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**THE CEILING OF SKELMORLIE AISLE:
A NARRATIVE ARTICULATED IN PAINT.**

Author: Angela Callaghan

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

School of Humanities

College of Arts

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature _____

Printed Name _____

Date _____

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Angela Callaghan
November 2013

ABSTRACT

The intention of this thesis was to demonstrate that, with in-depth analysis, a carefully and deliberately constructed narrative could be revealed within the ceiling paintings of Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Scotland (c.1638). The ceiling adorned a burial aisle, which was erected by Sir Robert Montgomerie, seventh of Skelmorlie, in honour of his wife, Dame Margaret Douglas. The paintings, executed by Edinburgh apprentice James Stalker, are the only surviving example of the genre signed and dated by the artist. The ceiling was composed of forty-one individual compartments each one containing different combinations of emblems, designs, human figures, animals, birds and heraldic representations. Of the forty-one compartments, four of these contained landscape paintings, depicting the seasons, and their associated labours. Two unusual paintings were also executed each containing representations of a female figure on the land and by the sea. By a study of semiotics, this dissertation systematically re-constructed the narrative concealed within the paintings. This revealed the intrinsic meaning of the iconography. The thesis argued that simple observation revealed very little information relating to the understanding of the paintings and in-depth study was required to elucidate this.

The narrative began with an exploration of seventeenth-century nobility with a particular focus on the patron, Sir Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie. It then considered the role of architecture and design in Early Modern Scotland with a discussion on domestic architecture and burial aisles. An exploration into the painted ceiling in seventeenth-century Scotland was also included as was a consideration of the role of the artist and patron. A focus on the sources available to artists in Scotland during the Early Modern period, followed with a particular investigation into those used within the ceiling iconography of Skelmorlie Aisle. Whether it was intended that the ceiling iconography was to be read in a specific order was also included. These initial stages provided a platform from which an in-depth analysis of the iconography within the paintings, could be undertaken. The methodology applied here was that composed by German born art historian Erwin Panofsky. Panofsky argued that identifying objects, shapes and forms did not convey why certain components were chosen or what they meant. The first step was to ascertain the genesis of the sources, as this provided a greater understanding of the narrative and why they were chosen by Montgomerie. The research revealed that, with the exception of generic designs of floral patterns and scrollwork, the iconography within the paintings was not chosen at random; each component was selected for a very specific reason. When all of the factors were considered and the iconography analysed in depth, the full narrative became exposed.

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BUILDINGS VISITED

Balgonie Castle, Perthshire.
Banqueting Hall, Whitehall, London.
Barholm Castle, Gatehouse of Fleet, Galloway.
Crathes Castle, Deeside.
Culross Palace, Fife.
Dean House, Edinburgh.
Drumlanrig Castle, Thornhill, Dumfriesshire.
Dumfries House, Cumnock, Ayrshire.
Edinburgh Castle, Edinburgh.
John Knox House, Edinburgh.
Mary Somerville's House, Burntisland, Perthshire.
Newark Castle, Renfrewshire.
Northfield House, Prestonpans.
Pinkie House, Musselburgh.
Prestongrange, Prestonpans.
Saint Mary's Church, Glentully, Perthshire.
Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.
Skelmorlie Castle, Skelmorlie, Ayrshire.
Stirling Castle, Stirling.

ABBREVIATIONS

AGAA	Ayr and Galloway Archaeological Association
CUP	Cambridge University Press
GUP	Glasgow University Press
EUP	Edinburgh University Press
HMSO	His Majesty's Stationary Office
HS	Historic Scotland
NAS	National Archives of Scotland
NGS	National Gallery of Scotland
OUP	Oxford University Press
SW	Skelmorlie Writs
YUP	Yale University Press

INTRODUCTION

Thought peirlis give pryce and Diamonds be deir
Or royall rubies countit rich and rare
The Margarit does merit mekle mare
As Jem of Jeuels, paragon but peir.¹

1638 was a monumental year in Scottish history. The signing of the National Covenant on 28 February at Greyfriars Kirk in Edinburgh was a new dawn which was met with excitement and enthusiasm. The document, signed initially, and mainly, by the nobility and gentlefolk, touched a nerve of patriotism throughout the realm as both sexes, young and old, embraced its ideology. The occasion was to permanently change the political and religious landscape of Scotland and remains one of the fundamental milestones in the history of the nation. The Covenanting Revolution that it nurtured exposed Scotland to years of bloodshed and instability as the feuding era, extinguished by James VI at the beginning of the century, was replaced by turmoil of a different nature but of equal magnitude. To say the country was in the midst of religious and political unrest would be an understatement.

Further afield, the Thirty Years War (1618-48) raged throughout much of Europe. For both Protestants and Catholics, God appeared to turn an eye to the vicious and barbaric acts that were carried out in his name. Women and men were tortured and burned for witchcraft at the hands of merciless governors who cared little for the suffering they inflicted. At the same time, an obsession with death infiltrated the lives of European society eating its way through countries like a malignant cancer and bringing fear and anxiety. In many respects, the seventeenth century was a turbulent and sickening era.

¹ David J. Parkinson ed., *Alexander Montgomerie Poems* 2 vols., (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society) vol.i., 124.

The counterbalance of these repugnant acts inflicted on society came in the multitude of beautiful works of art produced by European artists. The reason may have been, as initially suggested by Diderot, from the, 'evolution of the desire to enter into a pictorial space that subsequently replaced reality'.² As secular imagery superseded religious iconography in many areas, Jaques Callot's etching of the horrors of the Thirty Years War were overshadowed by the abundance of beautiful, vividly coloured paintings by artists such as Van Dyke, Velazquez and Rubens.

In London, Charles I enjoyed a stylish existence surrounded by the Great Masters. He was fully aware of the atrocities on the Continent, but he chose to concern himself more with his own personal surroundings. Due to this, he did not overly disturb himself with the murmurings of discontent emanating from Scotland. Charles was more preoccupied with continental visitors than he was with discussing matters of state, a factor that resulted in Scotland being left to take care of itself.

Charles enjoyed the company of Continental visitors and entertained them within the splendour of the Banqueting Hall at Whitehall. Here Charles could visually survey the greatness, power and might that was the Stewart dynasty. Casting his eyes upwards, he could see representations of his father's reign within the ceiling paintings executed two years previously by Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640). Rubens captured the essence of Stewart kingship in his portrayal of the deceased James VI, the paintings being a salute to both the man and the crown he represented. Of the nine gigantic canvases, each encased in ornate gold frameworks, the pinnacle was *The Apotheosis of King James* (c1635), a painting which extravagantly glorified the king's virtues.³

² Bernard Comment, *The Panorama* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999) 98.

³ Bert Schepers, 'The ceiling paintings in the Banqueting Hall' in Michel Draguet ed., *Rubens: A Genius at Work*, (Brussels: Lannoo Publications, 2008) 230.

James' son Charles, however, was destined for a different notoriety. As he sat and admired the resplendent and magisterial spectacle before him, he was not to know that such an honour would never be bestowed upon him. In relation to this king, what the Banqueting Hall would be remembered for was that it would be the venue from which observers could watch the last dramatic moments of Charles' life unfold. Perhaps if he had spent more time engaged with his Scottish subjects, he could have prevented civil war and the beginning of his own downfall. History would dictate that, despite several paintings of him having been commissioned, neither Rubens, nor any other master, would be commissioned to paint a ceiling in honour of this monarch.

In 1638, in the small coastal town of Largs in south west Scotland, another masterpiece was being completed. James Stalker, an apprentice decorative artist based in Edinburgh, was putting the finishing touches to his painted ceiling which he would have signed and dated with pride (Plate 1). It may not have possessed the richness, splendour or wealth of Rubens' compositions but it represented Scotland's own unique interpretation of decorative painting. These ceiling paintings were not dedicated to a monarch, but were designed to adorn the ceiling of a private burial aisle, now known as Skelmorlie Aisle, which held the remains of the wife of a local Scottish laird, Sir Robert Montgomerie, seventh of Skelmorlie (d.1650).

Montgomerie's wife, Dame Margaret Douglas (d.1624),⁴ was the daughter of Sir William Douglas of Hawick; her mother, also named Margaret, was the daughter of James Gordon of Lochinvar.⁵ The couple married on 15 November 1593 and had

⁴ Tomb inscription, Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.

⁵ James Balfour Paul, ed., *The Scots Peerage*, 9 vols. (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1910) vol. viii, 128.

two children.⁶ These scanty details are all that has survived of Margaret Douglas, other than the contents of two sonnets dedicated to her by court poet to James VI and cousin of Robert, Alexander Montgomerie, and the narrative contained within the painted ceiling that her husband commissioned in her memory.

The building, acquired by Historic Scotland in the 1930s from the Montgomeries of Eglinton, also housed a magnificent Renaissance style monument which mirrored the intricacy and splendour of those created for Mary Queen of Scots and Queen Elizabeth I in Westminster Abbey.⁷ The monument was not, however, the subject of this dissertation therefore it was only discussed in brief detail within the following chapters.

Previous scholarship on the ceiling paintings of Skelmorlie Aisle have been largely descriptive studies which have principally concentrated on identification of the various components. These were expanded upon by Michael Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland* (2003), whose focus on emblematics highlighted the origins of many of the sources utilised by James Stalker. Scholarship into the interpretation of the narrative concealed within the ceiling paintings, however, was an area which had been under researched.

The intention of this thesis was to prove that by in-depth analysis of the ceiling paintings an intentionally constructed narrative could be unearthed. To achieve this the thesis challenged two principal points, firstly, that the iconography was not selected at random and had particular relevance to Montgomerie and, secondly, to examine the extent to which the suggestion, presented by Michal Bath,

⁶ GD3/ 2/13/10 Montgomerie Papers, NAS.

⁷ Michael Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, (Edinburgh: NMS Publications, 2003) 142.

that the aisle paintings reflected, 'it's patron's Catholic spirituality'⁸, by his inclusion of imagery relating to covert Catholicism, was true.

To allow a platform from which the construction of the narrative could be undertaken, a study of Early Modern nobility was carried out as this highlighted the challenges facing Montgomerie and his contemporaries. An in-depth survey into Montgomerie, and his immediate family, life experiences and influences was also undertaken. A consideration of contemporary architecture and design was presented including a discussion on burial aisles and the popularity of the painted ceiling. A consideration of the relationship between artist and patron during the era was also under included. The study incorporated an examination of the type of sources chosen by decorative artists of the era and specifically what sources were available and utilised by Stalker. Identifying the genre of art displayed within the aisle was also incorporated as this gave a clear indication of what Montgomerie's intentions were in choosing the iconography. In-depth analysis of the individual paintings provided an insight into the early seventeenth-century mentalities and aesthetics as an understanding of the choice of iconography demonstrated the subliminal and latent intentions of both the artist and the patron.

Montgomerie constructed the aisle fourteen years after the death of his wife in 1624, an action which indicated, despite the passage of time, he was still mourning her loss.⁹ Margaret was deemed to be a great beauty, a fact confirmed by cousin of Montgomerie of Skelmorlie, Alexander Montgomerie, court poet to James VI who dedicated two sonnets to her.¹⁰ The sonnets, an extract from which was

⁸ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 145.

⁹ This lapse in time is discussed in greater detail in chapter one.

¹⁰ There are an abundance of texts on Alexander Montgomerie including Roderick Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie: Poetry, Politics and Culture*, (Tempe, Arizona: Centre for Medieval Studies, 2005), Ronald Jack, *Alexander Montgomerie*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), George Eyre-Todd, *Scottish Poetry of the Sixteenth Century*, 2 vols., (Glasgow, 1896).

quoted above, highlighted her virtues and revealed some of the characteristics of her personality. A further discussion on Montgomerie's sonnets was undertaken in chapter six.

Montgomerie Family Lineage in Brief

Robert, Seventh of Skelmorlie is a relatively unknown entity. Historian Theresa Grant stated, 'very little specific detail is known about his life, except what tradition has laid down and the scanty records of the period show'.¹¹ Robert was directly descended from George Montgomerie, second son of Alexander, grandfather of the first earl (1483-1545). Alexander granted a charter to George in the form of a gift of the lands of Skelmorlie. Charters of 1 November 1453 and 16 June 1461 respectively attest that George also received from his father the lands of Lochliboside and Hartfield both in the burgh of Renfrew.¹² George, first of Skelmorlie, died before 1506 and was succeeded by his son John. John's son Cuthbert, third of Skelmorlie, had a son, also Cuthbert, who was slain at the battle of Flodden leaving his son George, who was a minor at the time, his heir. George eventually married Catherine, youngest daughter of Hew, Earl of Eglinton, thus marrying directly into the main family line. He died in 1561 leaving as his heir Thomas Montgomerie, fifth of Skelmorlie.¹³

Thomas was incapable of executing his affairs due to a mental disability. As stated in the Skelmorlie Writs, he was afflicted with, 'franessy and is nocht perfyte in his wittis, nor competent in himself, and swa can nocht rewile nor gowarne

¹¹ Teresa Grant 'Devotional Meditations' *Church Monuments: Journal of the Church Monuments Society*. vol. xvii, 2002.68-88.

¹² NAS, SW, GD3/1/7/1.

¹³ William Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1859 vol.i.) 31.

himself'.¹⁴ Due to this incapacity, a contract was drawn up between the Earl of Eglinton and Thomas' brother Robert, father of Robert, seventh of Skelmorlie, dated 18 August 1562, which allowed Robert to control his brother's affairs. The reasons and arrangements put in place are clearly stated in the contract which indicated that Thomas was not capable of caring for:

his landis, rowmes, possessionis, guides and geir; quhairfor the saidis Robert is seruit and retowrit totour administrator during the time of his seiknes, quho hes requirit and erneislie dissyrit the saisis noble and potent lorde to infeft or caws be infeft, be his precept, the saidis Robert in his landis of Skelmurlie, Loychransay, Synnok and Lochilbochsyd, with thair pertinent is hes haldin the saidis noble and potent lorde in chief; quha being myndit neuer to defraude the saidis Thomas of his kyndlie inheritence.¹⁵

In addition to organising his affairs, Thomas' brother Robert was also appointed his carer and protector, succeeding Thomas when he died. The sixth of Skelmorlie married Dorothy, daughter of Robert, Lord Sempill, in May 1567, thus allying the Montgomeries with another leading Ayrshire family whose arms are incorporated on the Skelmorlie Aisle ceiling. Robert and Dorothy had four sons and four daughters of which Robert, seventh of Skelmorlie, was one. He was the second son after his brother William and succeeded to the title after both William and his father were killed during an episode of feuding in 1583.¹⁶ A full discussion of Montgomerie, seventh of Skelmorlie this was undertaken in the following chapter.

Observation of Skelmorlie Aisle

The aisle (Plate 2) in which the painted ceiling was executed measured thirty-four feet ten inches in length by twenty-two feet in width and twenty feet high

¹⁴ NAS, SW, GD/3/1/7/1.

¹⁵ Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries* vol.i,56.

¹⁶ Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries* vol.i,56.

and was once attached to the old parish church in Largs at its southern side. The church building was demolished in 1802, but the aisle remained intact. The aisle also contained a freestone monument which acted as a laird's loft, this was erected in 1639 (Plate 3).¹⁷ The monument measured eleven and a half feet long, five feet wide and eighteen feet tall and was positioned to the left of the entrance underneath which the tomb which houses the remains of Sir Robert and his wife is situated.¹⁸ The monument boasted Corinthian style columns displayed on pedestals which were carved with a variety of designs.

As previously stated, Margaret died in 1624, as was indicated on her tomb engraving, therefore as all evidence, including reports from HS, indicated that the aisle was constructed between 1636-38, initially she must have been buried somewhere else. Although no evidence of this burial has survived, it was surmised she would have been laid to rest in the cemetery within the grounds of Largs parish Church as members of the nobility from other distinguished families within the area were buried there during this era. Members of the main Montgomery line at Eglinton were buried within the churchyard of Kilwinning Parish Church but there was no evidence of any of the Skelmorlie branch having been buried there.¹⁹

The barrel vaulted ceiling was sectioned into forty-one compartments by the use of bold black paint. This gave the initial impression that it was composed of a variety of unrelated, individually framed paintings. The subject matter consisted of a diverse array of designs, shapes and images including people, birds and animals, emblems, buildings, activities, heraldry, floral designs and grotesques. Written texts, which accompanied the artistic imagery, were included within oblong

¹⁷ John Houston, HS Unpublished Report, 1933.

¹⁸ John Houston, HS Unpublished Report, 1933.

¹⁹ No contemporary records have survived therefore information was retrieved from personal surveys of both churchyards.

compartments, again surrounded by a variety of patterns and designs. The paintings included four landscape scenes representing the seasons and two further landscapes incorporating a figure of a lady by land and one by sea. The paintings also incorporated pseudo- architectural features; for example, corbels are placed *in-situ* by the use of paint. This was observed by Bath who explained, ‘the whole ceiling is a notable exercise in false architecture, its barrel vault being intersected by *trompe l’oeil* ‘stone’ vaulting and rib-work rising up from fourteen Mannerist *trompe* corbels which pretend to project through the cornice’.²⁰

Restoration and Authenticity

The ceiling paintings were restored in 1899 by Glasgow based firm J. B. Bennett and Sons. Although no written account of the restoration process has survived, evidence of it having taken place was recorded both in newspapers²¹ and on the ceiling itself which displayed the word *Restoratum* and the date 1899. There were no written accounts of whether the ceiling had been restored prior to 1899 but the information available would support that it had not. Technical evidence on this subject was provided by HS and took the form of written reports and analysis of ultra-violet photographs (Plates 4-9) taken in 1989. According to Senior Conservator Ailsa Murray, these indicated that there was no evidence of previous restorative work prior to the 1899 restoration. Murray reported:

Any 'touching up' of the painting does not appear to have caused any notable changes to the original execution. Some reinforcement of the flat background areas and along the

²⁰ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 132.

²¹ The *Sunday Telegraph* (4 March 1900), *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald* (23 February 1900), *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald* (20 December 1889).

board joins has been done with more minor 'reinforcing' around the design elements such as the buildings.²²

Furthermore, local historian William Dobie, who wrote the earliest surviving written record of the ceiling paintings in 1847, *The Parish Churches and Burying-Grounds of Ayrshire*, also made no mention of any previous restorative work having been undertaken. Dobie was in no doubt that the paintings he viewed were those executed by Stalker. He penned:

The greater portion of these is still beautiful and bright after an exposure of two hundred years to an atmosphere which has pulverised the surface of the incumbent ashlar walls. The colouring of the ceiling, which we have thus attempted to describe, although partially faded has in no part altogether given way. While portions of it appear still to retain much of their original brightness. Considering its long exposure to the influence of so fitful an atmosphere, the free admission of which through broken windows and crannied roof, has been for many years unopposed, it says much for the excellence of the materials employed, that they have so long successfully resisted the most active agents of decay.²³

It was important to ascertain to what extent the restoration process interfered with the original paintings as this gave an indication of the painting's authenticity. In referring to authenticity the intention was to highlight to what extent the original work of the artist had been violated. One step towards ascertaining this was by undertaking a comparison of pre and post-restoration drawings. The analysis of two drawings dating from 1889 and 1897 was used to achieve this as they captured the ceiling decoration in its entirety. Comparison of the two gave an indication of what was visible prior to the restoration of 1899 thus providing evidence relating to how, and to what extent, the restoration had altered the original paintings.

²² Murray, 'Skelmorlie Aisle: observations on ultra-violet and normal reflected light photographs'. Unpublished report August 2009.

²³ William Dobie *The Parish Churches and Burying-Grounds of Ayrshire*, (Glasgow: Robert Malcolm, 1847) 14.

