ Angelo, H. (1828). *Reminiscences of Henry Angelo, with Memories of His Late Father and Friends, Including Numerous Original Anecdotes and Curious Traits of the Most Celebrated Characters That Have Flourished During the Last Eight Years*, London: H. Colburn, p. 231.

⁴³⁹ Bermingham, A. and Brewer, J. (1995). *The Consumption Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, London: Routledge, p. 83.

their work, and Barret seemed to have made a handful of etchings on paper himself as well as collaborating with professional printers.

In a series entitled *Harrow Road*, Barret executed several views of Harrow Road in Paddington, focusing on the route leading out of London nearby his residence in Westbourne Green. An image from the series is *Three Figures Driving a Donkey Cart* in which the scene is located on the road beside a house and an inn (Fig. 142). In an *Untitled Print* (Fig. 143) a church with a pointed spire visible between two trees can be seen, with a wooden fence in the foreground, suggesting that Barret was engraving local scenes around his house. In his book Old and New London (1873) Walter Thornbury describes how the Picturesque quality of the church in Barret's print was heightened by the dark foliage of an ancient yew tree. 440 The same church recurs in several Harrow Road prints, as in the case of an *Untitled Print* (Fig. 144), which shows the same building, fence and land but displayed at a different angle. Barret also depicts two horses shown standing beside a cart in front of a barn or house in the print entitled *On the Harrow* Road (Fig. 145). Three men are visible in the middle ground and seem to be in conversation; the man on the far left is the only one standing and appears to be holding a pitchfork. Such vernacular depictions and settings show Barret's awareness of prints' more popular audience.

Alongside local scenes around Harrow Road in Paddington, Barret also created his own prints of *Norbury Park* (Fig. 146) and *Southall* (Fig. 147). These two prints are

⁴⁴⁰ Thornbury, W. (1887). *Old and New London: A Narrative of its History, its People and its Places*, London: Cassel and Company, p. 207.

in the same style and format as the rest of the Harrow prints but depict Norbury Park, where Barret worked for several years for Lock and then Southall. Other prints produced by Barret were made after works he had painted. These include View of the River Dargle in County Wicklow (Fig. 148), an image that includes two men sitting on the riverbank just before it passes between two high rocks. This was a very typical scene by Barret from when he was living and working in Dublin. The image, Roache Abbey in Yorkshire (Fig. 149), shows the ruins of a medieval abbey converted into a farm building with two horses. Two men lie by a pond in the foreground. Barret would have visited the abbey while he was working for Constable in Yorkshire because the abbey was not far away from Constable Hall, as well as being noted for its Picturesque qualities with the combination of ruins and a rugged landscape. In View of Beeston Castle, Cheshire (Fig. 150) two people can be seen, one on horseback, travelling down a path towards fields and a hill, while the image is framed by trees on both sides. The image itself is taken from John Young's 'Catalogue of Pictures by British Artists in possession of Sir John Fleming Leicester' (1825). Barret would have sketched this print when he did the commissions for Sir Peter Byrne Leicester of Tabley House.

In order to create printed editions of his works, Barret collaborated with several printmakers. Not much has been discovered about the details of these relationships, but it seems that printing helped the artist to create another source of income. Some of these print makers included John Boydell (1720-1804), Samuel Middiman (1746-1851) and William Watts (1752-1851).

John Boydell dominated the print trade during the mid-eighteenth century with his editions of engravings of popular works by contemporary artists. By 1746 he had established his own independent engraving company through which his trading and selling skills helped British Art to become more established across Europe. Boydell was also deeply involved in the London art scene, becoming a member of the Royal Society in 1760 and in 1773 he published A Catalogue of Prints, Published by John Boydell, an *Engraver in Cheapside London*, containing samples of all his work.⁴⁴¹ An engraving of Barret's work Snowdon is listed under the first Sets of Views section of this catalogue. In addition, four more pieces by Barret are listed under List of Fine Views by Barret, these include A View of Part of Hawarden Castle in Flintshire, A View of Hawarden Castle in Flintshire, A View of Part of Snowden in Carnavonshire, and Another View of Hawarden Castle. Boydell published Select Views of Great Britain in 1788, which included 53 views by eighteen different artists, including two of Barret's sons, George Barret Junior and James Barret, as well as Barret's own View on Shanklin Chine (Fig. 118). Other Boydell prints made after Barret's work include Morning (Fig. 151), which depicts a forest with a man on a cart whipping two horses. There are three calves on the back of the cart, and a group of cows and sheep in the foreground. Two figures and a horse are also visible on the path, while a view of a town in the distance can be seen. The work seems to have been part of an unidentified series. River Landscape with Two Figures Rowing a Boat, (Fig. 152) is another print that was possibly a part of a series by Boydell. It shows two