The first of these drawings, by W.H. Ross (Plate 10), was included in a re-published version of Dobie's 1847 text undertaken by his grandson, John Dobie Wilson. Wilson's text, published in 1889, was also included in the *Archaeological and Historical Collections relating to Ayr and Galloway* in the same year.²⁴ The second drawing, dating from 1897 (Plate 11), was executed by Edinburgh architect Andrew Lyons and accompanied an article, written by him, in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* in 1901.²⁵ Observation of both drawings indicated that although they differed in style and execution in places, they were clearly recording the same paintings as they are spatially and thematically exact. This observation provided crucial information relating to what was visible pre-restoration allowing a more in-depth survey of how these images were altered during the restoration process.

Restoration Alterations.

Through a comparative study it became evident that certain aspects of the ceiling iconography had been created during the restoration process in 1899 as some images were absent from the two drawings. Evidence from the ultra-violet photographs also assisted with this. The first example was the figure of the scorpion relating to the zodiac sign Scorpio. The image was, for some inexplicable reason, seen as pentimenti; in other words, another, slightly varied version of the scorpion was detected through the use of ultra-violet photography. It was observed underneath the existing paintwork where it was situated in a slightly different position from where it rests today. No reason has been unearthed as to why this occurred. Although the

²⁴ Ross, W.H., 'Developed Plan of Ceiling', *Archaeological and Historical Collections relating to Ayr and Galloway*, vol.vi, 1889.

²⁵ Andrew Lyons, 'The Ceiling in the Montgomerie Aisle of the Old Church at Largs' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, vol. 35 (1900-01) 109-11.

artist's intentions were respected, what is visible today, was created by the restorers in 1899 rather than enhancement or repair of the Stalker's original.

The six vignettes displaying the seasons and the two images incorporating a female figure, one in which she is beside a horse, which I have referred to as *The Land*, (Plate 12) and the other including a female figure by the sea, which I have referred to as *The Sea*, (Plate 13) revealed minor intrusion at the hands of the restoration team. Although areas of in-painting as a means of enhancement had taken place, it was deemed fair to suggest, in accordance with the ultra-violet report from HS,²⁶ that the restoration process applied to these paintings did not, in any significant way, interfere with Stalker's work. Any paint applied was done so following a philosophy of minimalism and the intentions of the artist respected.

Above each of the vignettes a small shield was *in situ* each containing monograms of Montgomery and Douglas. Of the six on display, Ross and Lyons both clearly demonstrated two shields, one above *Ver*, the other above *Hyems*, as being blank. The ceiling today, however, displayed intertwined initials in both, therefore, these areas had been created in 1899 by the restorers.²⁷ A further post-restoration addition was noted in the diamond panel found to the south of the ceiling's midline. Both Ross and Lyons indicated that the shield and scrolls were blank, as was a small round cartouche now bearing the date 1638. The shield now contains the Montgomery coat of arms accompanied by the words *Garde Bien*, the family motto, above. The scroll to the bottom of the panel now has the names Robert Montgomery and Margaret Douglas displayed and these too have been added at the restoration.

²⁶ Murray, 'Skelmorlie Aisle: observations on ultra-violet and normal reflected light photographs'. Unpublished report August 2009.

²⁷ Ross and Lyons drawings observed in relation to visible iconography within Skelmorlie Aisle, September 2007.

As the bulk of the smaller designs were compiled using a repetitive design, in-touching would have been a simple process. The process made the iconography bolder and renewed and refreshed areas which were either extremely faded or had completely vanished through the rigours of time. It is argued that in comparing the nineteenth-century drawings to the ceiling paintings as they are today, the integrity of the artist has not, on the whole, been compromised. Some components had been identified as not being present in the pre-restoration drawings, and since HS files indicated that no in-touching with paint had been applied to the ceiling iconography since the restoration of 1899,²⁸ these areas had been created at the hands of the restorers and cannot be regarded as authentic.

The ceiling paintings as they are today display an almost exact likeness to Ross' drawing of 1899. This gives substance to the suggestion that the Ross execution was drawn as a plan for the Bennett restoration and explains why the title accompanying the drawing was, 'developed plan of ceiling'.²⁹ The Lyons drawing, although thematically and spatially identical, varied slightly in composition when compared to the ceiling today. Although paint had been applied to the ceiling during the restoration process, there was no evidence unearthed through written accounts, HS files or technical reports to suggest that there was any previous restorative work prior to that of 1899.

Chapter Breakdown

²⁸ Robert Wilmot, 'Examining authenticity in two contemporary projects in Scotland'. (Forthcoming).

²⁹ Wilson, Robert Dobie *The Skelmorlie Aisle and Monuments at Largs*, (Edinburgh, 1889) centre insertion.

Chapter one provided an overview of seventeenth-century Scottish nobility exploring their aspirations, influences and experiences. A consideration of contemporary religion was also undertaken as this was of crucial importance to the mentalité of the Scottish nobility. This investigation provided contextual material in which a study of Robert Montgomerie, seventh of Skelmorlie could be situated. To create a profile of Montgomerie the chapter considered the man he was and the influences and challenges that faced him. A consideration of the feuding era, which had a major influence on his life, was also undertaken. Montgomerie's religious ideology was investigated in relation to evidence available in contemporary records. Understanding his heritage, particular interests and personality, assisted in interpreting the iconographic aspects of the ceiling's narrative.

Chapter two considered contemporary architecture and design in Early Modern Scotland. It presented a discussion on burial aisles in Scotland by undertaking a comparative study of other aisles of the period. A consideration of the construction and decoration of the private residences of the Scottish nobility was also included. This chapter provided a detailed discussion on the popularity of the painted ceiling and examined the type of ceiling traditionally used for that style of decoration. The chapter continued with an investigation into the relationship between the artist and the patron in Scotland highlighting information relating to the artist of the Skelmorlie Aisle paintings, James Stalker and his patron Sir Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie. It also provided information regarding the reading of the ceiling paintings and explored whether the artist or patron wished the narrative to be read in any specific order.

Chapter three examined sources. It focussed on general sources and themes employed within Scottish decorative art with a special emphasis on those chosen by

Stalker for Skelmorlie Aisle. The chapter related the sources to specific figures, allegories and literary works as well as indicating what Stalker could see personally in terms of buildings and prospects. This information provided material which helped to create a profile of the artist as well as being indicative of the mentalité and intentions of the patron. The sources which were selected, including those from readily available printed material, have been identified: this was also the case for those from the Largs area and the sources designed exclusively by Stalker. The fact that the paintings displayed Dutch influence was another avenue explored in this chapter.

Chapter four considered genre. As the paintings were executed within a burial aisle, it may be have been expected that they would have had a direct relationship to death. To establish if this was the case, an in-depth study of artistic representations of art relating to death was provided which considered both Scottish and European influences. The ideology surrounding death during the period was also investigated, as this highlighted why specific motifs were chosen. The importance of Early Modern ideology, which viewed the body as comprising of two separate entities, one social and the other biological, also plays an important role. Issues such as idealisation and individuality were also discussed. The chapter also considered to what extent the iconography was a suitable choice for a place of private prayer.

Chapters five and six focused on a semiotic breakdown of the ceiling iconography. Chapter five focused on iconography which was overtly religious. This included the Old Testament narratives and characters, seasonal landscapes and biblical quotations. A survey of these components demonstrated the extent to which they reflected Montgomerie's religious ideology.

Chapter six continued principally with an examination of the two individual landscape paintings. It was argued that these paintings would have been particularly special to Montgomerie as they contained extremely personal components. Outlining what these components were, and establishing their relevance to Montgomerie and his wife, Margaret Douglas, was therefore the major focus of this chapter. The inclusion of other components that were not overtly religious was also undertaken in this chapter. These included an examination of the heraldic devices including their importance to both Montgomerie and seventeenth-century nobility in general. The investigation also examined the two Cardinal Virtues that were included in the ceiling iconography with a further discussion on why two of them were omitted.

Methodology

To reveal the intrinsic meaning of the iconography within the paintings, the methodological approach of German-born art historian Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) was implemented. Panofsky's theory was constructed during the 1930s and is still regarded as the foremost tool in the deciphering of Renaissance art, 'Panofsky's work and his approach remain important...his example, together with his writings, provides a unifying vision that continues to be valuable'.³⁰ It was exclusively designed for Renaissance art and was not a theory that could be applied effectively to any other genre of paintings. This restriction could have been regarded as a criticism, but, Panofsky's theory being so specific made its suitability to the analysis of the iconography within the aisle paintings ideal. To extract the narrative encapsulated within the iconography an application of Panofsky's theory was well suited.

³⁰ Juliet Istraband qtd. in Chris Murray, *Key Writers on Art: The Twentieth Century*, (London: Routledge, 2003) 226.

The principle of his theory was underpinned by the hypothesis that, to analyse Renaissance art, a tripartite approach, composed of three strata, was required. The first stratum of his theory, recognition of natural subject matter, stated that initial viewing of a work of art revealed little other than basic form and further analysis was required to obtain an understanding of where the iconography originated from and what it meant. Basic recognition of shapes and images conveyed little information beyond the spatial arrangement and description of what was seen.³¹ A more in-depth approach was required if a narrative was to be revealed.

The secondary, or conventional, stratum identified the sources used within the paintings. It recognised what the shapes and forms were. This stratum recognised stories, allegories and images and provided, 'specific themes and concepts expressed by objects and events'.³² As we relate specific compositions to particular ideas and concepts, the recognition of sources contributed more information towards the overall meaning of the paintings as it demonstrated why specific stories, figures and allegories were used. This added a great deal of information to the overall narrative as there was an identifiable reason why they were chosen.

The third stratum took the analysis a step further by allowing the intrinsic meaning to be re-constructed. This stratum involved the symbolic interpretation of the paintings. Here the signs and symbols were decoded and the painting viewed as a product of its historical environment. It considered the cultural, religious and environmental influences and tackled issues such as why particular components were chosen and what the combination of all the components meant. The work was, 'analysed as an expression of a particular mentality or world view'.³³ By viewing the

³¹ Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939) 5

³² Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 6.

³³ E. De Jongh 'The Iconological Approach to Seventeenth Century Dutch Painting', cited in J.

three strata as a whole, a consideration of form, recognition of sources and a deciphering of the iconography, the narrative within the paintings could be exposed. As art historian Irving Lavin claimed, 'it was this insistence on, and search for, meaning- especially in places where no one expected there was any- that led Panofsky to understand art as no previous historian had'.³⁴ Meaning within the Skelmorlie paintings had been a greatly under-researched area and the application of Panofsky's theory allowed a teasing out of the iconography to be presented.

It was argued that observation alone revealed little of the artist's intentions, those of the patron or the reasons and meaning behind what was presented before the viewer. Panofsky suggested that what was observed at this simplistic stage was merely a symptom of, 'something else which expresses itself in a countless variety of other symptoms, and we interpret its compositional and iconographical features as more particularised evidence of this something else'.³⁵ This 'something else' remained elusive without more extensive analysis of the paintings.

Basic Observation in Relation to Panofsky's Theory.

The starting point for the application of Panofsky's theory was undertaking basic observation of the ceiling paintings. No in-depth analysis of the paintings was undertaken at this stage. A basic survey demonstrated that the barrel vaulted ceiling, as previously stated, was sectioned into forty one compartments by the use of bold black paint. This gave the impression that it was composed of a variety of paintings in individual frames rather than being one complete image. The iconography

Grijzenhout *et al.* *The Golden Age of Dutch Painting in Historical Perspective*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 206.

³⁴ Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 15.

³⁵ Erwin Panofsky qtd. in John Drury, *Painting the Word* (London: National Gallery Publications, 2002) xii.

displayed a diverse array of designs, shapes and images including people, birds and animals, emblems, buildings, activities, heraldry, floral designs and grotesques. Written texts, which accompanied the artistic imagery, were observed within oblong compartments surrounded by a variety of designs. It was noted that there was an attempt to fabricate architectural structures, for example false corbels, by the use of paint.

The paintings were seen to have been executed on boarding which was attached to the ceiling by nails, some of which could still be observed. The ceiling itself, was constructed in three sections, whereby the vertical joints of each section was splayed and there was evidence of a covering composed of a strip of canvas which had been both glued and nailed to the boards.³⁶ The three sections intruded upon the central panel consisting of a central hexagonal compartment juxtaposed by two of diamond design. The wooden structure was constructed employing quadruple longitudinal divisions which had been achieved by the painted mouldings which extended throughout the entire length of the ceiling. Every available space of the ceiling had been decorated, incorporating a complex association of what appeared to be unrelated symbolic forms and decoration, described by Bath as, 'stylistically eclectic'.³⁷ Twelve spandrels, which were created by the vaulted roof, presented signs of the zodiac and ten small painted shields are displayed on the false corbels. Ornate shields containing monograms of Robert Montgomerie and Margaret Douglas were also visible (Plate 14). Coats of Arms, each one different, were also included on the centre panel.

Amongst the imagery a painting of a man and a woman dancing around a tree had been executed. There was also a representation of a serpent or snake alongside

³⁶ Houston, HS, Unpublished Report.

³⁷ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 131.

(Plate 15) as well as the figures of two men, one hunting and the other ploughing (Plate 17). Two oval compartments present figures of two women. One has been painted with her feet bare and her eyes covered carrying a sword in her right hand and scales in her left. She has been clothed in draped cloth. Enclosed within a partition below the painting are the words:

CUIQUE SUUM IUSTO PENSANS
LIBRAMINE REDDO CONCILIOQ
HOMINES CONCILIOQ DEOS.

(I render to each man what is his due, weighing it with true balance; I find favour with men and with gods)³⁸

The other female figure (Plate 18) had been executed with her uncovered arms supporting a column which she was observed carrying over her shoulder; her hands support the column at its extremities. The figure's feet were also bare. The words encased in a painted border read:

FORTIS IN ADVERSIS ANIMOSAQ PECTORA
GESTANS
INFRACTIS ANIMAS ARDUA QUDQUE FERO

(Strong in adversity and showing a brave heart, with unbroken spirit I shoulder every burden)³⁹

The two figures appear to speak the words.

Two semi-oval compartments at the south side of the ceiling display an arm holding a sword and the Lion Rampant. They appear to have been halved to fit the size of the ceiling. They too were surrounded by the same type of decoration as the two female figures noted above. The painting of the forearm and hand hold the sword has the words:

FOR WARRE OR WORKE; WE
THIS HANDS SHOVL D ARME.

³⁸ Translations by Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 132.

³⁹ Translations by Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 132.

displayed underneath the image. The second of the semi-oval panels displayed the Lion Rampant beneath which was the text:

THAT TO DEFENDE OUR
COUNTRIE DEARE FROM HARME

And also:

(RENOVATUM MDCCCXCIX)

Twelve texts were noted within rectangular compartments (Appendix 2) and were, ‘surrounded with wreaths of foliage, scroll-work, and drapery of varied designs, garlands of flowers, corbels of fruit, birds, butterflies, etc., in their natural tints’.⁴⁰

Six landscape paintings have been executed, three each on the west and east sides of the ceiling where the barrel construction reaches the walls. Four depicted the seasons and have the appropriate signs of the zodiac accompanying them. They have been individually labelled, *Ver* (Plate 18), *Aestas* (Plate 19), *Autumnus* (Plate 20), and *Hymens* (Plate 21). The scenes displayed views of rural life and the labours of the seasons. The other two paintings were also landscape scenes, one containing a female figure with a horse which had been signed and dated *J.Stalker fecit 1638* (Plate 12). The remaining painting was observed containing a seascape with a female figure kneeling on the beach (Plate 13). The paintings currently exude a dramatic use of colour and bustling imagery but, it is argued, without further analysis the paintings tell the viewer very little.

Literature Review

⁴⁰ Wilson, *The Skelmorlie Aisle and Monuments at Largs*, 6.

The major source used for this study was the aisle ceiling, the analysis of which was supported by other primary sources. The family papers held at NAS provided vital information on the entire Montgomerie clan, although those relating directly to Skelmorlie, principally the Skelmorlie Writs, were sparse for the period required. The majority of the papers held in N.A.S. related to the main family, the Montgomeries of Eglinton. The writs consisted of a plethora of land charters, agreements and bonds, but little personal information about Montgomerie of Skelmorlie. The papers were supplemented by printed primary sources compiled by William Fraser in his two-volume *Memorials of the Montgomeries* (c.1859). This text assisted in building a chronological history of the Montgomerie family, inclusive of cadet branches. Again, Fraser's focus was mainly on the Eglinton branch and, despite providing in-depth genealogical material on the Montgomerie clan, once again, the sources relating to Skelmorlie were sparse.

William Robertson, *Ayrshire: Its History and Historic Families* (c.1908) positioned the Montgomerie family in the context of other members of Ayrshire nobility during the seventeenth-century. The text covered an extensive range of material on the leading families from the eleventh through to the nineteenth century. His coverage of the Montgomeries was concise, but again he too focused principally on the main family at Eglinton, dedicating only a modest amount to the cadet branch of Skelmorlie. Robertson's narrative style also included other sources, although he did not generally indicate where these came from. Robertson incorporated a discussion of the Ayrshire feuds but the major source for this was Keith Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland* (c.1986). This text was crucial in demonstrating feuding culture in Scotland and the role the Montgomeries played within it in the west of Scotland. His chapter on 'The Cunningham-Montgomery Feud' provided an

insightful account of the causes and course of the lengthy dispute. Once again, however, the focus was on the Montgomeries of Eglinton, with only a brief mention of the Skelmorlie branch. The text considered the effect the feuding era had throughout Scotland and gave a clear and concise account of Ayrshire's role in the feuding.

The Scottish Revolution 1637-44, (c.2003) by David Stevenson provided insightful information relating to the Covenanting Revolution. Alan MacDonald, *The Jacobean Kirk 1567-1625* (c.1998) offered in-depth discussion on aspects of contemporary religion during the period under investigation. Its principal focus on reformed religion provided valuable background information. Maurice Lee, Jr., *The Road to Revolution: Scotland under Charles I, 1625-37*, (c.1985) also provided invaluable material on Early Modern religious policy in Scotland as did Maurice Lee, Jr., *The Inevitable Union and other Essays on Early Modern Scotland*, (c.2003) also provided a wealth of information on the religious situation in post-Reformation Scotland. Keith Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland* (c.2000), offered an extensive discussion on all aspects of Scottish nobility in the Early Modern Period. His arguments on how social status and preservation of lineage were an important aspect of the ideology of the age were particularly relevant. This was a thorough study although art was not a major consideration.

Michael Bath, *Scottish Decorative Painting in Scotland* (c.2003), was crucial to this study. Taken from an emblematic standpoint, Bath's exhaustive research into the field provided an abundance of material relating to Scottish painted ceilings. His identification of many of the aisle sources provided vital information which was expanded upon, allowing a teasing out of the ceiling's iconographic narrative. Bath's focus was identifying sources, therefore his approach was more

literary in nature and did not discuss, in any great detail, what the sources meant or why they were chosen. Bath's text, alongside personal surveys of other painted ceilings in Scotland, provided primary sources to which Skelmorlie Aisle could be compared.

Other decorative schemes provided an insight into which features were comparable with the ceiling at Largs and which were individualistic. Although providing a worthwhile view of Scottish decorative art, over-restoration in most cases made it necessary to survey the imagery with caution. An in-depth study of Alexander Seton's residence at Pinkie House in Musselburgh was undertaken as a contemporary example. Bath's discoveries provided a very important basis for this study.

Michael Apted, *The Painted Ceiling of Scotland* (c.1966), surveyed examples of the designs and iconography demonstrated throughout Scottish painted ceilings. This text was the definitive source on the study of Scottish painted ceilings prior to Bath's publication. The text was found to be basic, but informative, although largely outdated by Bath's volume. Apted's discussion of the type of ceiling construction utilised for painting still made the text valuable to this study. His second text, *Painters in Scotland* (c.1978), which he compiled with Susan Hannibus, remains the foremost account of artists in Scotland 1301-1700. The biographical dictionary provided a concise account of all available information, extending from the few personal details that have survived to an indication of their materials and commissions. It incorporated a variety of primary texts, principally works accounts. The text took the form of a reference manual, rather than being discursive, and gave vital information from which a profile of Stalker could be constructed. In particular

it presented many details relating to John Sawers, thus providing direct information on the source closest to Sawers.

Charles McKean, *The Scottish Chateau* (c.2001), discussed the Renaissance country house. This exhaustive study catalogued the changes in style and construction of the buildings and the reasons for these. Featuring in-depth analysis of both structural and decorative features, the text contained a lengthy discussion on the architectural and decorative styles of the period. Incorporating an abundance of visual and primary sources, the historical and cultural importance of the buildings was highlighted. Although examples were demonstrated from throughout Scotland, there were few from Ayrshire by comparison. The importance of this text was its use in trying to ascertain the popularity of the painted ceiling and whether Montgomerie was likely to have had one in his home, Skelmorlie Castle.

Tara Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*,(c.2010) provided a comprehensive account of how the practice of religious imagery was incorporated into a domestic setting during the Medieval and Early Modern periods. Her account included in-depth discussion into how paintings were viewed and how they also did the viewing. Her approach provided invaluable information that could be applied to the paintings at Skelmorlie Aisle which contributed to an understanding of how the paintings should be read.

William Dobie, *The Parish Churches and Burying-Grounds of Ayrshire* (c.1847), provided a vivid description of what was visible on the Skelmorlie Aisle ceiling in the middle of the nineteenth-century. Dobie included a thorough description of the iconography, as well as a detailed account of the monument, and was the earliest surviving printed study of the aisle. The text was a descriptive account, incorporating little discussion out-with this. Dobie did not attempt to

analyse the ceiling paintings or identify the sources, but he did clearly state what was visible. His text was revised in 1889 by his grandson Robert Dobie Wilson, *The Skelmorlie Aisle and Monuments at Largs* (c.1889). The only addition to the original text was the Ross drawing and a foreword by Wilson.

Ian Finlay, *Art in Scotland* (c.1948), provided a concise account of Scotland's place in the art world. It focused on the factors influencing the development of Scottish art and provided essential contextual material. Although providing a good overview, Finlay's main discussion was on the more prestigious examples of Scottish art and artists and he did not engage to any great extent with the decorative arts. Duncan MacMillan, *Scottish Art 1460-1990* (c.2003), gave an extensive panorama of art and artists in Scotland, highlighting its progression through the centuries, as well as national and continental influences. The text gave an excellent account of the Scottish art scene in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Scotland. Although the bulk of the content was out-with the period of this study, it did provide extensive contextual material. Although a discussion on painted ceilings was included, this was sparse as was any acknowledgement of art relating to Ayrshire.

Sources focussing on the relationship between the artist and patron in the Medieval and Early Modern Scotland were few but an insight into this poorly documented field could be gleaned through Duncan Thomson, *The Life and Art of George Jamesone* (c.1974). This text offered a brief discussion on the role of the artist and painter and although focussing exclusively on Jamesone it still provided valuable information. Michael Apter, *The Painted Ceilings of Scotland 1560-1650* (c.1966) also gave a brief insight into the relationship between the artist and patron through contemporary records. John Bullock, *George Jamesone: The Scottish*

Vandyck (1885) provided more invaluable material relating to the artist/patron role but again focussed principally on Jamesone.

An extensive range of original Medieval and Early Modern emblem books were consulted as the visual texts allowed the emblems within the paintings to be identified in terms of both their original source and their religious ideology. These included Etienne Delaune *Liberal Arts Series* (c.1569) and *Old Testament Prints* (c.1550-72), both of which were incorporated into the aisle iconography. Adriaen Collaert's *Four Seasons* (c.1587) (after Maarten de Vos) was also a feature. A survey of these ascertained the extent to which Stalker had used the original source and how much was his own creation. Henry Hawkins *The Devout Heart* (c.1634) and Stephani Luzvic *Coer Devot* (c.1628) contained emblems relating to the symbolism of the heart. These texts demonstrated various styles of images of the heart in order to determine if the image at Largs was original. They also indicated the importance of the heart motif during the Medieval and Early Modern periods. A study of Hendrick Golzius, *Equus Liber Et Incompositus* (c.1578) was important as this was the source used for the execution of the horse in one of the two personal landscape paintings. A study of this image indicated to what extent Stalker copied the original source. This image, and the images from the emblem books, indicated what was available to Stalker and other Scottish artists of the period.

Charles Mosley, *A Century of Emblems* (c.1989), presented a comprehensive discussion on the use and understanding of emblematics: why they were chosen and how they were effective was also a focus of this text. A wide-ranging overview provided a compilation of the majority of popularly utilised emblems in one volume. The texts were translated from their original French or Latin to English, a feature

which was extremely useful. The focus was literary and, although their historical context was touched upon, this was vague.

The fundamental visual text on death from the Medieval period Hans Holbein the Younger's etchings in *The Dance of Death* (c.1538) offered important information regarding genre. The text focused more on Continental attitudes but, as these were imported to Scotland, the material was still relevant. A variety of skeletal images depicting everyday events acted as a warning to the viewer about what faced them. The text was repetitive and its didactic properties contained alarming messages warning the reader to prepare for death. The importance of the text for this study was that it provided material which could be compared to the ceiling iconography. This would demonstrate to what extent Stalker had incorporated this theme into the ceiling paintings.

Philippe Aries' seminal text, *The Hour of Our Death* (c.1981), focused on both attitudes towards dying and the practices adopted by European society. A groundbreaking text on this subject, Aries highlighted the obsession with death and structured didacticism that was adopted by Medieval and Early Modern Europe. His text was instructive and comprehensive, demonstrating how death was prepared for and became a daily concern in everyday life. The text, however, focused principally on French attitudes with little reference to practices in other countries. As French influence was imported to Scotland, his text had relevance in indicating how ideology towards death was universally understood during the period. Peter France, *Death and Memory* (c.2000), demonstrated how commemoration became important, and how attitudes towards death altered to incorporate remembering the dead. The discussion was extensive, but focused more on the Medieval period. It was again European-based, with no reference to Scottish examples.

Audrey-Beth Fitch, *The Search for Salvation* (c.2009), gave a clear and concise account of attitudes towards death, specifically in Scotland. This comprehensive text on the subject demonstrated how lay people, through various avenues from printed texts to art, strove to understand and prepare for death. The text focused more on the Medieval period providing good contextual material rather than addressing practices in the seventeenth-century. Anne Gordon, *Death is for the Living* (c.1984), also indicated customs and practices particular to Scotland. It demonstrated how Scottish society, on the whole, adopted European practices. Gordon's focus on how it was those left behind who were responsible for memorialising the dead was particularly valid to this research. The discussion was principally based on Medieval Scotland, but demonstrated the basis of Early Modern attitudes.

The relationship between art and death was discussed at length by Nigel Llewellyn in, *The Art of Death* (c.1991). How death was displayed through paintings, jewellery, embroidery, ornaments and sculpture was the theme of this text, which focused on a European context. Llewellyn indicated the extent of the practice and how widespread it was. No specific examples of Scottish art were demonstrated, but it did indicate how practices were universal.

Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconography* (c.1939), provided the basis for the theoretical application to the iconography under investigation, indicating how Panofsky's theory worked and how it could be applied to Renaissance paintings. It utilised a thorough approach, using a multitude of examples to demonstrate the theory. It did not, however, consider how it may be applied to Renaissance decorative art.

F.L. Cross ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (c.1989), provided an abundance of material relating to biblical figures and narratives. The text was theologically based, therefore the content's relationship to other subjects was not a major focus. J.S. Strong ed., *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (c.1994) was crucial in analysing the biblical texts. Specifically, it indicated which quotations were related to the theme of death. The text included a record of all biblical quotations from every version of the Bible, making a comprehensive and detailed list. Strong did not offer any discussion on the material, only identification of their original sources.

The interpretation of religious iconography by Chiara de Capoa, *Old Testament Figures in Art* (c.2003), was a major source of reference. Her comprehensive discussion of biblical figures and narratives was perfectly suited to analysing the ceiling paintings. Her extensive range of imagery pinpointed all popular themes, although her text did not include specifically why the figures or narratives may have been chosen. Edward Hulme, *The History, Principles and Practices of Symbolism in Christian Art* (c.1910), provided a more detailed discussion. The text indicated the use of biblical figures and symbols and their evaluation and use in terms of religious belief. The text offered a generic approach to how and why images and symbols were utilised. *Symbols and Allegories in Art* (c.2005), by Matilda Battistini, was a more updated text. It included an extensive selection of semiotic components which were compared to those on display within the ceiling paintings. Although not focussing exclusively on Christian art, the text introduced secular signs and symbols and their importance in the world of semiotics.

Seymour Slive, *Dutch Painting 1600-1800* (c.1995), provided a comprehensive account of the religious influences and characteristics of Dutch art.

Covering the influence of Dutch painting throughout Europe, it also indicated the relationship between Dutch and Scottish artists. Julia Williams, *Dutch Art in Scotland* (c.1992), provided a direct source on the influence of the Dutch on Scottish art and artists. Covering the Medieval, Early Modern and Modern periods, the text demonstrated how Dutch practices were incorporated into Scottish art. Landscape painting was the major focus and dominated the text. She did not engage with the Dutch influence on Scottish decorative art.

Limitations and Challenges of the Sources

Difficulties arose in trying to obtain primary sources relating directly to Sir Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie and his wife Margaret Douglas. The majority of the documents relating to the Montgomerie family focussed on the main family line at Eglinton. Material relating to the Montgomeries of Skelmorlie was scarce, and what was available contained little personal information. The sources were fragmentary and confined to a small selection of legal records which were badly damaged, and thus, almost unreadable. Sources relating to Margaret Douglas were equally elusive. The majority of the material on her family was found to be held at Drumlanrig Castle where a proper archive system is currently in the process of being established. What was held at Drumlanrig was restricted and not available to the public.

Further obstacles arose in tracing documents relating to the period and the area. No parish registers have survived from the Largs area earlier than the mid eighteenth century. Archives in Ayrshire, Renfrewshire and Northern Ireland revealed nothing from the period relating to Montgomerie, seventh of Skelmorlie or his immediate family. No paintings have been unearthed from the era to give an indication of what Largs looked like during the seventeenth-century.

Other than the artist James Stalker being the son of David Stalker, there was no information on him, excepting that he was apprenticed to John Sawers between 1632-38.⁴¹ His signature on the Skelmorlie Aisle paintings was the only other indication that he existed. There was no note of Stalker in any records after 1638. There was no register of marriage, nor was his name associated with any other master or painter, therefore he may have died or moved abroad soon after the ceiling paintings were finished. A conjectural profile of him was constructed from information on other artists and practices from the period.

It was argued that the ceiling paintings of Skelmorlie Aisle contained a wealth of information relating to the historical and cultural life of the people involved with them. From the ceiling's conception, the paintings had a fascinating story to tell. As Bath stated, these were 'speaking pictures'⁴² and the message they conveyed could not be elucidated without in-depth analysis. The principal focus of this thesis was to demonstrate that Stalker, under Montgomerie's patronage, compiled a deliberately constructed narrative whereby each component was chosen for a very specific reason. This narrative, which was articulated in paint, began with the man who commissioned it, Sir Robert Montgomerie, seventh of Skelmorlie and the society in which he lived and was influenced.

⁴¹ Michael Apter *et al.*, *Painters in Scotland 1301-1700*, (Edinburgh: Medina Press, 1978) 91.

⁴² Michael Bath, *Speaking Pictures*, (London: Longman, 1994) 280.

CHAPTER ONE

EARLY MODERN SCOTTISH NOBILITY: EXPERIENCES AND INFLUENCES

Sir, I am sorie that ye suld suppose,
Me to be one in lucre to deltye,
Or speu despyt against hir vho is gone:
No- nevir none culd fee me so to flyte.
I war to wyt, the bureit to bakbyte,
Or to indyt hir families defame,
Thoght Cuningham. In Conscience I am quyte
By word or wryt, enough nou for my Name.
I sueat for shame, besyd the blot and blame.
Men suld proclame it wer Montgomeries Muse.
Fy, I refuse sik filthie these or theam,
Hou beit at hame mair vncouthness we wse.
I must confes it war a fekles fead
Quha docht do nocht bot to detract the dead.⁴³

Robert Montgomerie (1571-1650), seventh of Skelmorlie in Ayrshire, lived in a tempestuous age of which feuding, commemorated above in Alexander Montgomerie's poem, was just one component. The Scottish Reformation had been established eleven years before his birth; the year following, John Knox died along with his antipathy towards bishops in the Kirk. Shortly thereafter, Andrew Melville introduced his ideas on Presbyterianism which soon conflicted with the more erastian instincts of the young James VI, son of Mary Queen of Scots. Her execution by Elizabeth of England in 1587 was viewed as martyrdom to Roman Catholicism and a slight to the Scottish nation. Yet James had to cultivate the English to ensure the fulfilment of his hopes of succeeding Elizabeth while curbing the anti-monarchical overtures of Melville's followers. The Union of 1603, whereby James VI of Scotland became James I of England, led to attempts to anglicise the Scottish

⁴³ Parkinson ed., *Alexander Montgomerie Poems*, ii vols., vol.i., 132.

Church. His notion of the 'Divine Right of Kings' generated opposition to James's son and heir, Charles I, who nurtured a rebellion in the 1630s resulting in the subscription of the National Covenant of 1638. Full-scale revolution leading to bloody civil war and the deaths of thousands in the name of religion swiftly followed. The execution of Charles I, the year before Skelmorlie's death, paved the way for the Cromwellian invasion.⁴⁴ Robert Montgomerie, knighted by James VI and granted baronetcy by Charles I, lived through, to say the least, a calamitous era.

The focus of this chapter was to create a contextual background to the period in which Montgomerie, seventh of Skelmorlie lived and construct a profile of this very poorly documented individual. The chapter began with an investigation into contemporary religion and a study of Early Modern Scottish nobility. It then constructed a profile of Montgomerie by an investigation into his own family background as this provided crucial information which highlighted the type of man Montgomerie was. Included in this investigation was a crucial examination of the feuding era in which he was directly involved. A survey of contemporary documents which illuminated Montgomerie's religious sensibilities was also undertaken. All of these factors provided a suitable platform from which the ceiling paintings could be analysed in relation to their cultural and religious identity.

Early Modern Scottish Nobility

⁴⁴ This period has attracted a significant amount of historical literature. See James King Hewison, *The Covenanters A History of the Church of Scotland from Reformation to Revolution*, 2 vols. (Glasgow: John Smith, 1913), Gordon Donaldson, *Scotland :James V to James VII* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), David Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution 1637-44 The Triumph of the Covenanters* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973), David Stevenson, *Revolution and Counter Revolution in Scotland 1644-1651* (London, 1973), Edward J. Cowan *Montrose For Covenant and King* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), Edward J. Cowan, 'The Covenanting Tradition in Scottish History' in *Scottish History The Power of the Past* eds. Edward J. Cowan and Richard J. Finlay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002).

Early Modern Scottish nobility encountered diverse experiences and challenges. As Alan MacDonald stated, 'Scotland, in the latter half of the sixteenth century and the first quarter of the seventeenth, underwent radical change'.⁴⁵ Some of the challenges facing them came from economic instability but many of them stemmed from two principal factors, firstly, the change in religious ideology inherited from their predecessors and, secondly, the transferral of the royal court to London in 1603. Brown argued that, 'the world nobles inhabited in the 1560s was not unrecognisable from that of the 1640s. Continuity is a more persistent theme than change',⁴⁶ but, despite continuity in many areas, there can be no doubt that the Scottish nobility faced many trials. Margaret Sanderson wrote, that the beginning of the seventeenth-century was, 'the great age of the portioners and bonnet lairds, and the feuars who, given the change, began to climb the social ladder'.⁴⁷

The nobility were, on the whole, a complex group, as Keith Brown claimed, they comprised of:

a large organic body, composed of interrelated lineages, expanding on one branch while contracting at another, its tentacle-like arms reaching out into every area of economic and cultural activity...here is a nobility that was not tottering towards the fag-end of a medieval world, nervously holding on to power and wealth in the face of vigorous new challenges from kings or from commoners. In economic, biological and ideological terms, noble society was aggressive and imaginative, consolidating the old and seeking out the new in order to increase its wealth, numbers and intellectual recourses.⁴⁸

Their interests were diverse and as Charles McKean reminded, the Scottish nobility:

⁴⁵ Alan MacDonald, *The Jacobean Kirk*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1998) 5.

⁴⁶ Keith Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000) 272.

⁴⁷ Margaret Sanderson, *Scottish Rural Society in the 16th Century*, (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1982) 190.

⁴⁸ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 272.

was a largely educated and well-travelled one. It was as intrigued as any other society in Europe by chivalric ideals expressed through jousts and games. It pounced on alterations to status, hierarchy and precedence.⁴⁹

This was witnessed by Henri Duc de Rohan during his visit to Scotland in 1600 who claimed that '...the nobility who I have found full of civility and courtesy, the country possesses a multitude of learned men, and a people of such courage and fidelity'.⁵⁰

A number of factors expanded the wealth of the nobility during the Early Modern era, although Brown observed, 'understanding the economic health of the nobility is made particularly difficult by the nature of the sources, and in this topic, more than any other, the temporal length of study can enormously alter the picture'.⁵¹ Influences such as an increase in trade and also the financial rewards of making an advantageous marriage contributed to expanding the pockets of the nobility; however, the two principal changes that had a greatly influential effect on the financial position of the Scottish nobility were, firstly the Reformation and, secondly, the removal of the Royal court to London.⁵²

With the Reformation came the secularisation of church lands. In many cases they, 'went back to the families whose predecessors had originally donated them'.⁵³

Deborah Howard highlighted:

The period 1560-1660 witnessed a major redistribution of land-holding in Scotland, as church lands passed to lay ownership. Before the Reformation, about one-third of the total land area was held by the Church, but already in the

⁴⁹ Charles McKean, *The Scottish Chateau*, (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2001) 10.

⁵⁰ P. Hume-Brown ed., *Early Travellers in Scotland*, (Edinburgh: James Thin, 1978) 95.

⁵¹ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 272.

⁵² Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 272.

⁵³ Robertson, *Ayrshire: Its History and Historic Families*, (Glasgow: Grimsay Press, 2005), 208.

early years of the seventeenth-century many monastic estates had been granted to lay commendators.⁵⁴

It was, therefore, beneficial to be in royal favour, for example, the Earl of Eglinton obtained the lands and possessions of Kilwinning Abbey granted to him by numerous grants by the king.⁵⁵ He was not the only member of the Ayrshire nobility to benefit from distribution of lands or being on good terms with the crown; Fraser recorded; 'The burgh of Irvine was infested in the buildings, property, and revenues of the White Friars, the temporalities of the College Kirk of Maybole passed to the Earl of Cassilis, and those of Kilmaurs to the Earl of Glencairn'.⁵⁶ Through the expansion of their lands, the nobility gained from the wealth it generated through rents and the selling of agricultural produce.⁵⁷

An expansion of personal income was also increased after the Royal court moved to London in 1603 as there was a relaxation of the custom duties. This made trading easier and therefore the practice increased. This not only enlarged the national purse but increased the private revenues of the nobility. Trade in consumables such as, 'wool, hides, barrelled salt fish, and increasingly as the century progressed, coal, salt, live animals and grain'⁵⁸ increased and Scottish produced textiles, for example, 'course linen and woollen cloth'⁵⁹ were also traded.⁶⁰ Brown highlighted how almost 75% of goods entering Scotland in the 1620s came from

⁵⁴ Deborah Howard, *The Architectural History of Scotland: from the Reformation to the Restoration, 1560-1660*, (Edinburgh: E.U.P., 1995) 48.

⁵⁵ Robertson, *Ayrshire: Its History and Historic Families*, 208.

⁵⁶ Robertson, *Ayrshire: Its History and Historic Families*, 209.

⁵⁷ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 47.

⁵⁸ Ian Whyte, *Agriculture and Society in Seventeenth Century Scotland*, (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1979) 17.

⁵⁹ Whyte, *Agriculture and Society in Seventeenth Century Scotland*, 17.