⁴⁴¹ Boydell, J. (1773). *A Catalogue of Prints, Published by John Boydell, Engraver in Cheapside London*, London: Boydell.

figures in a rowing boat in the foreground, with a bridge and buildings at the bottom of a mountain on the left. On the right are figures, one on horseback, beside the woods.

Images by Barret were also engraved by Samuel Middiman, a landscape painter and engraver based in London. Middiman had worked for Boydell and several prints after Barret appear to have been made by him when he worked for Boydell. He was known for three publications, *Select Views in Great Britain* (1783-1789), *Picturesque Castles and Abbeys of Great Britain* (1807-11), and *Picturesque Views and Antiquities of Great Britain*, published between 1807-11. Engravings after works by Barret and his son Joseph were featured in *Select Views in Great Britain*, which depicted the Picturesque features of the Lake District, mountains and rural areas of Great Britain. Middiman also made prints after a few artists Barret collaborated with, including Gilpin and Cipriani. Among the works by Barret printed by Middiman in the series *Select Views in Great Britain*, were *Ullswater*, *View Near Caernarvon* (Fig. 153), *View of a Waterfall* (Fig. 154), *Windermere Lake* (Fig. 155), and *View of Llangollen Vale* (Fig. 156).

Paul Sandby, who has been mentioned previously, helped to commercialise Barret's works through prints. As well as being a printer, he was also a founding member of the Royal Academy and was known as a watercolour and gauche painter. He had travelled in many of the same places as Barret and had printed views of South and North Wales between 1775 and 1777. He was one of the pioneers for aquatints, which made it easy to reproduce watercolour paintings by shading with different colour

tones.⁴⁴² Today at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford there are seven aquatints and etchings after Barret printed by Sandby.

William Watts (1752-1851) was another engraver who printed several of Barret's works. His "View of the Seats of English Nobility and Gentry" published between 1778-1787 is a series of engravings that includes reproductions of Barret's work. This series of engravings included eighty-six views of country houses in Picturesque settings, each accompanied by a description of the view. The engravings were presented as being after the most esteemed artists of the time. Among these is Barret's representation of Cadland Park in Hampshire, the Seat of Robt. Drummond Esqr, (Fig. 157) which shows a villa belonging to Lord Clive.

Archibald Robertson (1765-1835) created several prints after Barret's work. Robertson is not known as well for his etchings, but there are eight different etchings after landscapes by Barret in the British Museum. The 'Public Advertiser', 3 June 1784, advertises the prints as having been 'finely painted in Watercolours' by 'the late Mr Barret'. These include *Bareges in the Pyranees* (Fig. 158) *Falls on the Gava* (Fig. 159) and Luz *in the Pyrenees* (Fig. 160). The landscape in *View of Recaro* (Fig. 161) includes a small bridge across a stream in the foreground, with three soldiers on the bank,

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1912-0319-78.

⁴⁴² Colley, L. (2009). "Paul Sandy: Picturing Britain", *The Guardian*, November 7, 2009, retrieved August 9, 2019 from

https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2009/nov/07/paul-sandby-exhibition-lindacolley.

⁴⁴³ David, A., Print, Book, Illustration in British Museum Number 1912,0319.78 retrieved August 15, 2019, from

livestock and figures in the field opposite and a town in the middle ground. A church tower on the right is seen at the foot of the mountains.