⁶⁰ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 47.

Germany, France or Holland demonstrating how important a role northern Europe played in trade with Scotland.⁶¹

Although there was in many cases a growth in income, there was also an increase in expenditure as much of the Scottish nobility began to indulge in the increased purchase of non-essential items. There was an enlarged interest in luxury goods as the nobility adopted a practice of 'spending heavily in support of a lifestyle that was consistent with their status'.⁶² Increased travel and the influences they were exposed to overseas contributed to this new mode of spending.

Adventure, the call for mercenaries and the search for excitement encouraged some members of the Scottish nobility to embark on journeys to the continent but despite this, in many cases foreign travel was closely linked to education. The realisation that education harboured, 'a desire to acquire knowledge and skills useful to a nobleman throughout his life in government, court and society'⁶³ encouraged many of the Scottish nobility to send their sons to Europe to expand their knowledge and experiences. Although many did attend university in Scotland, several wished to broaden their horizons by travelling abroad where they could experience the diversities of European culture. There they would learn dancing, music and foreign languages and acquire, 'refined courtly accomplishments'.⁶⁴ The principal areas they chose to visit for study were France and Italy but others also visited the Baltic and northern Europe. The first Earl of Dumfermline, first Earl of Haddington and first Lord Balmerino all travelled to France to finish off their education while John Ruthven, third Earl of Gowrie, went to the University of Padua. Three of the Earl of

⁶¹ Keith Brown, 'Reformation to Union, 1560-1707', in R. Houston and W. Knox, eds., *The New Penguin History of Scotland*, (London: Penguin, 2001) 204.

⁶² Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 272.

⁶³ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 187.

⁶⁴ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 193.

Eglinton's sons went to Paris but there is no record of Montgomerie of Skelmorlie having gone overseas. As it was usually 'higher nobles'⁶⁵ who went abroad, due to the finances involved, it is hardly surprising not to find any of the Skelmorlie branch of the family having accompanied them. Travelling abroad was also an excellent way of avoiding any troubles at home.⁶⁶ The practice of continental travel was so popular that, 'in 1598 so many of the higher nobility were either out of the country or were planning to leave that concern was expressed about the potential for political instability without their local leadership'.⁶⁷

The transferral of the royal court to London in 1603 had an unsettling effect on the Scottish nobility. An absent ruler, 'left a vacuum at the centre of what was already a highly decentralised state'.⁶⁸ Brown declared, 'Henceforth, Scottish politics would be played out both in Scotland, at parliament, in the Privy Council and its committees, in the courts of law, and in the castles and houses of the nobility'.⁶⁹ Scottish nobles in some cases fled between the two capitals, some withdrew from public life all together. This created much discontent as the king became increasingly detached and, 'for most Scots nobles the union of the crowns meant primarily the sudden disappearance of the institution which had been at the centre of their social and political lives, the Scottish court'.⁷⁰ They had been used to having direct access to the king and this was thwarted when he moved to London. Stevenston wrote, 'The nobility of Scotland as a whole believed that they had a right to share power with the king. As the greatest of his subjects they were his natural

⁶⁵ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 193.

⁶⁶ Brown *Noble Society in Scotland*, 191.

⁶⁷ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 193.

⁶⁸ Brown, 'Reformation to Union 1560-1707' cited in R. Houston *et al.*, eds., in *The New Penguin History of Scotland*, (London: Penguin, 2002) 235.

⁶⁹ Brown, 'Reformation to Union 1560-1707' cited in Houston in *The New Penguin History of Scotland*, 235.

⁷⁰ Stevenston, *The Scottish Revolution*, 20.

and traditional advisors'.⁷¹ No longer could the nobility pressurise the king into agreeing with their policies and schemes, they were required to consider more legitimate and formal measures. The expenditure incurred by having to travel to London persuaded many to stay at home. The wealth and salubrious surroundings, as well as the extravagance of the English courtiers left their Scottish counterparts feeling, 'ridiculed for their poverty and accent'.⁷²

The nobility in Scotland enjoyed a healthy social life, some of which, as has been demonstrated, involved overseas travel which kindled an interest in acquiring luxury goods from the Continent. These they incorporated into improving their homes which became the hub of entertainment for visitors. but much of it was centred around their country homes. Their residences, discussed at length in chapter two, were a symbol of their lineage, social position and affluence, the bulk of which were based in rural settings.⁷³ A focus on country living was popular as many favoured a more rural environment travelling to the cities when required ⁷⁴ Visiting was a popular hobby and, as witnessed when considering the Earl of Eglinton, one that took up a vast amount of time. Brown stated, 'The social activity of the 6th Earl of Eglinton and his wife was formed by their ordinary residence in Ayrshire, her family home in Callandar, the Seton houses in Lothian and business in Edinburgh'.⁷⁵

Popular pastimes included horse riding and hunting, and sports such as fencing, fencing, archery, golf and tennis. Indoor pursuits included playing cards, dice and chess. Musical entertainment was also enjoyed and music was taught both to adults and children. This included instruction on the harp and lute.⁷⁶ Plays became

⁷¹ Stevenston, *The Scottish Revolution*, 19.

⁷² Stevenston, *The Scottish Revolution*, 20.

⁷³ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 205.

⁷⁴ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 205.

⁷⁵ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 211.

⁷⁶ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 216, 217, 218.

popular although the content changed focus after the Reformation and became more secular as religious plays were banned by the General Assembly. Touring companies visited and frequently entertained visitors.⁷⁷ Study and reading were also popular pastimes with the nobility learning sciences, languages, history, genealogy and heraldry. There was a particular interest in literary achievements and the period was rich in writers of poetry and prose. These included those reaching national stature such as Alexander Montgomerie, Sir Robert Ker of Ancrum and William Drummond of Hawthorndene.⁷⁸ Life was varied and challenging but the Scottish nobility managed to enjoy their social life as well as cope with changes and challenges of national importance. One of these was the important subject of religion.

Contemporary Religion

One fundamental influence on the Scottish nobility of the period was the matter of religion. It was a time as Charles McKean pointed out, that, 'there appears to have been a strong measure of co-existence between the Reformed Church and other religions- particularly amongst the elite to whom rank, lineage and kinship took at least as high a priority as religion-and one suspects even higher'.⁷⁹ He continued, '...at various times-three religions were being practiced in the country: the Reformed Church, Catholicism, and Conservatism (later called Episcopalianism...)'.⁸⁰ Stevenston suggested, 'To try to make a clear distinction between 'Episcopalians' and

⁷⁷ Houston, *The New Penguin History of Scotland*, 230.

⁷⁸ Houston, *The New Penguin History of Scotland*, 231.

⁷⁹ Charles McKean, 'Scottish Religious Architecture after the Council of Trent', p1, <http://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/portal/en/research/the-architecture-of-three-religions%28273c142f-a6aa-4ccb-a8db-8075b4bc9b05%29/export.html> Accessed 2 February 2013.

⁸⁰ McKean, 'Scottish Religious Architecture after the Council of Trent', p1, Accessed 2 February <http://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/portal/en/research/the-architecture-of-three-religions%28273c142f-a6aa-4ccb-a8db-8075b4bc9b05%29/export.html> Accessed 2 February 2013.

'Presbyterians' in this period is unrealistic.⁸¹ The three, therefore, seemed to co-exist reasonably comfortably and this was a recipe that appeared to satisfy the populace as little signs of incompatibility emerged. The Kirk, therefore, at this point, simmered on with any rumblings or unrest being contained. Few had conviction enough to wish to embark on a road towards radical change which was evidenced by the low number of ministers who were brought before the court of high commission for opposing the king's policy.⁸²

In Early Modern Scotland, the religious sympathies of the Scottish nobility were not a private matter and the landed gentry were expected to display outward signs of inner beliefs, as long as those beliefs were in keeping with the new religious regime. Keith Brown claimed, 'the personal and communal religion of nobles in general was much more important than it had been since the twelfth century'⁸³ He continued, this was, 'an age when societal expectations required individuals to express conformity with the religion of their community'⁸⁴ Thus attempting to ascertain the true religious beliefs of the many of the Scottish nobility during this period was problematic. As Brown observed, 'Looking into men's souls is never easy, especially in an age when societal expectations required individuals to express conformity with the religion of their community'.⁸⁵

Therefore the nobility not only carried a reasonable amount of power over the outward practices of their tenants and employees, they had to be careful that they too did not present any public expressions of private beliefs that were not in keeping with the Reformed Church's viewpoint.⁸⁶ Lee added, 'The nobility, as godly

⁸¹ Stevenston, *The Scottish Revolution*, 23.

⁸² Stevenston, *The Scottish Revolution*, 23.

⁸³ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 244.

⁸⁴ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 228.

⁸⁵ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 228.

⁸⁶ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 228.

magistrates -most became nominally Protestant, and many genuinely so-had a duty to advance the work of the Lord'.⁸⁷ It was hoped that the clergy could persuade the nobility to endorse Reformed ideology as by their support they too would become responsible for spreading their message amongst their own tenants. For the Kirk, with burgesses, lairds and their tenants, lay their greatest success. Christiana Larner wrote that there was a:

...systematic exposure of the laity to Christian instruction and moral exhortation through vernacular preaching by an entirely novel shift from the idea that the religious specialists to the assumption that each individual was personally responsible for his own salvation.⁸⁸

Despite this, Catholicism still survived. Brown explained:

Often this was skin-deep, the result of youthful flirtation, and it was easily abandoned in the face of pressure from the crown, the Church or the family itself. However, in many instances a devotion to Catholicism was the result of deeply held religious beliefs or of a family tradition that had become entangled with the identity and honour of the lineage.⁸⁹

Catholicism had a stronger foothold in the north, which was regarded as being more conservative, than in other areas. The south of Scotland contained a few remote patches primarily in the regions where the local nobility was of the same religious persuasion.⁹⁰ Brown maintained, 'Although there was some geographical concentration of Catholic support in the north-east and the south-west of the country, Catholics could be found among the families of the higher nobility in most regions'.⁹¹ The post-Reformation experience for many Catholics was a turbulent one, Stevenston suggested:

⁸⁷ Lee, Jnr., *The Road to Revolution: Scotland under Charles I*, (Urbano: University of Illinois Press:, 1985) 1625-163, 228.

⁸⁸ Christina Larner, *Enemies of God: Witch-hunt in Scotland*, (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2000) 157.

⁸⁹ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 244.

⁹⁰ Stevenston, *The Scottish Revolution*, 26.

⁹¹ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 244.

...it is noticeable that a disproportionately large number of the older nobility-perhaps a fifth- were Roman Catholics, and were thus largely excluded from public life. These included great nobles like the Marquis of Huntly living in France, the Earl of Argyll (living in London) and the Marquis of Douglas.⁹²

The survival of the old established religion was assisted by, 'Catholic missionaries (Franciscans from Ireland and Scots Jesuits) and distrust of Protestantism as the religion of the hated Lowlanders'.⁹³ Catholicism was still alive even at the Scottish court which caused tension between the king and the Kirk. MacDonald remarked, 'The principal difficulty between the Kirk and the crown in the years after 1586 related to the favour which the king showed to Catholic nobles'⁹⁴ and steps were taken to make sure exiled members of the Catholic nobility were not reinstated. Government restraint eventually led to there being a promise that 'no favours would be shown to Catholic earls until they had satisfied the Kirk'⁹⁵

The difficulty for clergy in accommodating the new religious ideology may be elucidated upon by a study of Alexander Seton Earl of Fyvie, 1st Earl of Dunfermline(1555-1622). A consideration of Seton clearly demonstrated how the public and personal religious sensibilities of the Scottish nobility could co-exist and how this reflected upon how the king viewed Catholic nobility. Despite public displays that endorsed the Reformed Church, Seton was known to be a Catholic but despite this, he held the most senior position in James VI's government. Maurice Lee stated that Seton was, 'a man whom everyone believed to be a Roman Catholic,

⁹² Stevenston, *The Scottish Revolution*, 21.

⁹³ Stevenston, *The Scottish Revolution*, 26.

⁹⁴ MacDonald, *The Jacobean Kirk*, 39.

⁹⁵ Lee, *The Inevitable Union and other Essays on Early Modern Scotland*, (East Lothian: Tuckwell, 2003).98.

though he outwardly conformed, held the highest office in the king's gift the lord chancellorship'.⁹⁶

Seton, was, according to Lee, 'president of the Court Session, came from a Catholic family and was suspected of being a Papist and most of the other members of the commission were believed to be either Catholic or lukewarm in religion'.⁹⁷ He had been educated in Rome by Jesuits where he displayed his intention of training for the priesthood before having a change of mind and deciding to study law. He was a great academic; excelling as a Latin poet; scholar of architecture; heraldry and mathematics.⁹⁸ His father was Keeper of the Household to Mary Queen of Scots and his aunt was one of Mary Queen of Scot's four ladies in waiting. In 1600 he was appointed guardian to the future king Charles I. He became Chancellor of Scotland in 1604 and in his role of Chancellor and Commissioner he was responsible for finalising the Treaty of Union.⁹⁹ He rose to become one of Scotland's most prominent lawyers. All of this he achieved despite being a Catholic in a country where both the king and the governing elite supported Reformed ideology. Seton was leader of a newly structured group named the Octavians, 'a commission established at the beginning of 1596 in an attempt to rescue the crown's disastrous financial situation'.¹⁰⁰ This group had life positions and were given an almost free reign in the management of Scottish financial affairs.¹⁰¹ He publicly supported the plight of exiled Catholic nobles and was questioned over his desire to re-instate Huntly as well as his intention to have the reinstatement of other exiled members of

⁹⁶ Lee, 'King James' Popish Chancellor', cited in I. Cowan and D. Shaw eds., *The Renaissance and Reformation in Scotland*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1983) 170.

⁹⁷ Lee, *The Inevitable Union and other Essays on Early Modern Scotland*, 84.

⁹⁸ Bath, *Scottish Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 79.

⁹⁹ Bath, *Scottish Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 79.

¹⁰⁰ MacDonald, *The Jacobean Kirk*, 61.

¹⁰¹ Lee, *The Inevitable Union and other Essays on Early Modern Scotland*, 83.

the nobility.¹⁰² In publicly supporting Reformed ideology, but privately remaining true to his Catholic beliefs, Seton's position demonstrated the challenges facing the Scottish nobility. As Brown highlighted, it was a time when, 'There was also much insincerity and ruthless exploitation of religion for political interests'.¹⁰³

By the mid seventeenth-century, the depth of religious belief was intense and there was a genuine and alarming fear of Popery within some religious communities. Lee maintained, 'In the middle of the 1630s...the situation inside the Scottish religious community both clerical and lay was extremely explosive'.¹⁰⁴ The journey to this point was fraught with religious anxiety, 'In Scotland in 1625, the Kirk was in crisis. Catholic nonconformity remained rife and a new Protestant nonconformity was increasing, fuelled by conventicling'.¹⁰⁵ This number was to rise, 'by the insistence on kneeling at communion, the king had more than doubled the number of nonconformists in Scotland and split the Kirk'.¹⁰⁶ These factors coupled with the lack of attendance of ministers at presbyteries and synods and their lack of discipline to hold General Assemblies paved the way for the religious turmoil that lay ahead. MacDonald maintained, 'Whatever the failures of Charles I, and there were many, his father's ecclesiastical legacy was the worst start he could have been given'.¹⁰⁷ Despite growing unrest in terms of secular issues:

In ideological terms the driving force was to be religion. Success would come because what was being done was God's work. His continuing favour to the Scots, successors to the Jews as his Chosen People, would ensure victory.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Lee, *The Inevitable Union and other Essays on Early Modern Scotland*, 84.

¹⁰³ Brown, 249.

¹⁰⁴ Lee, *The Road to Revolution: Scotland under Charles I, 1625-163*, 196.

¹⁰⁵ MacDonald, *The Jacobean Kirk*, 186.

¹⁰⁶ MacDonald, *The Jacobean Kirk*, 186.

¹⁰⁷ MacDonald, *The Jacobean Kirk*, 187.

¹⁰⁸ Stevenston, *The Scottish Revolution 1637-44*,) 11.

Charles I arrived in Scotland for his Coronation in 1633 unaware that four years later the country would be facing revolution. As Brown highlighted, 'The illusion of royal power created by James VI and his son was exposed to the harsh realities of Scottish politics'¹⁰⁹ and the reality was an unpleasant one for the king. He continued:

...real power was located in diverse sources, chiefly with the nobility, but also among the clergy, in burgh councils, and with clan chiefs, all of whom had been prepared to collude in the pretence of royal absolutism for as long as it served Scotland (or their own interests) well.¹¹⁰

Charles wished to see the Church in Scotland conform more with its English counterpart and with the influence of William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, this task was undertaken. Laud's anti-Calvinist viewpoint, coupled with the king's desire to adopt a policy of, 'order and decorum on worship, being attracted to the same theatrical devices that resulted in a ceremonial closely resembling that of Rome'¹¹¹ did not go down well. Issues of clerical attire caused tension as the austere colours worn by clergy of the Reformed Church were faced with the vivid and colourful surplices of the king's chaplains which they regarded as a step too close to Catholicism. As Charles' Spanish Catholic queen was surrounded by an increased number of Catholic supporters and advisors it was unsurprising that the accumulation of all of these factors laid a pathway of alarm and concern amongst the Scottish Protestant laity.¹¹²

With the Covenanting revolution that eventually followed, initially sparked by the riot in St. Giles Church in 1637 over the use of the king's Anglican Book of

¹⁰⁹ Brown, 'Reformation to Union 1560-1707' in *The New Penguin History of Scotland*, 241.

¹¹⁰ Brown, 'Reformation to Union 1560-1707' in *The New Penguin History of Scotland*, 241.

¹¹¹ Brown, 'Reformation to Union 1560-1707' in *The New Penguin History of Scotland*, 243.

¹¹² Brown, 'Reformation to Union 1560-1707' in *The New Penguin History of Scotland*, 244.

Common Prayer, the country was faced with a period of chronic religious instability

as:

Episcopalians and Presbyterians became irreconcilable enemies, while the latter also divided into warring factions, splitting the Church of Scotland so deeply that the rifts were never healed. The religious basis of political life had the effect of politicizing large numbers of ordinary people for the first time, while the clergy emerged more than ever before as leaders of local communities.¹¹³

More protests emerged and these climaxed with the signing of the National Covenant. The dialogue within the document opposed any policy which had a flavour of Catholicism and:

defended the 'true Religion', emphasised a commitment to government under the law, implied a profound distrust of Erastian episcopacy, and bound its signatories to the defence of God, king and commonweal on the clear understanding that the king's interests were subordinate to those of the law and the church.¹¹⁴

The Scots did not approve of the death of the king in January 1641 and continued to be true to the, 'idea of monarchy, loyal to the Stewart family, and committed to Covenants with God that could not be overturned by the unilateral behaviour of one party and which underlined the need to maintain the regal union'.¹¹⁵ The road to this point touched the majority of the Scottish nobility in one way or another and this included Sir Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie.

Montgomerie, seventh of Skelmorlie: Personal Profile.

In constructing a profile of Robert Montgomerie, seventh of Skelmorlie it was deemed important to consider his background and the various factors that would

¹¹³ Brown, 'Reformation to Union 1560-1707' in *The New Penguin History of Scotland*, 246.

¹¹⁴ Brown, 'Reformation to Union 1560-1707' in *The New Penguin History of Scotland*, 246.

¹¹⁵ Brown, 'Reformation to Union 1560-1707', in *The New Penguin History of Scotland*, 250.

have shaped his personality. Montgomerie inherited the Skelmorlie title on the death of his father and elder brother in April 1583 along with the lands and estates of Skelmorlie, Lochranza, Lochliboside and Sannox.¹¹⁶ He added to these the lands of Bourtreehill which he acquired from William Lyn in 1597. At court, he met Margaret Douglas,¹¹⁷ daughter of Sir William Douglas of Drumlanrig and Margaret of Lochinvar, and, as previously mentioned, they married on 13 November 1593, at which point he received a tocher of 7000 merks.¹¹⁸

Montgomerie's acquisition of land and consequent income received a boost when in 1606 Montgomerie he received from Hew, fifth Earl of Eglinton, the tenantry of Skelmorlie. The contract confirmed an agreement whereby the earl, 'agrees to erect Skelmorlie, and the other lands then belonging to the laird, into the tenantry of Skelmorlie, and the tower thereof to be the principal messuage[dwelling-place]'.¹¹⁹ The charter signed in Edinburgh on 18 February 1606 by both Eglinton and Skelmorlie includes, as well as the lands of Skelmorlie, the lands of Lochranza on the Isle of Arran. This was confirmed in 1607 by Crown charter under James VI. The earl's reasons for establishing the contract are noted in the Skelmorlie Writs:

The said Erle remembering and calling to mynd the guid, trew and thankfull service done to him and his nobill progenitouris be the said Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie and his predecessouris past memorie of the man; and to gif the better occasioun to him and his successouris to continew in all tyme cuming in the lyk thankfull and faythfull service to the said nobill Erle, his airis and successouris; and for the singular respect quhilk the said nobill Erle hes beris to the weill and standing of the foresaid hous of Skelmorlie.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ NAS, SW, GD3/1/7.1/13.

¹¹⁷ Grant, 'Devotional Meditations', 68-88.

¹¹⁸ NAS, SW, GD3/1/7/2/5.

¹¹⁹ Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries* vol. i, 159

¹²⁰ NAS, SW, GD3/1/7/2/4, GD3/1/7/2/1.

Montgomerie had a further increase in his finances around the time the aisle was constructed and the ceiling painted. This was due to an enlargement of his holdings and income which occurred when he became patron of the parish church in Largs, ‘The Church was held by the monks of Paisley till 1587, when the church lands, etc., were made a temporal lordship in favour of Lord Claud Hamilton. In the reign of Charles I this passed to Montgomerie of Skelmorlie’.¹²¹ At this point, it was Claud’s son James, who was patron. Grant noted that, ‘the second Lord Paisley (formerly James, Earl of Abercorn) lost the patronage and tithes of the church at Largs to Sir Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie’.¹²² No documents have survived to support exactly when this occurred, but on 22 July and also on 3 October 1635 he was actively seeking the valuation of the lands he acquired from Abercorn.¹²³ The area covered within the parish of Largs, and now belonging to Montgomerie was:

bounded on the north and east by Renfrewshire, on the south-east by Kilbirnie parish, on the south by Dalry and West Kilbride and on the west by the Firth of Clyde. Its greatest length from north by east to south by west is nine and a half miles; its greatest breadth is five and a quarter miles; and its area is twenty one thousand eight hundred and fifty acres.¹²⁴

The area of land was therefore extensive and with this new patronage came the tithes that accompanied it. This acquisition expanded, not only Montgomerie’s land and property, but also his income which explains why he was financially able to build and decorate the aisle so lavishly, an undertaking he commissioned the following year.

¹²¹ Francis Groome, *Ordinance Gazetteer of Scotland: A Survey of Scottish Topography, Statistical, Bibliographical and Historical*, (Edinburgh: Grange, 1882-5), accessed 14 January 2012.

¹²² Groome, *Ordinance Gazetteer of Scotland: A Survey of Scottish Topography, Statistical, Bibliographical and Historical*, accessed 14 January 2012.

¹²³ Grant, ‘Devotional Meditations’, 68-88.

¹²⁴ Groome, *Ordinance Gazetteer of Scotland: A Survey of Scottish Topography, Statistical, Bibliographical and Historical*, accessed 14 January 2012.

The couple had one son, also Robert, and a daughter who died unmarried. According to an inscription above Margaret's coffin, which was engraved as if spoken by the deceased, the daughter died before her mother. The inscription stated, 'My daughter an untimely doom, Consigned before me to the tomb'.¹²⁵ No records giving any information of this daughter have been found to date, nor is she buried in the aisle alongside her parents. It is likely that she too would have been buried within the churchyard in Largs before the aisle was constructed, where the effects of time or neglect have eroded any memorial that originally preserved details of her life. No remains of a child have been found within Skelmorlie Aisle.

Before his son's marriage in 1617, Robert, seventh of Skelmorlie bestowed upon him the lands of Lochranza. He was subsequently given the title, 'Sir Robert Montgumrie of Lochransa, Knicht'.¹²⁶ He married Lady Mary Campbell, sister of Archibald, Earl of Argyle. The marriage contract signed by, 'Robert Montgomerie Appirant of Skelmorlie' is dated 23 August 1617. On this occasion his father 'bound himself to infest his son and his wife in a tenandry of Skelmorlie, and he subsequently granted charters in their favour'.¹²⁷ The document read, 'At Edinburgh... to all in sundrie who are thus present I Robert Montgomerie senior of Skelmurly to Robert Montgomerie younger my fone the tenandry of Skelmurly and lands thereof'.¹²⁸ In 1643, Robert senior added to his son's lands by giving him those of Bourtreehill and Armsheugh in the parish of Irvine.¹²⁹

Montgomerie was Justice of the Peace for Cunninghame in 1622, a position which was renewed in 1623. A, 'Renewal of Commissions to the Justices of Peace in

¹²⁵ Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire, 1636-38.

¹²⁶ Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries* vol.i, 160.

¹²⁷ Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries* vol.i, 160.

¹²⁸ NAS, GD3/1/7/2/5, GD3/1/7/2/12.

¹²⁹ NAS, GD3/1/7/2/12.

all of the shires of the kingdom' states that Montgomerie of Skelmorlie was, 'to be renewed, and choise wes made of the persons particularlie underwrittin to be justice of peace within the bounds of the sherefdomes, stewardess and baillereis underwritten'.¹³⁰ It was noted that his son, Sir Robert Montgomery of Lochranza, was the Justice of the Peace for Bute.¹³¹

Montgomerie appeared to have had close association with his family. This was particularly noted in his relationship with his son with whom he shared interests and to whom he bequeathed his lands long before his death. His relationship with other members of the family appeared to have been equally amiable. The tone of correspondence between Eglinton and Skelmorlie displayed a fondness and trust, and the earl obviously regarded him as a worthy individual. This was clearly evident in the wording of the document, previously discussed, in which he gifts him the lands of Skelmorlie. It was also apparent in the testament belonging to his sister Jean who died in 1621. She wrote, 'and I leif my brother, Sir Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie, and George Montgomerie, our brother, to be oursearis to my bairnes'.¹³² This task they were to undertake alongside her husband, Robert Boyd of Portincross, who was still alive at Jean's death.¹³³ This may have only been family obligation but, nevertheless, Montgomerie was obviously regarded by his sister as a trustworthy, caring and supportive individual for the undertaking she requested and Montgomerie appeared to be willing to assume the responsibility.

¹³⁰ David Masson, ed., *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* (Edinburgh: H.M. Register House, 1877-1898), vol. vi (1635-37)707, vol. xiii (1622-25) 341, vol.v. (1633-35) 384.

¹³¹ Masson, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* vol., vi (1635-37)707, vol., xiii (1622-25) 341, vol.v., (1633-35) 384.

¹³² Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries*, vol. i,158.

¹³³ Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries*, vol. i,158.

No contemporary sources have survived that gave a clear and concise indication of Montgomerie's religious sensibilities but a combination of the man's actions and interpretation of the aisle paintings offer evidence that gave an indication of at least what Montgomerie wished to portray. As Brown maintained, 'For early modern people, religion was not a private matter, and for nobles especially their religious commitment had public significance'.¹³⁴ Due to this, it was problematic trying to ascertain without an element of doubt, where Montgomerie's allegiance lay. As previously stated, contemporary evidence was both scant and could, considering the era in which he lived, be a smoke-screen for his true inward feelings. It is argued, however, that if Montgomerie was, as Bath teased, a covert Catholic, he left little proof of this, in fact, surviving evidence would indicate quite the contrary as no contemporary evidence has survived that demonstrated that Montgomerie had any affiliation to Catholicism. Of the material available within the NAS, which held all the surviving Montgomerie family papers, there was no indication of any involvement via folklore or fact that Montgomerie was a covert Catholic.¹³⁵ Historians of the past who studied the Montgomerie family in great detail, predominately, William Fraser and George Robertson, did not indicate at any point that Montgomerie was anything except a supporter of Protestantism.¹³⁶

In 1637 Montgomerie petitioned against the introduction of the new service book. The petition stated that it was supported by, 'the gentlemen and remnant people of the Kirk of Lairge' and is signed 'Skelmurlie' amongst others.¹³⁷ He then signed the National Covenant in 1638, a copy of the document was filed amongst the

¹³⁴ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 235.

¹³⁵ N.A.S. GD3, Papers relating to the Montgomeries of Eglinton and cadet branches.FIX

¹³⁶ Further discussion on the Montgomerie family can be found in William Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries*, vols., (Edinburgh, 1859).and William Robertson, *Ayrshire: its History and Historic Families*, (Glasgow: Grimsay Press, 2005).

¹³⁷ Masson, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, vol. vi. 707.

family papers. Montgomerie of Skelmorlie and his son both signed the document at the General Assembly in Glasgow, ‘we subscribe according to the determination of the said frie and lawfull General Assemblie holdine at Glasgow’, their two signatures follow that of Argyll and his daughter Marie Campbell.¹³⁸ It was, however, possible that in signing this document Montgomerie was opposing the king's policies rather than supporting the Covenanting cause. It was also possible that he may have been conforming to public expectation rather than adhering to his own religious ideology as many other members of the nobility did.¹³⁹

Montgomerie lived in the midst of an area which had strong support for the Covenant.¹⁴⁰ The heads of the noble families, ‘Argyll, Cassillis, Eglinton and Loudon led the cause in Ayrshire supported by their kindreds and ...small lairds and tenant farmers’.¹⁴¹ The Earl of Eglinton, famously known as ‘Greysteel’ and head of the Montgomerie family, was a supporter. He expanded this support through his kindred as well as through personal association, Mackenzie claimed, ‘the Montgomerie’s entered the fold of Protestantism no doubt, like others, bringing their flocks of tenantry with them’.¹⁴² Eglinton was at the vanguard of the Ayrshire support which not only extended throughout the mainland, but also directly involved the islands of Arran and Bute, lands owned by Montgomerie of Skelmorlie and his son. Montgomerie's son, also Robert, was married to the sister of Archibald, Marquess of Argyll, who was the leader of the Covenanting Revolution. In the mid seventeenth-century, at the height of covenanting zeal, his grandson, again another Robert, was, ‘repeatedly subjected to penalties by Government on account of the

¹³⁸ Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries*, vol. i, 64.

¹³⁹ Brown, *Scottish Nobility in Scotland*, 235.

¹⁴⁰ Ian B. Cowan, *The Scottish Covenanters*, (London: Gollancz, 1976) 29.

¹⁴¹ Cowan, *The Scottish Covenanters*, 29.

¹⁴² W. Mackenzie, *Book of Arran* 2 vols., (Glasgow: Hugh Hopkins, 1914, vol ii.) 88.

attendance of his lady at conventicles'.¹⁴³ The evidence indicated that Montgomerie seventh of Skelmorlie, certainly associated with Covenanters when considering the sensibilities of the leader of the Montgomerie family at Eglinton; who his son was married to; and the fact his grandson was frequently fined for his wife's actions. The evidence, however, did not provide any solid proof that Montgomerie was himself a Covenanter.

One fact that was evident was that Montgomerie was a man of faith. He actively took steps to expand the number of places of Protestant worship throughout his lands. According to Argyll Synod Minutes, he was also instrumental in the, 'adjusting of parishes in Argyll'.¹⁴⁴ The minutes of the provincial Assembly of Argyll at Inverary on 8 October 1639 recorded, 'the assembly, considered that there are many parishes within the province, many kirks having no minister at all and are to be dismembered'.¹⁴⁵ This resulted in the alteration of the parish boundaries, which was deemed more accommodating as many parishioners were upwards of eight miles from their nearest church. It was believed that the alteration would not only please local communities but would 'concern the furtherance of the happy work of the reformation'.¹⁴⁶

Montgomerie was also directly involved in the expansion of Protestant churches on the Isle of Arran. On 8 July 1642 it was decided, 'that a third kirk be builded and erected in the isle and that be at the head of Lochransay and that the lands underwritten...shall be adjoined to the said kirk to be erected'.¹⁴⁷ This was in addition to the existing church at the opposite end of Lochransa and one in Kilmory.

¹⁴³ Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries* vol. i, 162.

¹⁴⁴ Margaret Young, ed., *The Parliaments of Scotland: Burgh Shires and Commissioners*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1992, 2 vols. i). vol. ii, 508.

¹⁴⁵ NAS, SW, CH2/557/1/57

¹⁴⁶ NAS, SW, CH2/557/1/57

¹⁴⁷ NAS, SW, CH2/557/1/56.

Although he had passed his lands to his son on his marriage, Montgomerie still kept a keen interest in ecclesiastical development in Arran. It was noted that he attended an inspection of the church in 1649 accompanied by his son and others who undertook a visitation. Not only was church business discussed but issues of minor acts of law breaking within the community were dealt with.¹⁴⁸ The sparse documentation that has survived did not provide any further details.

According to a local tale Montgomerie also was actively religious in private.

Wodrow stated:

Sir Robert was a man mightly in prayer, and much at it, but very short at a time. He would leave company, when in his house, frequently in a little time, and retired a little to his closett, as if it had been to look at a paper, and it was knouen it was for prayer.¹⁴⁹

The account was part of the oral tradition involving the Montgomeries that still exists in the Largs area. Local people still repeat narratives relaying tales of the family. These tales which appeared, for example, in Robert Wodrow's *Analecta*, have also been retold in local newspapers,¹⁵⁰ however, no factual evidence to support any of them was unearthed.¹⁵¹

Montgomerie served as a commissioner of the Loan and Tax in 1642-3 and Colonel of the Horse and Foot on the island of Bute, where he was also on the Committee of War, which he convened in 1643, serving on it in 1648 and 1649.¹⁵² Both his son and his grandson also served on the same committee. They were empowered with the task of:

¹⁴⁸ NAS. SW, CH2/557/1/211

¹⁴⁹ Robert Wodrow, *Analecta*, (Edinburgh: Maitland Club, 1842)372.

¹⁵⁰ Ardrrossan and Saltcoats Herald (20 December 1889).

¹⁵¹ Further examples of these traditions will be discussed in chapter six.

¹⁵² Young, ed. *The Parliaments of Scotland: Burgh and Shire Commissioners*, vol.i,508.

Preventing all dangers from foreign invasion or internal insurrection, and finding themselves obliged according to the trust reposed in them to preserve the peace of the kingdom from all evils and practices of such as labour to subvert religion and government and disturb the peace of the kingdom, they have therefore resolved the better to keep his majesty's subjects in a dutiful obedience to the laws and public judicatories and in a Christian unity amongst themselves...¹⁵³

Crawford claimed that in the later years of Montgomerie's life he regretted his former actions, specifically those involved in local feuding,¹⁵⁴ 'for these he was afterwards seized with remorse, and in expiation performed many acts of charity and mortification in his latter days'.¹⁵⁵ Robertson added, 'he was much mortified by the recollection of what he had done and in expiation performed many acts of charity'.¹⁵⁶ Further discussion on the Montgomerie's involvement in local feuding, including the participation of the Skelmorlie branch, elucidated this further. Montgomerie died in November 1650 at the age of seventy-nine, having been Laird of Skelmorlie for sixty-seven years.

The Ayrshire Vendetta

Robert, seventh of Skelmorlie, enjoyed the support and association of an important and influential family line, despite being from a smaller, less prestigious branch. Through the main line they had attained their lands and to them they gave their allegiance.¹⁵⁷ The Montgomeries of Eglinton, alongside their supporters and kindred, including the branch of Skelmorlie, took an active part in what prominent Ayrshire

¹⁵³ Keith Brown *et al.* eds., *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*, (St Andrews: 2007-2011), date accessed: 22 November 2011.

¹⁵⁴ Montgomerie's involvement in the Ayrshire feuds is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

¹⁵⁵ Crawford, *A General Description of the Shire of Renfrew*, (Paisley: J. Neilson, 1819) 175.

¹⁵⁶ Robertson, *Ayrshire. Its History and Historic Families*, 129.

¹⁵⁷ Robertson, *Ayrshire. Its History and Historic Families*, 129.

historian George Robertson called ‘The Ayrshire Vendetta’,¹⁵⁸ a reference to the feuds which engulfed Ayrshire during the sixteenth century. These decades of bloodshed constituted a deeply rooted cancer which was eventually expunged by the crown at the beginning of the seventeenth century.¹⁵⁹ Acts of destruction, slaughter and vandalism were part of the feuding ideology, and fighting and disorder were so common in Ayrshire amongst local landed families that the area was described as being at the centre of, ‘virtual civil war’.¹⁶⁰ Brown stated, ‘feuding escalated to the point of becoming uncontrollable’ incorporating, ‘a whole range of relationships of conflict from bloody genocide to simply avoiding social contact or taking up aggressive postures’.¹⁶¹

Feuding was a mindset, a way of life, the ideology of which was passed down from one generation to the next. Most leading Ayrshire families were engaged, to some extent, in feuds with at least one of their neighbours.¹⁶² If they had no personal grievance, they would be part of the support or kindred fighting for another family:

Until the very end of the sixteenth century, Scotland was in a constant state of civil war on account of these feuds; and in order to hold his own in such a state of society, it was absolutely necessary for a noble to increase his following as much as he could.¹⁶³

Historian John Major, writing in the seventeenth-century, observed, ‘if two nobles of equal rank happen to be very near neighbours, quarrels and even shedding of blood are a common thing between them; and their retainers cannot meet without

¹⁵⁸ Robertson, *Ayrshire: Its History and Historic Families*, 131.

¹⁵⁹ Robertson, *Ayrshire: Its History and Historic Families*, 137.

¹⁶⁰ John Sinclair, *The Old Statistical Account of Scotland*, (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1791, vol.vi) 21.

¹⁶¹ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland 1573-1625*, 6.

¹⁶² I.F. Grant, *The Social and Economic Development of Scotland before 1603*, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1930) 195.

¹⁶³ Grant, *The Social and Economic Development of Scotland before 1603*, 195.

strife'.¹⁶⁴ For the Montgomeries, their grievance was with the Cunninghames of Glencairn. The two families were enthusiastic participants, equalling each other in terms of ferocity and vengeance. Cunninghame supporters, included prominent Scottish families such as the Maxwells and the Gordons of Lochinvar, as well as cadet branches of his own name.¹⁶⁵ Eglinton's fighting force included support from Houston of that Ilk, James Mowat of Busbie and Dunlop of that Ilk, but principally his support came from the many cadet branches, of which Skelmorlie was one.¹⁶⁶

Born in 1571, Robert seventh of Skelmorlie, was delivered into this feuding society. The history of the feud between the two families was well established by the time of Montgomerie's birth, but he became directly involved at an early age when his own father and brother were slaughtered in 1583 at the hands of the Cunninghames. The catalyst which initially ignited the troubles began when Alexander, grandfather of the first Earl of Eglinton, was given the office of bailie of Cunninghame in 1448 by James II. As a result, due to the Cunninghames' jealousy,¹⁶⁷ the two families entered the first phase of their bloody feud:

The cause of contention being the office of bailie of Cunningham, which, although secured to the Earl's family, was greatly coveted by their rivals, while the exercise of the office caused jealousies and bitterness.¹⁶⁸

The crown attempted to intervene but it was not until 12 January 1509 that

a submission to the Bishop of Moray, the Earls of Angus, Argyll and Cassillis, and Lord Borthwick, who by decreit-arbitral found that the Earl of Eglinton had full and heritable right to the office of the Bailiary of Cunninghame.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ John Major, *History of Greater Britain*, (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1892) 48.

¹⁶⁵ Robertson, *Ayrshire. Its History and Historic Families*, 137.

¹⁶⁶ Robertson, *Ayrshire. Its History and Historic Families*, 137.