James Watson (1739-1790) is likely to have been friends with Barret given that he was also from Ireland and moved to London to become one of the leading mezzotint engravers in the city. He reproduced a rare portrait of a dog by Barret as well as images by many of Barret's colleagues including Gainsborough and Reynolds. Boydell also employed Watson. *Spaniel* (Fig. 112.2) was a print made by Watson after Barret that shows a spaniel standing to the left beside a pool of water in a woodland, watching wild duck flying off at left.

Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1788) studied in Paris and at the Royal Academy. His publication *Imitations of Modern Drawings*, made between 1784 and 1788 included works after Gainsborough, Barret, Wheatley, Wigstead and Sawrey Gilpin. There were thirty-one aquatint and dry point plates and two of them were after Barret. He lake scene in *Imitations of Modern Drawings* (Fig. 162), includes four cows by the water's edge and is framed by two entwined trees on the right. The shore curves on the right, and a man in a canoe approaches a smartly dressed couple. There is sailing boat on the lake leading the eye to the hills beyond. The print was made after a drawing by Barret dating to 1784-88. *A Park Landscape* (Fig. 163), also comes from a series entitled *Imitations of Modern Drawings*. It is the same picture as (Fig. 164), except there is more

⁴⁴⁴ Club, G. (1916). *A Catalogue of Books Illustrated by Thomas Rowlandson*, New York: The Library Congress, p. 82.

depth and detail to the etching because there is more shadow and shading than (Fig. 165).

William Russell Birch (1755-1834) printed *Lakeview with Figure on Horseback* (Fig. 166) which includes a figure on horseback in the foreground, a man with dogs, boats on the water in the distance and mountains on either side. It is described as being after George Barret the Elder, with the figures after Gilpin, and comes from an unidentified series. William Birch also engraved and printed pictures by Barret's colleges such as William Gilpin in *Llanberis Lake, North Wale*, (Fig. 167).

Sayer and Bennett Firm (1777- 1784) was a short-lived publishing firm that operated briefly during the second half of the eighteenth century. The founders were Robert Sayer (1725-1794) and John Bennett (1745 – 1787). The one etching by them of Barret's work is *A Landscape with a River Flowing Between Verdant Hills with Sun-Rising* (Fig. 168). A group of figures is visible in the right foreground; one holds a fishing rod and points to a boat nearby.

Joseph Powell (1780-1834) is known to have published a wooded landscape in *View of Norbury Park* (Fig. 169), has a log cart travels along a road. Further proof of the wagons being a popular theme during this time.

This range of printers producing engravings of Barret's work is testament to the thriving print culture in England by the end of the eighteenth century, when over three thousand men were working in printing presses in England.⁴⁴⁵ While the print trade

⁴⁴⁵ Bermingham, A. and Brewer, J. (1995). *The Consumption Culture 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text*, London: Routledge.

expanded, new techniques of printing were on the rise, stimulated by the growing demand for prints. As Pears argues, by the mid eighteenth-century collecting was not simply a pursuit of the rich and educated elite, and large groups of people were prepared to invest in images. This included a high demand for engravings and reproductions of landscape art. Even in Ireland, for example, Lady Louisa Conolly and her sister comment on how Irish collectors excitedly waited for new mezzotints to be sent from friends and relatives in London. It seems that with his own work Barret attempted to exploit this trade.

Barret's Last Commission, Death and Legacy

In an attempt to help Barret who was suffering from ill health and constant financial insecurity, Burke ensured his appointment as painter to the Royal Hospital in Chelsea in 1782, given that the post was provisioned with a sizable salary.⁴⁴⁸ Burke's own association with the Royal Hospital began in March 1782 on his appointment as Paymaster-General, while his connection with the artist seems to have endured since they met in Ireland.⁴⁴⁹ Beginning to paint a mural presumably as he had done previously at Norbury Park, Barret was unable to complete the project: he died two

⁴⁴⁶ Pears, I. (1988). *The Discovery of Painting the Growth of Interest in the Arts in England 1680-1768*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 120.

⁴⁴⁷ Monkhouse, C. and Laffan, W. (2015). *Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design 1690-1840*, Chicago: The Arts Institute of Chicago, p. 158.

⁴⁴⁸ Dean, C. G. T. (1950). *The Royal Hospital Chelsea*, Michigan, University of Michigan Press, p. 148.

⁴⁴⁹ Robinson, N. (1996). *Edmund Burke: A Life in Caricature*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 28.

years after he started work.⁴⁵⁰ It seems that Barret died in Paddington after suffering a bout of asthma on May 29, 1784. After his death, his son James Barret was appointed as the master painter of the Royal Hospital and finished the mural. However, today, there is no evidence of work by either Barret or his son. David Newton, the Royal Hospital's Education & Learning Coordinator and John Rochester, the Heritage Manager, suggests that Barret may have painted in the Rotunda in Ranelagh gardens, which was closed in 1803.⁴⁵¹

Following Barret's death, the Council Minutes at the Royal Academy in 1784 recorded that a letter from the artist to Lock was read as a way to mourn Barret's death. The Academy also gave Barret's wife £30 a year, recorded in the minutes of a meeting held on February 24 1786. Another recording in the Royal Academy Council Minutes in 1796 claims that "12 years after Barret's death had a painting sell for one pound and three shillings." This shows the way that prices for his work had fallen significantly, even after his death. Glossing over his finances, in the nineteenth century an entry under "Irish Artists" in *Dublin Literary Repertory of Arts, Science, Literature and*

⁴⁵⁰ Dean, C. (1950). *The Royal Chelsea Hospital*, London: Hutchinson and Company, p. 248.

⁴⁵¹ Email from John Rochester the Royal Chelsea Hospital "George Barret" Heritage Manager to Logan Morse, July 27th 2018. See Morse, L. M. (2022) *Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder*, Volume II, Appendix, p. 118. ⁴⁵² Royal Academy General Assembly Minutes, Reference number RAA/GA/1, See Morse, L. M. (2022) *Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder*, Volume II, Appendix p. 76.

⁴⁵³ Royal Academy General Assembly Minutes, Reference number RAA/GA/1, See Morse, L. M. (2022) *Artist in the Background: Life and Works of George Barret, the Elder*, Volume II, Appendix, p. 79.

⁴⁵⁴ Bodkin, T. (1920). *Four Irish Landscape Painters*, Dublin: The Talbot Press Limited, p. 5.

Miscellaneous Information (1814) points to Barret's kind, friendly, and gentle manners, as well as his sense of humour. The text explains that on his death he "left behind a widow and nine children." The dictionary stops short of presenting the Barret children as an artist family.

Of Barret's nine children, four, including his daughter, became artists. This is despite that fact that it seems that as James Roberts wrote to Reynolds in 1772, Barret was opposed to his children becoming artists. According to Roberts,

Mr Barret says he never would make a son of his a painter without he found his inclination so violent as to make him surmount of difficulties, but sometimes this strong inclination is perhaps fixed in a person of weak capacities, but then it can never produce any good."456

It seems that by his example, Barret had fostered in his children this "violent" inclination to surmount the difficulties of the profession, and as such had established a family of artists. Families of artists are not an unknown concept in the history of art. The guild-based social structures of medieval Europe present a rich legacy of filial continuity in art. Equally the studio and apprenticeship systems which developed (primarily outside Britain) in the Renaissance led to well-known family lineages such as the Bellinis active in Venice during the second half of the fifteenth century; Orazio

⁴⁵⁵ Bodkin, T. (1920). *Four Irish Landscape Painters,* Dublin: The Talbot Press Limited, p. 8.

⁴⁵⁶ Letter in Royal Academy from James Roberts to Joshua Reynolds dated March 29th, 1772, Refrence Number REY/3/1-66.