¹⁶⁷ Robertson, *Ayrshire. Its History and Historic Families*, 137.

¹⁶⁸ Balfour Paul, *The Scots Peerage*, ix vols. vol. iii, 434.

¹⁶⁹ Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries* vol.i, 31.

This decision, however, did not satisfy the Cunninghames who kept the feud alive. All attempts to extinguish conflict failed, including marriage between the two families. Eglinton was eventually reprimanded for his role in the feud when at the Parliament of 17 November 1526, a statement was read saying

If the Earl of Eglintoun would not make friends and pass to concord, anent all matters debateable betwixt the said Earls of Eglintoun and Glencairn, that the said Earl of Eglintoun should nowise have the said Earl of Arran's¹⁷⁰ heart nor his help in time to come.¹⁷¹

This attempt, however, also failed. Grant suggested that this was because, 'the armed power of the great lords overshadowed that of the officers of the crown'.¹⁷² It would be several years before the crown would succeed. In the meantime destruction and bloodshed continued and a creed based on retaliation would prevail.

Peace was eventually reached in 1536 thus bringing the first spate of feuding between the two families to an end. Despite minor skirmishes, an uneasy truce ensued until the 1570s when the feud rekindled even bloodier than before. At this point the Montgomeries dominated patronage of Kilwinning Abbey, a fact that greatly irritated the Cunninghames. The Earl of Eglinton had held the position of, 'chamberlain, justiciar and bailie of the abbey lands of Kilwinning'¹⁷³ since 1552. At that time, Gavin Hamilton, commendator of Kilwinning Abbey and relation of Eglinton's first wife, died and was replaced by Alexander Cunninghame of Montgreenan, Glencairn's youngest son, who refused to infest Eglinton in the abbey offices which he had occupied for over twenty years. In fact he attempted to go a step further by trying to have his offices withdrawn. Balfour Paul stated that the

¹⁷⁰ James First Earl of Arran was a major power player in the aristocratic struggle for custodianship of young James V in 1526.

¹⁷¹ James Cameron, *James V The Personal Rule 1528-1542*, (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998) 9-10.

¹⁷² Grant, *The Social and Economic Development of Scotland before 1603*, 193.

¹⁷³ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 85.

commendator, 'had much strife with the Earl of Eglinton and the latter actually garrisoned the steeple of the [Kilwinning] Abbey with a hundred men against the commendator'.¹⁷⁴ Eventually the crown again intervened and on this occasion Eglinton was summoned and told to cease his actions which he eventually, and reluctantly, did.

In 1580 Eglinton was finally infested back into the offices he had initially held. The relationship between the two families simmered for another decade until a serious event occurred. At this point, the direction and severity of the relationship between the two families drastically altered. A party of Cunninghames attacked Montgomeries and on this occasion one of the Montgomeries was wounded and one member of the Cunninghame party was killed. Revenge was to come.¹⁷⁵ Despite being the instigators of the attack, the Cunninghames tried to pursue the culprits through legal pathways, but they were unsuccessful and thus decided on a more direct approach, 'Glencairn threw himself into the work of anarchy and turned his feudal jealousies against the Montgomeries into various overt acts of violence, which the Montgomeries did not fail to reciprocate'.¹⁷⁶ Glencairn gathered together a group of kinsmen and supporters bent on vengeance. Retaliation came in April 1586 when the earl left his home at Eglinton to join the court at Stirling. En route he paid a visit to a member of another cadet branch, Neil Montgomerie of Langshaw. On leaving Langshaw's home later that evening he was intercepted and slaughtered by a band of Cunninghame supporters.¹⁷⁷ Langshaw's wife, herself a Cunninghame, had apparently notified her kin of the earl's visit, an act that would not go unpunished. Robertson writes, 'In revenge the Montgomeries mustered in force to the standard of

¹⁷⁴ Balfour Paul, *The Scots Peerage*, ix vols., vol. vii, 241.

¹⁷⁵ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 87.

¹⁷⁶ Robertson, *Ayrshire: Its History and Historic Families*, 122.

¹⁷⁷ Robertson, *Ayrshire: Its History and Historic Families*, 122.

the Master of Eglinton and raided the Cunninghame country'.¹⁷⁸ Fraser added, 'and in the heat of their resentment killed every Cunningham without distinction, that they could come by, or even so much as met with on the highways, or living peaceably in their own houses'.¹⁷⁹

Direct Involvement of the Skelmorlie Branch

As previously mentioned, the Montgomeries of Skelmorlie were also involved in the Cunninghame feud. Sir Robert Montgomerie, sixth of Skelmorlie, father of the patron of the aisle, shot and fatally wounded Alexander Cunninghame of Montgreenan, Commendator of Kilwinning. Montgreenan was brother to the Earl of Glencairn, the attack apparently taking place at his own gate. This event took place in March 1582¹⁸⁰ although no corroborative documents have been unearthed to confirm this.

The elder Montgomerie of Skelmorlie was himself assigned a similar fate. Both he and his eldest son William were murdered in 1583 by the Maxwells of Newark who were related to the Cunninghames through marriage. The Montgomeries of Skelmorlie and the Maxwells had also been involved in disputes, most of which, until this point, were minor.¹⁸¹ However, events involving the Maxwells included a particularly bloody episode the previous year when a brutal and fatal encounter took place between the two factions. In this episode Patrick Maxwell of Stainlie, and several of his followers, were slain by the Montgomeries and their

¹⁷⁸ Robertson, *Ayrshire: Its History and Historic Families*, 61.

¹⁷⁹ Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries* vol.i, 34.

¹⁸⁰ Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries* vol. i, 56.

¹⁸¹ Robert Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland*, (Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1833) vol iii, part i, 122.

supporters.¹⁸² This resulted in the revenge attack which claimed the lives of Robert, sixth of Skelmorlie, and his eldest son William, who were murdered by Maxwell's son, also Patrick. Maxwell was subsequently charged with the murders but

Patrik Maxwell of Newark [was] dilaitit of airt and pairt of the slauchter of vmq Robert Montgomerie of Skelmourlie and vmq Williame Montgomerie apparand of Skelmourlie.¹⁸³

No evidence of the subsequent trial has survived.

The slain Montgomerie was succeeded by his second son Robert, patron of the aisle, who enthusiastically continued the hereditary feud with the Cunninghames. He affixed no limits to his revenge for the slaying of his father and brother. Brown stated, 'Sir Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie was said to have been the man the Cunninghames most feared'.¹⁸⁴ Sir Robert, 'set no bounds to his feudal wrath, but indulged in it with such eagerness as to occasion very much bloodshed of his enemies'.¹⁸⁵ He was described as, 'a man of great courage, which he found frequent opportunities of displaying in his feud between the Montgomeries and the Cunninghames'.¹⁸⁶

As the century came to a close, the king intervened to eradicate the feuding culture once and for all:

It was to the credit of James VI that he should have made determined efforts to stamp out the feuds against his nobles. In 1595 he resolved to end the disorders that were 'shaking loose the commonweal' and he summoned the principals of all the feuds that were at the moment going on to appear before him, with strictly limited retinues.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland*, vol iii, part i, 122.

¹⁸³ Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland*, vol iii, part i, 122.

¹⁸⁴ Brown, *Blood feud in Scotland*, 91.

¹⁸⁵ Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries* vol. i, 159.

¹⁸⁶ Fraser, *Memorials of the Montgomeries* vol. i, 159.

¹⁸⁷ Grant, *The Social and Economic Development of Scotland before 1603*, 194.

This resulted in the Montgomeries and Cunninghames being summoned in January 1596. Further legislation to address feuding was issued in 1598 with the Act of Convention of Estates for removing of feuds. The following year, encouraged by supporters and kindreds, both parties were forced to find a peace settlement. In March 1604 the Earl of Eglinton was relieved of any responsibility relating to acts of broken assurances carried out by his men if he personally brought them before the council.¹⁸⁸ The pair were summoned by the Privy Council 1605/6, 'There is order to charge Earl of Eglinton, Lord Semple, Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie...to appear before the Lords of Secret Council at Stirling'. Both parties were instructed to 'come in peacable maner, without arms, except their swords, and to remain in their lodgings till the council direct some of their number to convoy them to the council house'.¹⁸⁹ This was necessary to prevent further skirmishes to and from the court. Both sides were eventually coerced into signing submissions on 16 March 1609 and peace between them was enforced by decret. The feud thus came to an end. Peace between the Montgomeries of Skelmorlie, the Cunninghames and the Maxwells of Newark, however, took a little longer to achieve but in the end, peace did prevail.¹⁹⁰

The relationship between the Montgomeries of Skelmorlie and the Maxwells of Newark was especially problematic due to their involvement with the death of Skelmorlie's father and brother. A local tale associated with the quenching of the feud maintained:

The Baron of Skelmorlie, the object of whose visit is involved in mystery, found himself necessitated to hide in a small closet or turret of the castle. Newark discovered his hiding-place; and far from resenting this intrusion, called out,

¹⁸⁸ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 99.

¹⁸⁹ Masson, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* (1604-7), vol. vii, 234.

¹⁹⁰ Masson, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* (1604-7), vol. vii, 234.

'Robin, come down to me, who has done you so good a turn as make you young Laird and old Laird of Skelmorlie in one day'.¹⁹¹

Maxwell made reference to the slaughter of Montgomerie's father and older brother here and also admitted that he was the culprit. Maxwell also suggested that the killing of the two older Montgomeries was to Robert's benefit since he became seventh of Skelmorlie. Maxwell and Montgomerie reportedly became reconciled at this event. There is, however, no factual evidence to support this tale and it may be, as Crawford claims, merely an affecting fabrication.¹⁹²

Traditional tale or not, peace with the Maxwells was established after crown intervention which was monitored by the Privy Council. Assurances were undertaken and in 1605/6 a renewal of such between Skelmorlie and Maxwell was prompted. The document read:

the assurance between Robert Montgomerie of Skelmourlie, on the one part, and Patrik Maxwell of Newark and Johnne Maxwell of Stainlie, on the other part, being now almost expired, there is to be the like charge to both these parties.¹⁹³

The Minute Book of Processes included, in a collective memorandum dated December 1605, an entry which stated, 'Act to charge Skelmurlie and Newark to renew their assurances'.¹⁹⁴ A similar document was recorded in 1606/7, whereby the assurance between the three mentioned was again almost expired. It recorded, 'there is order to charge both parties to subscribe within six days after the charge, under pain of rebellion, such new form of assurances as shall be delivered to them, to endure till 1 January 1608'.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Crawford, *A General Description of the Shire of Renfrew*, 175.

¹⁹² Crawford, *A General Description of the Shire of Renfrew*, 175.

¹⁹³ Masson, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* vol. vii (1604-7), 153.

¹⁹⁴ Masson, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* vol. vii (1604-7), 157.

¹⁹⁵ Masson, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* vol. vii (1604-7), 281.

The feud between the Montgomeries and the Cunninghames was nearing its end when, on 17 January 1607, there was a, ‘submission of the feud between the Earls of Eglinton and Glencairn’.¹⁹⁶ The document further stated that, ‘Hew, Earl of Eglinton, Robert Montgomerie of Skelmurelie [were to] appear personally to subscribe a submission of their feuds and nominate arbiters, conform to the Act of Parliament’.¹⁹⁷ This also included their supporters and Patrick Maxwell of Newark. By the end of his life in November 1650, dispute with all old adversaries was over, although one record within a Minute Book of the Court of Session for Irvine dated 1649/1650 has an entry that recorded: ‘17 December 1649 Cunnyaeme and Montgomrie’.¹⁹⁸ No further information has survived, but what this entry does highlight is that court proceedings were still taking place involving the two families. These, however, need not have been hostile.

During his lifetime Montgomerie had lived through a changing world. He inherited the title of Skelmorlie amidst a society immersed in deadly feud and had suffered personal tragedy with the slaughter of his father and his older brother, the loss of his daughter and then his wife. When he died, Scotland was a different place from the one he had been born into. The feuding society had been eventually purged and the localised civil wars between neighbouring families was over. An ethos based on peace prevailed and on its journey towards this peace:

The world of bloodfeud was being turned upside down as the corporate society of kinsmen, friends, dependants, and ancestors was replaced with the awful isolation of the sinner standing before the judgement of God. In this new world men inherited nothing from their parents, not even their feuds.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁶ Masson, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* vol. vii (1604-7) 296.

¹⁹⁷ Masson, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* vol. vii (1604-7) 296.

¹⁹⁸ NAS, Minute Book of the Court of Session for Irvine, Scott, 1649/1650.

¹⁹⁹ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 207.

The changing ideology that emerged from the embers of the feuding society was focussed on peace rather than conflict. This may have taken time to establish and may, in many instances, have been more in keeping with uneasy truce, but the feuding years were eventually brought to an end. Brown claimed that, 'peace did not become universal, but some feuds were pacified, some were made less destructive'.²⁰⁰ The reformed Church did not approve of a society which conducted its affairs through bloodshed. The crown, conscious that this type of society lacked sophistication and the resultant disharmony not only had a negative effect on the profile of the kingdom but reflected badly on its king, eventually took a firm stance.

This chapter demonstrated that Scottish nobility of the seventeenth-century faced several challenges but also enjoyed a new found affluence and self-confidence. They were, in many instances, a well educated, talented collection of individuals who travelled to Europe and beyond bringing Continental influences to home soil. Changes to religious governance, which had its genesis with the Scottish Reformation, meant that for a time three religions were practiced and although they were not always harmonious, the ethos seemed to work albeit for a short time. It was a complex time to try to ascertain the religious affiliations of many of the nobility and this was demonstrated by a consideration of Alexander Seton. Seton was a known Catholic and yet was the most senior member of the king's council. The transferral of the royal court to London in 1603 had, on the whole, an adverse affect on the Scottish nobility as, in many cases, they found themselves on the periphery having little access to their king. They could no longer influence him nor persuade them to their way of thinking. As the seventeenth-century reached the end of its

²⁰⁰ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 207.

fourth decade, religious disruption again emerged which resulted in challenges to Charles' kingship, religious instability and eventually revolution.

For Montgomerie, seventh of Skelmorlie, he witnessed these times, was influenced by the feuding era and suffered due to personal tragedy. The Montgomeries had known both peace and conflict. The ancient seat had survived throughout the centuries gaining position, prestige and the lucrative rewards that accompanied them. Their lands of north Ayrshire extended from the Irish Sea encompassing Renfrew and the Irvine and Garnoch valleys, making them one of the foremost Ayrshire families. The powerhouse of the family was their seat of Eglinton in Irvine, but although he retained friendly allegiance with the earldom, Montgomerie of Skelmorlie was firmly established as an independent branch of this prestigious family. Having his own lands and property, he was not without power and social status.

When the feuding era was expunged, a society that did not have conflict at its heart was a new objective. Brown claimed, 'a peace that was permanent required a shift in how men thought about their world, of the place of violence in it, and of how they coped with rivals and enemies in a world without it'.²⁰¹ Montgomerie was a man of his time and as such both outwardly and inwardly, displayed his love of God and of his country by trying to serve his community both in religious and secular ways.

Montgomerie had been involved in establishing religious communities through his involvement in having new churches built, as well as this, he served his locality well in secular committees.

²⁰¹ Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 101.

Trying to ascertain his involvement with the Covenanters was inconclusive as, although he obviously associated with Covenanters no evidence emerged that supplied any clear evidence that he was one himself, however, no evidence suggested he was not. The Earl of Eglinton, head of the family line, was a firm supported and leader of the movement in Ayrshire and Montgomerie of Skelmorlie's son and grandson were both married to ladies who had Covenanting associations. This evidence, however, does not necessarily mean Montgomerie was a supporter. At a time when religious beliefs were not a private matter, Montgomerie's outward actions may not have reflected his inner beliefs. If this was the case, he hid his personal ideology extremely well.

Legend stated that Montgomerie was a man who spent much time in private prayer with the suggestion that he had felt guilty about his bloody actions during the feuding era. Once Skelmorlie Aisle had been built, he could retreat there for solitude and peace; surrounded by a world that he had constructed, a world that time and changing ideologies could not intrude upon, nor influence. There he was, as in years gone by, in the company of the wife he had treasured and in her company he could find solace. It was with God that Montgomerie may eventually have had to make his peace, but, while there was still blood running through his veins, he had first to make peace with himself. Within the aisle, built and decorated as a place with deeply personal significance, he would have the perfect setting.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN.

Should we not say that we make a house by the art of building, and by the art of painting we make another house, a sort of man-made dream produced for those who are awake.²⁰²

A dream, similar to that conceived by Plato, was fulfilled by Sir Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie when, in 1638, the mausoleum he had constructed in memory of his wife, Dame Margaret Douglas, was completed. Montgomerie's dream was to provide an everlasting memorial incorporating an artistic grandeur that was a testimony to both the esteem in which he held his wife, and the social position they both held. Within the aisle Montgomerie retreated for private prayer and contemplation, an intimate setting where, in spiritual terms, he could be reunited with his wife. The aisle portrayed a tangible reflection of his love and loss, as professed by Van Gogh, 'there is no greater artistry than loving people'.²⁰³

The paintings on the aisle ceiling displayed how ideas could be modified to create extremely personal and commemorative decoration in a private burial aisle. The imagery potentially revealed the religious beliefs, affluence and personality that affirmed Montgomerie in his role of land owner and established member of the Ayrshire nobility. By deploying the most fashionable decoration of the era, he created a unique resting place for the wife he lost and still, after fourteen years, mourned.

²⁰² Plato *Sophist* as cited in E. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1897)7.

²⁰³ Vincent Van Gogh, *Letters to His Brother*, Facsimile of original text, (London: Constable, 1927) 5.

The aim of this chapter was to principally provide an overview of the Scottish burial aisle and Scottish domestic architecture and design of the period. A consideration of the interior design of the buildings with a particular focus on the painted ceiling was also undertaken, this included a survey of the type of ceiling utilised for painted decoration. The chapter also touched upon the role of the patron and artist incorporating an insight into the relationship between Montgomerie and the Skelmorlie Aisle artist, James Stalker.

Burial Aisles

Aisles were not uncommon during the pre-Reformation period, Richard Fawcett claimed that at this time, 'there was a well-established tradition of asymmetrical chapel aisles in Scotland'.²⁰⁴ After the Reformation the Kirk's attitude towards burial within the church building was, according to Andrew Spicer, regarded as a threat to, 'the rights and traditions of the landed elite'²⁰⁵ and this resulted in an increase in the construction of aisles as these attachments to the original buildings satisfied both the Kirk and the nobility. The traditions of the nobility were accommodated by not completely overturning their practice of being buried within the church building, and they also accommodated the Kirk's intolerance of practices associated with Catholicism.²⁰⁶ Even when the church buildings were demolished, the aisles frequently remained. Fawcett claimed, 'In cases where the family had a continuing

²⁰⁴ Richard Fawcett, *The Architectural History of Scotland*, Edinburgh: E.U.P., 1994) 217.

²⁰⁵ Andrew Spicer, 'Defyle not Christ's kirk with your carrion': burial and the development of burial aisles in post-reformation Scotland' in B. Gordon and P. Marshall (eds.) *The Place of the Dead*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2003)153.

²⁰⁶ Spicer, 'Defyle not Christ's kirk with your carrion': burial and the development of burial aisles in post-reformation Scotland' in B. Gordon and P. Marshall (eds.) *The Place of the Dead*, 153.

interest in them, such aisles were likely to survive even if the rest of the church was abandoned'.²⁰⁷

Several examples of pre-Reformation aisles still exist. One which contained a painted ceiling was Guthrie Aisle in Angus. This aisle was added to the Parish Church by Sir Alexander Guthrie around 1479 and was constructed at the south flank of the nave at the west side of the building which was quite common during this period. The iconography executed highlighted subject matter that was typical of pre-Reformation religious ideology. The painted decoration included representations of the Crucifixion on its east side and the Last Judgement on the west.²⁰⁸ The roof was composed of ashlar struts and collars and was similar in shape to that at Skelmorlie Aisle, although it was a larger construction. The feature of compartmentalised ceiling compartments was also incorporated.²⁰⁹

A further example of a medieval aisle was built by the Drummond family at Stobhall in Perthshire. The building was rectangular in shape and contained an ambry and water stoup. It consisted of a painted board and beam ceiling and within the attic space was a confessional positioned above the chapel.²¹⁰ The inclusion of the ambry and water stoup were typically Catholic attributes and it was noted that no such features were found within Skelmorlie Aisle.