⁴⁵⁷ See for example Lindley, P. (2003). *Making Medieval Art*, Donington: Shaun Tyas; Farnhill, K. (2001). *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia, c.* 1470–1550, New York: York Medieval Press.

and his daughter Artemisia Gentileschi (1563-1639, and 1593-1654) and Giambattista (1696-1770) and his sons Giandomenico and Lorezo Tiepolo (1727-1804, and 1736-1776). In the context of British art John and John Baptist Closterman (1660-1711) were German brother artists trained by their father, who were active in London in the early eighteenth century. 458 More centrally to the canon, Hogarth's professional relationship to his father-in-law James Thornhill (1675-1734) sets up a model instance of artistic continuity moving along genealogical lines (Hogarth took on the Saint Martin's Lane Academy from Thornhill in 1735). In the Atlantic context the Peale family presents a strongly documented contemporary eighteenth century case of a family of American artists active from c. 1760 to c. 1880. Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827) was the first of this family of eight artists, extensively influencing American painting through his work as a portraitist and his teaching of his sons, brothers, and nieces. 459 Peale's brother James (1749-1831) became a miniaturist and his three sons Raphaelle, Rembrandt and Rubens painted portraits and still life subjects. James Peale's daughters Anna, Margaretta Angelica and Sarah Miriam Peale also became successful miniaturists.

However, this approach to explaining the development of art over time has not yet found traction in the history of British art and as such the Barret family of artists might provide a starting point to look more closely at art and society in Britain between c. 1747 and c. 1842. Of Barret's artist children, George Thomas Barret Junior (1767-

⁴⁵⁸ Rogers, M. (1983). *John and John Baptist Closterman: A Catalogue of Their Works.* London: Walpole Society, p. 224-279.

⁴⁵⁹ For literature on the Peale family see Miller, L. B. (1993). "Father and Son: The Relationship of Charles Willson Peale and Raphaelle Peale", *American Art Journal*, Vol. 25, p. 4-61; Miller, L. B. (1996). *The Peale Family: Creation of a Legacy, 1770-1870*, New York: Abbeville Press.

1842) is the best-known. His *Self-portrait* (Fig. 170) depicts himself in front of an easel supporting an image that looks like an Irish landscape by his father, clearly identifying himself as part of the family lineage. George Barret Junior also was one of the eight original members of the Watercolour Society, with which he exhibited among sixteen others in 1805.⁴⁶⁰ In 1840 Ackerman published *Theory and Practice of Water-Colour Painting*, including a series of letters from George Barret Junior to Reverend William Turner (1761-1859) about the practice of water colouring. He also exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1800 to 1803. A bust of Barret that can be seen on the façade of the building for the Royal Society of Painters in Watercolour off Piccadilly Street, along with other honoured members.

Barret Junior followed his father's footsteps by being involved in the Society of Painters of Water Colours. He was close friends with Gilpin's son William Sawrey Gilpin (1762-1843), who became the first president of the Society of Water Colours. Like his father, George Barret Junior was a landscape artist who worked in both oils and watercolours, painting Picturesque views of southern English landscapes, many of which feature sunrises and sunsets, suggested in his early self-portrait, in which he is shown beside his easel on which there is a small landscape canvas. Barret holds a paintbrush in his right hand and a mahl stick in his left. It seems that George Barret Junior could paint very similar to his father, and several pictures which maybe by his father are attributed to him. Examples of these are 'Gentlemen's Horseman's Seat in

⁴⁶⁰ Roget, J. (1891). A History of the Old Water Colour Society of Painters in the Water Colours, with Biographical Notices of its Older and all of the Deceased Members and Associates, Proceeded by an Account of English Water Colour Art and Artists in the Eighteenth Century, London: Longmans, Green, and Company, p. 125.

Yorkshire', 'Scene on Loch Lomond' in 1796, 'Lord Grantley's Seat' (horses by Gilpin) and 'Scene in the Highlands' (with a portrait by Reinagle and horses by Gilpin). As Roget notes, "the subject would have pointed to the authorship of George Barret, the elder had he not been dead more than ten years." 461

Despite this similarity, Barret Junior's paintings were more Romantic and Claudian than his father's work. There were many sunsets and sunrises with no reference to the locations of these scenes. AGA Roget argues, Barret had a strong feeling for English rural scenery, he was qualified to transmit to his own son a valuable inheritance of art-training it was all the wealth he could leave him, AGA However, unlike his father, George Barret Junior appears to have been aman of simple tastes and frugal in his habits, while he was also industrious and dedicated to his art. But he made so modest an estimate of the value of his own work that he was always poor. AGA The two artists painted similar places, such as both painted the Isle of Wight and North Wales, suggesting that George Barret Junior was also influenced by his father's interest in the Picturesque.

Of Barret's other artist children, Joseph Barret (1759-1830) was awarded a gold palette by Society of Arts in 1775 for an ornamental design. James Barret (1762-1819)

⁴⁶¹ ibid, p. 137.

⁴⁶² Fenwick, S. and Smith, G. (1997). The Business of Water Colours: A Guide to the Archives of the Royal Water colour Society, New York: Ashgate Publishing, p. 122. ⁴⁶³ Roget, J. (1891). A History of the Old Water Colour Society of Painters in the Water Colours, with Biographical Notices of its Older and All of the Deceased Members and Associates, Proceeded by an Account of English Water Colour Art and Artists in the Eighteenth Century, London: Longmans, Green, and Company, p. 176. ⁴⁶⁴ ibid, p. 137.

succeeded his father as a master at the Royal Chelsea Hospital. He painted landscapes and watercolours and exhibited them at the Royal Academy from 1785-1819. In an age in which the highest goal for women was marriage, the amateurishness encouraged by the Picturesque can be linked with the rise of drawing room art, and female accomplishment. Mary Barret (1771-1836), a pupil of Mrs Anne Mee, the miniature painter, painted birds and still life scenes. In so doing she appears to have gone beyond the drawing room in making a career of her art. In a family of topographic artists, her miniatures perhaps however reflect contemporary gender divisions and create an image of what was available to a woman artist in the context of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century British art.465 Despite this, Mary Barret was elected into the Old Water-Colour Society on February 10 1823, where she exhibited over thirty-four paintings between 1823 and 1835. Birth records from the mid-eighteenth century reveal the names of two more children, although it seems that Barret's final three children were unrecorded. Will Lock Barret (born 1771) and Isabella Barret (born 1765) were the other children found through this research. As mentioned in chapter three, the choice of the name Will Lock must have been in honour of Barret's patron, as he was born around the same time Barret was working at Norbury Park.

In conclusion, this chapter has attempted to explore Barret's final projects as well as the continuation of his legacy through the work of his artist children. In order to do this, the chapter has considered the dissemination of some of his best-known works

⁴⁶⁵ For a discussion of these ideas see Sheriff, M. D. (1996). *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

221

during the eighteenth century through a discussion of his involvement with the growing

print market, as well as his production of images intended directly for the print trade

via his associations with various prominent printers of the period. The extent to which

Barret as well as other commercial printers were engaged with creating reproductions

of his work can be read as a suggestion of the popularity of his works during his lifetime.

This endeavour also demonstrates his interest in the market, given that Barret always

appears to have viewed his painting as a commercial enterprise. The second part of the

chapter has attempted to show light on the circumstances of his last commission and

death as well as the immediate responses to this by the Royal Academy. Giving a brief

overview of the artist's children has located Barret as the head of a family of artists,

meaning that although his legacy may have been neglected in wider canons of art

history, his impact was clearly evident on his artist children, and further analysis might

be carried out on the notion of the Barret family of artists. The concept of the 'artist

family' raises questions as to the overall social history of the working family in

eighteenth century Britain, and what this tells us about the changing status of art and

artists in society at large.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