St. Brides Church, Dalgety built on the site of twelfth century St. Bridget's Church was extended around 1600 by Alexander Seton, First Earl of Dunfermline. At this point a two-storey burial aisle, which HS maintained resembled a miniature

²⁰⁷ Fawcett, *The Architectural History of Scotland: From the Accession of the Stewarts to the Reformation 1371-1560*, 217.

²⁰⁸ Fawcett, *The Architectural History of Scotland*, 145.

²⁰⁹ Fawcett, *The Architectural History of Scotland*, 145.

²¹⁰ David Mc Gibbon & Thomas Ross, *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*, (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1887) 366.

tower house was added as was a laird's loft.²¹¹ This structure, named the Dunfermline aisle after its owner, also contained a room incorporated into the structure described as, 'a withdrawing room to which they could retreat and enjoy refreshments'.²¹² McGibbon and Ross noted:

the old church forms the eastern part of the structure, while to the west has been erected a two-storey building containing, on the ground floor a burial vault and on the upper floor a 'lairds loft' and a room for the Lord of the Manor from which access was obtained to a gallery in the church.²¹³

Access to the upper floor was provided by an octagonal stair turret at the north side. The interior of the walls of the room were also ashlar and it also displayed moulded stone-work panels and cornice. A wide opening allowed access to the church and this permitted admission to the west gallery. There was evidence that another gallery once existed at the east end of the church as an outside staircase still remains.²¹⁴ According to Fawcett, Montgomerie's aisle, and Seton's at Dalgety display, 'a sophisticated form of architecture and the influence of the court'.²¹⁵ McKean argued that although the aisle was added to St. Bride's, which was a Reformed Church, the positioning of the construction built by Seton, who was known to be a Catholic, does not correspond to that ideology. McKean stated, 'For only a Catholic explanation can explain why he set his extraordinary and lavishly built ashlar aisle on axis at its western end, rather than the customary location half way along'.²¹⁶ Considering Seton's religious sensibilities and his national status this may have been a way that

²¹¹ www.historic-scotland.gov.uk Accessed 24 March 2013.

²¹² www.historic-scotland.gov.uk Accessed 24 March 2013.

²¹³ McGibbon, *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland* vol., 3, 549.

²¹⁴ McGibbon, *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*, vol., 3, 551.

²¹⁵ Fawcett, *The Architectural History of Scotland*, 167.

²¹⁶ McKean, 'Scottish Religious Architecture after the Council of Trent', p1, <http://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/portal/en/research/the-architecture-of-three-religions%28273c142f-a6aa-4ccb-a8db-8075b4bc9b05%29/export.html> Accessed 2 February 2013.

he could incorporate his own beliefs but still be seen to support the Reformed ideology.²¹⁷ Positioning was also an area considered in relation to Skelmorlie Aisle.

Skelmorlie Aisle

The point previously raised by McKean that the customary post-Reformation practice was to attach aisles 'half way along'²¹⁸ the church building was one which was investigated in relation to Skelmorlie Aisle. The available evidence determined that the aisle was recorded as having been constructed in what was, 'formerly the north transept'.²¹⁹ This was supported by an entry in NSA (c 1834-45) written by the local minister at that time, Revd. John Dow who recorded that, '..Sir Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie who, in 1636, erected, in an aisle on the north side of the church, a handsome burial place and monument'.²²⁰ The painting of the aisle and church in the *Hyems* painting (Plate 21) offered the only surviving contemporary evidence. According to Houston, it was clearly noted that the windows and doorway were to the north, with a belfry complete with bells at the west gable.²²¹ In viewing the painting, at a glance it initially appeared that the aisle and church building shared the same plane but, after more in-depth analysis, this was found not to be the case. Houston highlighted this in his 1932 report , he observed:

The building in the centre represents Skelmorlie Aisle and Church. It depicts the Aisle as it now is and the old church before demolition. The old building is shown built at right angles to the Aisle and has a window and a doorway to the north, while over the west gable there is represented a belfry for two bells. The drawing of this particular part of the church [seems to] lie in line with the Aisle; this is not the

²¹⁷ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 100.

²¹⁸ McKean, 'Scottish Religious Architecture after the Council of Trent', p1, <http://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/portal/en/research/the-architecture-of-three-religions%28273c142f-a6aa-4ccb-a8db-8075b4bc9b05%29/export.html> Accessed 2 February 2013.

²¹⁹ RCHAMS, Architectural notes on Skelmorlie Aisle, reference: NS25NW 13.00.20265 59441.

²²⁰ <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1834-45/Ayrshire/Largs/> p.806. Accessed 8 June 2013.

²²¹ Houston, Unpublished Manuscript, 1933.

case, as after more careful examination it will be seen that it is intended to represent it as lying at right angles to the Aisle. The ridge of the east end of the old church can be seen above the Aisle ridge background²²²

Evidence from 1857 confirmed, without doubt, that the aisle was attached onto the church where, as McKean claimed, was the customary practice during the post-Reformation period, 'half way along'²²³ the church building. An Ordinance Survey map (c.1857) (Plate 22)²²⁴ demonstrated the aisle's position in relation to the church building which had been previously demolished in 1802. It clearly showed the aisle's position was typically post-Reformation and not in a similar position to Seton's aisle at Delgety which was regarded as being in a position more reflective of Catholic than Reformed ideology.²²⁵ This point was important particularly in trying to establish Montgomerie's religious affiliation.

The position of the aisle demonstrated that the family, whilst occupying the Laird's Loft, faced south. This offered a side-on view of the church where the pulpit would have been traditionally positioned to the east.²²⁶ The original archway leading into the old church had been bricked up after its demolition (Plate 23). The relationship between the family aisle and what the congregation could see from the church building will be considered later in this chapter.

Lairds Lofts

²²² Houston, Unpublished Manuscript, 1933.

²²³ McKean, 'Scottish Religious Architecture after the Council of Trent', p1, <http://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/portal/en/research/the-architecture-of-three-religions%28273c142f-a6aa-4ccb-a8db-8075b4bc9b05%29/export.html> Accessed 2 February 2013.

²²⁴ N.L.S., Map Images: Town plans/views (1580-1919), Ordinance Survey Map, Ayr Sheet, 111.12(Largs), 1857.

²²⁵ McKean, 'Scottish Religious Architecture after the Council of Trent' , p1, <http://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/portal/en/research/the-architecture-of-three-religions%28273c142f-a6aa-4ccb-a8db-8075b4bc9b05%29/export.html> Accessed 2 February 2013.

²²⁶ McKean, 'Scottish Religious Architecture after the Council of Trent' , p1, <http://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/portal/en/research/the-architecture-of-three-religions%28273c142f-a6aa-4ccb-a8db-8075b4bc9b05%29/export.html> Accessed 2 February 2013.

The family were accommodated in a laird's loft which was positioned under the painted ceiling and above the burial vault. The loft within Skelmorlie Aisle was carved from local freestone in an extremely exuberant and ornate design.²²⁷ (Plate 3). It was an elaborate and extravagant construction resembling those constructed for Queen Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots in Westminster Abbey.²²⁸ The fashion of having a laird's loft constructed was a fairly common one for the landed gentry of the period where they were regular additions to aisles and were frequently built over the burial vault. Deborah Howard explained:

In country parishes, local lairds preferred to build family burial vaults or aisles, adjoining the church itself...family aisles opening onto the body of the church-with a laird's loft of family pew overlooking the body of the church, above the burial vault. In such cases the main vehicle for display was the loft itself, an elaborate timber gallery framing the real-life family members with elaborate signs of their importance, wealth.²²⁹

In relation to Skelmorlie Aisle, Howard suggested that the presence of the laird's loft over the tomb represented:

more vividly than in any other family aisle of the period, the patron's resurrection was visually symbolised by the presence of live figures in the family aisle directly above the door of his tomb. Here there was no need for effigies of the children of the deceased, for they would be there in person every Sunday.²³⁰

An unusual interpretation of the laird's loft was commissioned by adversaries of the Montgomeries, the Cunninghames of Glencairn who erected an aisle in the parish church of St. Maurs, Kilmaurs, Ayrshire.(Plate 24). This too contained a

²²⁷ Wilson, *The Skelmorlie Aisle and Monuments at Largs*, 6.

²²⁸ Monuments to Queen Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots, Westminster Abbey, London.

²²⁹ Howard, *The Architectural History of Scotland: from the Reformation to the Restoration, 1560-1660*, 200.

²³⁰ Howard, *The Architectural History of Scotland: from the Reformation to the Restoration, 1560-1660*, 203.

monument, erected in 1600, which was reminiscent of a laird's loft but with a twist. The finely and elaborately carved stone monument was already occupied by displaying the sculpted figures of the 8th Earl of Glencairn (died 1464), his countess and their children.²³¹ Here, instead of the family physically occupying the lairds loft, the family were in fact carved in stone and already *in situ*. Two figures, the earl and his wife are demonstrated leaning on books on a balcony setting whereby the earl has his hands clasped in prayer and the countess, in a pose which looks as if her hands are placed on top of each other. Under the two figures are the busts of their children. Howard observes, 'Half-length statues of the couple are arranged facing the spectator as if in a laird's loft, the earl in prayer, his wife with demurely folded arms, while their mourning children are lined up, praying solemnly, in the tier below'.²³² It was noted, however, that unlike Skelmorlie Aisle, there was no painted ceiling in the Glencairn aisle.²³³

Howard claimed that one of the most impressive examples of a laird's loft was in the Forbes Aisle which was built by Alexander, eighth Lord Forbes in 1634 (Plate 25). The construction was formerly housed in the old Parish Church of Pitsligo but it was reassembled at the neighbouring church at Rosehearty in the late nineteenth century.²³⁴ This construction was exquisitely carved from wood and also positioned above the family tomb. Although aisles were plentiful, little evidence has survived to indicate how typical painted decoration within them was. As this style of decoration was popular within domestic properties it is likely that other aisles, now long demolished, also contained a painted ceiling.

²³¹ Howard, *The Architectural History of Scotland: from the Reformation to the Restoration, 1560-1660*, 203.

²³² Howard, *The Architectural History of Scotland: from the Reformation to the Restoration, 1560-1660*, 205.

²³³ Glencairn Aisle, St. Maurs Parish Church, Kilmaurs, Ayrshire.

²³⁴ Howard, *The Architectural History of Scotland: from the Reformation to the Restoration, 1560-1660*, 200/201.

Domestic Architecture

In travelling through seventeenth-century Scotland, the traveller could not fail to be impressed by the breathtaking examples of domestic architecture found throughout the realm. David MacGibbon and Thomas Ross stated, 'our old Scottish castles and mansions are so numerous and form such prominent objects in the landscape that they never fail to strike even the most careless observer'.²³⁵ Charles McKean added, 'So the magnificent early seventeenth century skyline celebrated ancient lineage, the nobility of warfare, and also modernity'.²³⁶ The quantity of fortified dwellings had expanded during the feuding years, resulting in the growth of castellated architecture during this time. Thomas Morer, writing in 1689, observed:

the houses of their quality are high and strong and appear more like castles than houses, made of thick stone walls, with iron bars before their windows, suited to the necessity of those times they were built in, living then in a state of war and constant animosities between their families. Yet now they begin to have better buildings and to be very modish both in the fabrick and furniture of their dwellings.²³⁷

By the early seventeenth-century, the feuding era had passed and the need for the homes of the nobility to resemble defensive structures was no longer necessary. Buildings, therefore, began to undergo an architectural and decorative metamorphosis and although some defensive structures were still incorporated, these were included for decorative rather than functional purposes.²³⁸ McKean highlighted, 'The principal decorative elements upon Scots Renaissance buildings was not those of new language of classical architecture but those of the earlier Scots

²³⁵ MacGibbon and Ross, eds., *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*, 236.

²³⁶ McKean, *The Scottish Chateau*, 10.

²³⁷ Hume-Brown, *Early Travellers in Scotland*, 274.

²³⁸ William John Napier, 'Kinship and Politics in the Art of Plaster Decoration', University of Dundee Doctoral Thesis, 2012, 58.

architecture of defensiveness directed to peaceful purposes'.²³⁹ During this period, the 'Scottish Chateau'²⁴⁰ became a traditional feature of the Scottish landscape, playing an important part in the lives of the elite. In many cases, they had a dual purpose acting as both residences and important hubs of administration. Their purpose as, 'multifunctional edifices with highly symbolic qualities, a constitutional element of feudal government and as such closely tied up with territorial politics and consolidation of power'.²⁴¹ McKean explained, this was, 'the time when Scottish country gentlemen, blinking like moles in the sunlight, were supposed to have emerged from their strongholds into a countryside enjoying its first real taste of peace'.²⁴² Scottish architecture was extremely impressive and indicative of a nation that possessed knowledge of both Scottish and Continental designs, 'If it was accepted in music, poetry and illustration that the Scots had participated in the Renaissance-while adding something of their own individuality-why should those same Scots characteristics reveal backwardness when it came to architecture?'²⁴³

Interior Decoration and Design: The painted ceiling in Scotland

Increased affluence, due to distribution of land after the Protestant Reformation, created aristocratic self-confidence. An increased interest in luxury goods from the Continent also paved the way for the nobility's changing attitude towards their private residences. Sheila Mackay claimed that, 'new prosperity as well as new learning brought forward a class of lairds and merchants who built rural

²³⁹ Charles McKean, *The Scottish Chateau*, (Stroud: Sutton, 2001)10.

²⁴⁰ McKean, *The Scottish Chateau*, title page.

²⁴¹ Joachim Zeune, *The Last Scottish Castles*, (Germany: Leidorf, 1992)114.

²⁴² McKean, *The Scottish Chateau*, 1.

²⁴³ McKean, *The Scottish Chateau*, 9.

and urban tower houses throughout Scotland, by the hundreds'.²⁴⁴ Both education and travel helped to broaden the minds of the Scottish elite and in many cases they incorporated new ideas and influences from abroad into their homes. Howard stated, 'the more people travelled, the more they could understand the significance of borrowings from other countries'.²⁴⁵

The residences of the nobility reflected affluence and status and, during the Early Modern period, this was also a feature of the interior of their homes. Joachim Zeune claimed, 'the respective status of the owner is reflected in the degree of elaboration and extravagance of the décor'.²⁴⁶ Further to this, their increased interest in purchasing luxury goods saw a rise in the acquisition of

Dutch linens, English pewter, carved woodwork partitions from the Baltic, finely chased guns from Dundee, wines from Bordeaux, screens, silverwork from Paris, quantities of tapestry from the Low Countries, silk and velvet cushions, enormously elaborate beds and gorgeous curtains.²⁴⁷

A proliferation of these goods found their way into the homes of not just the Scottish nobility, as this practice was also adopted by those of lesser standing. As McKean indicated, 'the lavishness and comfort they record in the houses of people well below the grandee level can be surprising'.²⁴⁸ Their acquisition of luxury goods was also translated into a desire for luxury decoration within private residences. One type of lavish décor found within the interior decoration of many of the residential buildings of the Scottish elite was the painted ceiling.

Again it was not only the homes of the nobility who adopted the practice of having painted ceilings within their private residences. As Nic Allen demonstrated:

²⁴⁴ Sheila Mackay, ed., *Scottish Renaissance Interiors* (Edinburgh: Moubray House Press, 1987)1.

²⁴⁵ Howard, *Scottish Architecture from Reformation to Restoration*, 143.

²⁴⁶ Zeune, *The Last Scottish Castles*, 43.

²⁴⁷ McKean, *The Scottish Chateau*, 26.

²⁴⁸ McKean, *The Scottish Chateau*, 26.

If you had walked into the home of any prosperous Scottish merchant 300 years ago, the chances are that you would have looked up to wooden ceilings covered with figurative or natural motif and patterns, all emblazoned in a riot of blues, blacks, reds, ochres, greens and yellows.²⁴⁹

The painted ceiling had taken firm root in Scotland, incorporating both vernacular and continental influences.²⁵⁰ The practice was predominantly employed by the educated classes who used the iconography portrayed as a means of asserting their social standing and personal identity.²⁵¹ A significant number imported European ideas, while others were created using vernacular components and/or themes and motifs personal to the patron.

Although geographically (Plate 26) more popular in the east of Scotland, centring in Edinburgh and Aberdeen, painted ceilings were also found further north, and in the Borders and Ayrshire. By the construction of open flat, board and beam or barrel vaulted ceilings, the artist could compose images that were not merely aesthetic but could convey a narrative. The barrel vaulted variety was the preferred choice for narratives as it gave a larger area of flat surface on which the artist could paint but kept the iconography tightly related due to its bowed construction. It was grander and the most expensive ceiling to construct. The board and beam version was more suited to smaller, repetitive, linear designs and was more popular due to its simplicity.²⁵²

Painted ceilings were not only fashionable in Scotland; the concept originated on the Continent where they were also highly popular. They were found in the stately homes of both the aristocracy and the governing elite in most European

²⁴⁹ Nic Allen 'Artful Craft' qtd. in Mackay ed., *Scottish Renaissance Interiors*, 17.

²⁵⁰ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 3.

²⁵¹ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 1.

²⁵² Michael Apted, *The Painted Ceilings of Scotland 1550-1650*, (Edinburgh: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1966) 27.

cities and towns. Italy led the way in creating exquisite art in all its forms and this included painted ceilings. The French followed Italian examples and the English likewise. Dutch representations were not quite so elaborate.²⁵³

The ceiling paintings in Italy, France and England were frequently undertaken by prominent artists such as Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) whose famous masterpiece on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome is, undoubtedly, the world's most famous painted ceiling. Peter Paul Rubens' (1577-1640) execution of the Banqueting Hall ceiling in London is the pinnacle of English painted ceilings (Plate 27). Both of these artists decorated the ceilings of secular and religious buildings and created their masterpieces in a similar manner to their usual paintings. Their ceiling paintings were on a grand scale which, if dissected, were easily gracious enough in execution to merit being framed and displayed on walls. They too were effectively portraying a narrative on the ceiling whereby the perimeters of the ceiling acted as the frame. Many were compartmentalised by the use of elaborate framework, but each framed section came together to present one overall narrative, a practice also adopted on several of the ceilings in Scotland.²⁵⁴

Painted ceilings in Scotland were an entirely different concept and were executed by decorative artists who focussed on a specific form of art which was quite unlike European examples. Described by Michael Bath as a, 'distinctive Scottish tradition',²⁵⁵ decorative painting has its own place in the history and culture of Scotland. Bath continued, 'we should not make the mistake of regarding this

²⁵³ Anthony Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration in Elizabethan and Jacobean England*, (London: YUP, 1997) 217.

²⁵⁴ More information on English and Continental painted ceilings can be found in Graham Rust, *The Painted Ceiling*, (New York: Bulfinch, 2001), Juergen Schulz, *Venetian Painted Ceilings of the Renaissance*, (California, U.S.A.: University of California Press, 1968), Anthony Wells-Cole, *Art and Decoration in Elizabethan and Jacobean England*, (London: YUP, 1997)

²⁵⁵ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 2.

northern tradition as some kind of regional extension of the English fashion'.²⁵⁶ Duncan Macmillan claimed that this style of decoration was not only, 'a striking feature of Scottish culture, but it also seems to be quite specific to Scotland'.²⁵⁷ Rab Snowden, Senior Conservator with Historic Scotland observed that, 'the decorated ceilings of Scotland may seem naïve when set beside the contemporary art of Rubens and Rembrandt, but they provide a fascinating insight into the cultural and aesthetic needs of post-Reformation Scotland'.²⁵⁸

Scottish painted ceilings extended beyond the bounds of mere aesthetic value as much of the iconography displayed was of an intimate and personal nature. Religious and political affiliation was frequently a feature as was an indication of social status. These themes were included within the iconography found in the aisle. Many ceilings were inclusive of both secular and spiritual imagery, the themes utilised extending from representations of biblical narratives to highly personal representations of heraldic arms and scenes relating exclusively to the owner and meaning of the building. Although the majority of the outstanding examples of decorated ceilings were found in the homes of the Scottish nobility and landed gentry, recorded examples were also noted in the homes of merchants and artisans. Painted decoration was geographically and socially widespread throughout Scotland, with the areas around Aberdeen and Edinburgh boasting the greatest number. Despite the north-east commanding the greatest number of examples, a few have been located as far south as Dumfries and Galloway.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 2.