This thesis has plotted, for the first time in the history of art, the life of the eighteenthcentury Irish painter George Barret. It has also complied the first catalogue and sustained analysis of the major works and commissions he carried out during his lifetime. Drawing on hitherto undiscovered archival sources, it has elaborated and then considered his trajectory from the son of a tailor born in Dublin, discussed in the first chapter, to his bankruptcy and subsequent death in Paddington, discussed respectively in the fourth and sixth chapters. The second and third chapters focused the peak of his career as one of the most sought-after painter decorators in London during the period, standing out even among better known contemporaries such as Richard Wilson. As this dissertation has shown for the first time in the scholarship on Anglo-Irish landscape painting and on the 18th century art market, among Barret's patrons are many of the most significant names in eighteenth-century British art and politics, particularly in the context of Whig circles and those with Anglo Irish connections. Given the context of the eighteenth-century art market which has been touched on in the second and fourth chapters, and which relied on artists to publicise themselves in a very direct manner with their potential patrons, this was a great achievement for someone who had begun life in the Liberties, a working-class district in Dublin. Although archival sources reveal that he clearly received a great deal of help from friends and supporters at different stages in his career, notably Edmund Burke and William Lock, they also make clear that one of Barret's major achievements was his ability to interact successfully with his patrons. As the third chapter has argued, it was, in fact, this ability that elevated his contemporary fame and the popularity of his work above that of other better-known contemporary landscape painters such as Wilson. Ultimately it is perhaps in this more social sense that Barret should be remembered.

Despite his success with patrons, archival sources reveal that Barret's ability to connect with the eighteenth century elite was not without cost. The artist seems never to have recovered from his bankruptcy, which numerous contemporary sources suggest was as a result of living beyond his means as a way to keep up with the lifestyles of his patrons. It seems that even after his move from Orchard Street to Paddington, Barret was unable to curb his continued high level of spending. That said, the sixth chapter of this dissertation has argued that Barret exploited the print trade to widen the market for his work. He also raised what might be seen as a 'family of artists', given that so many of his children followed their father into painting. This suggests that the young Barrets admired their father, and the fact that two of his sons took over his commissions and continued to work for their father's patrons suggests that Barret had established strong foundations in his relationships both with his children and his clients.

Since little of the existing secondary literature touches on Barret and there has been no attempt to construct a catalogue raisonné of his oeuvre until now, a large part of this thesis has necessitated the cataloguing of Barret's work, which has run throughout the second section of each chapter. While the cataloguing may at times have appeared to halt the flow of the argument, constructing it has been essential to this project since, as mentioned, no catalogue of Barret's work exists to date, making this a fundamental part of the research necessary for this thesis, and adding significantly to

what is known of Anglo-Irish landscape painting as a whole. The attempt in each chapter to discuss works alongside any commissions they may have related to also helped to establish a picture of how Barret worked, as well as with, and for, whom he painted. This again contributes to locating the artist within his social and artistic milieu within the eighteenth-century art market in Ireland and England.

While this dissertation has made no claim to recovering Barret as a lost genius of eighteenth-century British landscape painting, and indeed the archives and sources do no support such a re-reading of his work and position, his ability to keep up with the most fashionable trends, tastes and preferences was clearly a large part of what made him appealing to his patrons. As a friend of Burke, Barret was highly influenced by his philosophies surrounding the Sublime, particularly while he was still in Ireland, as discussed in the first chapter. The same is true in the case of Picturesque theory, where the fifth chapter aimed to show that Barret's more speculative work demonstrates more than a superficial understanding of Gilpin's demands and ideas. As has been mentioned multiple times throughout this dissertation, Barret did not take a Grand Tour or travel abroad, and yet his ingenuity and ability to gain access to Grand Tour collections in both England and Ireland also enabled him to rise to the demand of creating classically inspired scenes for Grand Tourist patrons both in Ireland and later in London.

Ultimately the purpose of this dissertation has not been to bolster the tradition of the canonical history of art, by attempting to rehabilitate Barret's work into the canon. Instead, through rigorous first-hand research and in light of new art histories that are emerging in the present, it has aimed to provide new ways of understanding

that allow for a more complex picture of, in this case, the field of eighteenth-century landscape painting, as well as the place of Barret within it. This has necessitated going beyond discussions of artistic talent to touch on other ways of negotiating a career in art. This is particularly relevant given the context of what was emerging as an increasingly competitive and dynamic market as a result of the foundation of the Royal Academy, alongside numerous other societies. It is for his ability to negotiate this context both for himself, and later to set the foundations for his family to follow in his footsteps, that Barret deserves recognition.