²⁵⁷ Duncan Macmillan, *Scottish Art*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1990) 58.

²⁵⁸ Rab Snowden qtd. in Mackay ed., *Scottish Renaissance Interiors* 18.

²⁵⁹ Apted, *The Painted Ceilings of Scotland*, 16.

Painted ceilings were found in town houses, country residences and royal palaces adorning many public rooms, or specifically, 'on every important floor'.²⁶⁰ Few have survived in their entirety but remaining or recorded examples display similar styles of execution. The ceilings frequently resembled each other in a variety of characteristics ranging from the type of designs used to the themes they portrayed. At the time executed, they conveyed vibrancy and brilliance of colour which was arguably a practice adopted as a means of replacing the void created by the lack of colour within post-Reformation churches.²⁶¹ Many, but not all, included religious iconography. Usually this adhered tightly to Protestant ideology but, for example, Provost Skene's House in Aberdeen displayed scenes containing content that would be regarded as portraying orthodox Catholicism. This included paintings of the Resurrection and the Annunciation as well those relating to Christ's Passion.²⁶²

Ayrshire Examples of the Painted Ceiling

Ayrshire provided a good example of an area where it was not only the higher nobility possessed salubrious residences. Charles McKean noted:

Many lairds of lesser standing, predominantly in the lowlands and particularly in the south-west, had inherited or otherwise acquired a small tower, or a property requiring a new house, and had proceeded to build. Between 1500-1542 more 'chateau' were constructed in Ayrshire than elsewhere in Scotland.²⁶³

Regionally, few examples of the painted ceiling have survived in Ayrshire, thus highlighting the importance of Skelmorlie Aisle. Garnock House in North Ayrshire, which is now destroyed, certainly boasted this style of decorative art.

²⁶⁰ Apte, *The Painted Ceilings of Scotland*, 35.

²⁶¹ Peter Sutton, *A Moral Compass: 17th and 18th Century Painting in the Netherlands*, (New York: Rizzoli Publishing, 1999) 13.

²⁶² Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 125.

²⁶³ McKean *The Scottish Chateau*, 81, 141.

Boards, preserved and stored by HS, display images of fruit and flowers which were popular themes with this style of ceiling.²⁶⁴ This subject matter was so popular that all recorded examples of the painted ceiling, either destroyed or still surviving, incorporate both. Cessnock Castle in East Ayrshire, the painted ceiling of which is also now destroyed, was recorded by Andrew Lyons as displaying examples of foliage, scrollwork, patterns and black outlines.²⁶⁵ Another example was detected at Cassilis Castle in Maybole, South Ayrshire which also had a painted ceiling but again this no longer survives.

Montgomerys' adversaries, the Maxwells of Newark, extended their fifteenth century tower house in 1597. During a restoration process in 1941, seven beams were found from what was once a painted ceiling. The soffits displayed, 'trailing tassels' and the sides of the beams displayed, 'trompe l'oeil square studs and arabesques in rectangular compartments'.²⁶⁶ Although there were existing examples which indicate that painted ceilings were a feature within the homes of Ayrshire nobility, no evidence has been unearthed to indicate that Montgomerie incorporated one into his private residence at Skelmorlie Castle.

The Castle (Plate 28) sits on an incline overlooking the entrance to the Firth of Clyde on the outskirts of the village of Skelmorlie, three miles north of Largs. It was described by Timothy Pont as, 'a fair weil bult housse and pleafantly feated decorated with orchardes and woodes'.²⁶⁷ No records have been detected that stipulate that Montgomerie, seventh of Skelmorlie owned any other property. Much of the original portion of the castle was destroyed by fire in 1959 but the extension

²⁶⁴ HS, Stenhouse Conservation Centre, Edinburgh.

²⁶⁵ Lyons 'The painted ceiling in the old church at Largs', *Proceedings of the Antiquities Society of Scotland* vol. xxxv, (1904) 151-3.

²⁶⁶ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 227.

²⁶⁷ John Fullarton ed., facsimile of original by Timothy Pont, *Topographical account of the district of Cunninghame*, (Glasgow, 1876) 74.

survived.²⁶⁸ Existing ceilings within the castle, in both the old and new wings, currently display plaster ceilings.²⁶⁹ This does not mean that at some point in time a painted ceiling may not be detected underneath the plasterwork.

Type of ceiling construction

The type of ceiling considered suitable for painted decoration took three forms which were typically constructed of wood or plaster. These included flat open surfaces, barrel vaulted and board and beam varieties. Flat open ceilings allowed large executions over a wide area but the iconography was not easily contained. The relationship between each component was difficult to determine due to the lack of proximity of some of the components. This style was adopted for one of the Earlshall bedrooms and the same construction was also found at Falkland Palace, both in Fife. Barrel vaulted and board and beam were the most popular styles.²⁷⁰

Although the aisle ceiling was a barrel vaulted construction (Plate 29), board and beam ceilings were also popular for this type of decoration. The latter was more common due to its simplicity therefore more of them have survived. Furthermore, it was a relatively easy process to cover the board and beam ceiling when fashion changed. Many were eventually covered by plasterwork which, when this was removed, often due to demolition, a painted ceiling would sometimes be found intact underneath the plaster having been completely protected by the new medium. One example of this was found in Dundee:

During recent operations...many old buildings were removed in which it was discovered, when the plaster was taken down, the jousts, ceilings and in some cases the walls, had

²⁶⁸ Michael Davis, *The Castles and Mansions of Ayrshire*, (Argyle: Spindrift, 1991) 372.

²⁶⁹ Skelmorlie Castle, Skelmorlie, North Ayrshire.

²⁷⁰ Apted, *The Painted Ceilings of Scotland*, 28.

been decorated with the usual conventional festoons of fruit and flowers and panels of scrollwork.²⁷¹

Recent research undertaken by William Napier has revealed that rather than the accepted viewpoint that plaster ceilings replaced painted ones, the two actually existed at the same time. Napier stated, 'The most recent gazetteer of seventeenth-century decorative plasterwork in Scotland lists over seventy-five houses where examples of such plasterwork can be found. Of these, the majority belong to the period 1600-1675'.²⁷² As the popularity of the painted ceiling principally spanned the area between the Reformation and ended approximately with the Civil Wars, several properties were found to contain both styles of ceiling decoration. Examples of both were found at Pinkie House in Midlothian and at Earlshall in Fife.²⁷³

The painted board and beam variety adopted the principal of wooden beams being attached, at specific distances apart, directly onto the ceiling creating, 'long narrow compartments between beams'.²⁷⁴ The painted decoration was applied to each of the three visible beams as well as to the ceiling itself. The designs were usually repetitive, the decoration applied in a linear fashion usually extending throughout the length of the beam. This style of ceiling did not allow a narrative to be read with ease thus the iconography used was more decorative than narrative. Examples of this are seen at Gladstone's Land, Edinburgh and also at Delgaty Castle, Aberdeenshire.

The barrel vaulted ceiling, like that of Skelmorlie Aisle, was more expensive to construct but was much grander. The paintings on these structures created the

²⁷¹ *Scottish Notes and Queries*, vol. iii, 1901-2, 110.

²⁷² William John Napier, 'Kinship and Politics in the Art of Plaster Decoration', University of Dundee Doctoral Thesis, 2012, 41.

²⁷³ William John Napier, 'Kinship and Politics in the Art of Plaster Decoration', University of Dundee Doctoral Thesis, 2012, 62.

²⁷⁴ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 1.

appearance of being all-encompassing, giving the impression that the paintings dominated the entire building. This style of ceiling was frequently destroyed when no longer in vogue as it was difficult to apply the fashionable plasterwork that replaced it. The barrel vaulted construction allowed larger images to be displayed and therefore it was easier to execute a narrative in paint.²⁷⁵ The style of such ceilings permitted the area to be viewed as one complete image which allowed the artist a larger area on which to compose. In executing ceiling paintings, the painters had to modify their compositions in accordance with the shape and size of the ceiling. This was evident at Skelmorlie as the end panels stop abruptly and the imagery comes to a sudden halt. Examples of the barrel vaulted variety include Culross Palace in Fife and Pinkie House in Musselburgh.

Some examples of Scottish painted ceilings were compartmentalised by the use of black paint as a separating tool which effectively framed each individual 'section'. Examples of this can be found at Earlshall, Rossend Castle.²⁷⁶ The chosen design would have been drawn to scale using a practice known as 'pounce work'.²⁷⁷ This practice mapped the intended design in small scale which would later be transferred onto the ceiling in larger form. A base would be applied to the wood with a coating of chalk mixed with size and the designs drawn on it and coloured in afterwards and the end result was a matt finish. The majority of ceilings in Scotland were originally executed in tempera which is not waterproof but more like distemper. The paint was mixed with any medium except oil. Frequently egg-yolk and gum was used as this bound the pigments as well.²⁷⁸ Skelmorlie Aisle, which

²⁷⁵ Apted, *Painted Ceilings in Scotland*, 28.

²⁷⁶ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 152.

²⁷⁷ Andrew Lyons, 'The painted ceiling in the old church at Largs', *Proceedings of the Antiquaries Society of Scotland* vol. xxxv, 1904, 151-3.

²⁷⁸ Apted, *Painters in Scotland 1301-1700*, 9.

incorporated *J. Stalker fecit 1638* (Plate 30) and Delgaty Castle, Aberdeenshire, which displayed the initials ‘*JM*’ attributed to John Melville, or Mellin, (fl, 1587-1605), the artist, but no date is present.²⁷⁹

Colours and Materials

Stalker executed the paintings in tempera which was the usual material for this type of work. It was a mixture of pigment and any medium other than oil; egg was a popular component frequently used in Scotland and throughout Europe. It was by the application of tempera that the majority of the painted ceilings in Scotland were composed. Although ‘size’, a type of glue which derived from boiling animal products, was also popular, it was not used for painted ceilings as it did not absorb quickly or evenly into wood.²⁸⁰ Oil was rarely used for interiors, although it was liberally applied to exterior decoration. This is noted on the heraldic imagery on the outside wall at Skelmorlie Aisle. Despite it having been repainted, the original would have been in oil.

Although certain colours were prepared in Scotland, many arrived from overseas and are listed on inventories of imports at ports such as St Andrews and Leith.²⁸¹ Red lead and linseed oil were commonly purchased by artists. The linseed oil was readily used in painting and was mixed with colour. Oil was also added to red lead as a means of creating a preservative for metal work. The use of red lead was popular, and reference to it is frequently found in Works Accounts.²⁸² One such document states that £20 was paid at Holyrood for:

²⁷⁹ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 10.

²⁸⁰ Honour, *A World History of Art*, 16.

²⁸¹ Apted, *Painters in Scotland 1301-1700*, has a detailed discussion on this.

²⁸² Apted, *Painters in Scotland 1301-1700*, 131-149.

the complete paynting and laying of thre irne yetis and 16 grete irne windowis with all the remanent of the windois and irne werk with the new werk with reid leid and whereon and oley.²⁸³

Stalker, as apprentice, would have acquired his materials from Sawers who would, most likely, have bought them in Edinburgh due to him being based there. Lyons, in his drawing of the ceiling in 1897, noted that the painting was tempera and that some of the colour was still visible.²⁸⁴ This was a testimony to the quality of the paint applied as the ceiling existed in a state of dampness and damage for over two hundred years before it was restored. The excellence of the paint withstood the test of time and inclement weather. Due to the touching-in and also wear and tear, it was difficult to state what the exact shades of the ceiling paintings would have been but they would certainly have been bright and bold as, after a period of almost four hundred years, the original parts still display a depth of colour. Although these areas were much faded, they still gave an indication of how bright the original work may have been.

The Influence of Reformation and Transferral of the Royal Court

The two greatest patrons of the Arts in Scotland were the Church and the Crown. Thus, with the change in attitude towards art, particularly religious art, that was adopted after the Reformation of 1560 and the transferral of the royal court to London in 1603, the artist's relationship with their two greatest patrons irrevocably change. Michael Apton noted that the Reformation, 'encouraged the spread of domestic painting and may have provided the means for their [the artists]

²⁸³ H.M. Paton, *Accounts of the Masters of Works*, (Edinburgh, 1957) vol. i, 86.

²⁸⁴ Andrew Lyons, 'The Ceiling in the Montgomery Aisle of the Old Church at Largs' in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, vol., 35(1900-01) 109-11.

employment'.²⁸⁵ The Protestant regime opposed the decorating of church interiors with paint, thus all practices of this nature were extinguished. Colourful walls, which were both decorative and didactic, were covered over with plain whitewash. Statues, stained glass windows and paintings of all types, were not only removed. Although religious art portraying the Virgin, Saints and the Godhead were found to be abhorrent did not, however, disapprove of art in other forms.²⁸⁶ Depictions of biblical narratives and moral teaching was acceptable, but not in churches. Also portraiture became more popular and this service was commissioned by many of the religious elite included John Knox who had his portrait painted by Adrian Vanson in 1579.²⁸⁷ Scotland lost the majority of its painted heritage as the new regime held no place for any reminders of 'popery'. Churches were to focus on the word of God, not on decoration, for the Reformers, 'the Bible was to be the icon'.²⁸⁸

The extent to which the almost complete obliteration of the nation's painted heritage can be blamed purely on the reformers is, however, arguable. The new ideology encouraged many sectors of the Scottish community to partake in acts of iconoclasm as, according to Macmillan, 'the whole thing was in fact a mixture of piety, greed, and vandalism with the manoeuvring of politicians, secular and ecclesiastical, local national and international'.²⁸⁹ Their literal interpretation of biblical scripture, demonstrated in Exodus 20:4-5b, was their defence for such acts:

though shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: though shalt not bow down thy self to them, nor serve them.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁵ Apted, *The Painted Ceilings of Scotland*, 3.

²⁸⁶ Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland*, (London: Yale University Press, 1988) 328.

²⁸⁷ Stanley Cursiter, *Scottish Art*, (London: Harrap and Company, 1949) 16.

²⁸⁸ Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland*, 328.

²⁸⁹ Macmillan, *Scottish Art 1460-1990*, 38.

²⁹⁰ *The Holy Bible*, King James Version, (Oxford: OUP, 1979) 81.

Ian Finlay claimed, however, that, 'it was not the Reformation which diminished any glory of the arts in Scotland, but rather a poverty of native artistic ability which dimmed the grandeur of the Reformation by leaving it uncelebrated in paint or in stone'.²⁹¹ Irrespective of this argument, iconoclasm became an inherent part of reformed ideology and paintings and statues that had survived the rigours of previous English invasions did not survive the hands of the reformers.

Despite the savage attack on art, however, there did not appear to be a collision between Protestant doctrine and the nobility's increased interest in the painting of domestic interiors. Enough examples of painted interiors dating from the period exist throughout Scotland to indicate that the practice was highly fashionable.²⁹² As this form of decoration was applied to public rooms, there was no attempt to hide its existence. Their homes would have been frequently visited by other members of the Scottish elite, who also must have found the decoration inoffensive. Even during the years of iconoclasm, painted interiors were spared. As is noted by the dates of the existing or recorded examples of decorative art, not only were properties having their existing interior decoration preserved, many properties were having it freshly applied.²⁹³

Skelmorlie Aisle was one example of this. Despite having been built in the midst of predominately protestant territory, the execution of the painted ceiling (c.1638) was not regarded as being unacceptable. Although it was a private burial aisle, it was annexed to a public building. The Laird's Loft, which stood beneath the painted ceiling, held the Montgomerie family during church services, in full view of

²⁹¹ Ian Finlay, *Art in Scotland*, (London: OUP,1948) 66.

²⁹² There is a full discussion of these in Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*. Also in William J. Napier, 'Kingship and Politics in the Art of Plaster Decoration', Doctoral Thesis, University of Dundee, 2012.

²⁹³ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 215-275.

the congregation. The aisle's survival may have been due to its existence not being particularly widely known but it is more likely that its interior decoration did not offend contemporary religious sensibilities. As discussed in chapter one, Montgomerie was actively religious, neither he, nor his associates, found anything inappropriate in the decoration of the ceiling. As the religious iconography displayed on the ceiling, for example biblical quotations, greatly endorsed Protestant ideology, it would be difficult to see how the decoration could realistically be offensive.

In some cases, however, iconography displaying Catholicism was portrayed. This was found at Provost Skene's House, Aberdeen²⁹⁴ where the images from the life of Christ and instruments of the passion were in full view. The house was owned by Mathew Lumsden at the time of the paintings, estimated 1626, but, despite his family being accused of recusancy, there was no evidence that he personally supported the old regime. Although this type of imagery would certainly have offended protestant extremists, the iconography remained untouched by the iconoclasts. As he fought on the covenanting side during the Bishop's Wars (1639-40), it may be suggested that a blind eye was turned to what may have been an example of crypto- Catholicism.²⁹⁵

As previously touched upon, many of the Scottish nobility increased their wealth with the acquisition of land once held by the Catholic Church. This financial boost provided the means to indulge in artistic projects and, as a result, allowed painters to be commissioned to undertake this work. Expansion of their estates, including interior decoration, extension work and re-designing became particularly common.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ Bath, *Scottish Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 79.

²⁹⁵ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 126.

²⁹⁶ McKean, *The Scottish Chateau*, 8.

The second major influence on the relationship between artists and their patrons in Scotland was the transferral of the Scottish court to London in 1603. As the crown was a major patron, the transferral of the court, also removed artists' commissions from the crown. In returning to Scotland in 1617, James VI's instructions commanded that his Scottish residences be elevated to the same level as those he occupied south of the border and as a result decorative schemes were commissioned.²⁹⁷ He ordered that his palace of Holyrood was to be decorated with paintings and wood carvings in preparation for his return. This instruction alarmed the Presbyterians as they feared it might become a catalyst for a return to Catholicism.²⁹⁸ This undertaking may have given employment to a few painters over a short period of time, but the bulk of aspiring Scottish painters were without commissions from their two greatest patrons, Church and Crown.

Prior to 1603, James had commissioned artists, predominately from the Netherlands, to his court.²⁹⁹ Through these figures, Scottish artists learned of techniques and practices from the continent. Style and composition utilised by the Continental artists was thus adopted by their Scottish contemporaries and they in turn taught their apprentices. This was a process that could be directly linked to James Stalker. After James moved to London, patronage may have changed but the Arts flourished under the guidance of, principally, Alexander Seton. Seton, through sharing his own Continental experiences, kept Scotland in-vogue with contemporary Continental practices.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ Robert Brydall, *History of Art in Scotland*, (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1889) 58.

²⁹⁸ Brydall, *History of Art in Scotland*, 58.

²⁹⁹ Apted, *Painters in Scotland*, 10.

³⁰⁰ William J. Napier, 'Kingship and Politics in the Art of Plaster Decoration', Doctoral Thesis, University of Dundee, 2012, 274.

After the demise of James VI, his son Charles I was a most enthusiastic patron of the Arts and had an outstanding personal art collection. Scottish talent would have benefited greatly from the monarch residing in Holyrood as Charles was most certainly ‘an able judge of a picture’.³⁰¹ Many of his paintings were commissioned from Continental artists, such as Rubens and van Dyke, who benefited from both the prestige and the payments that accompanied them.³⁰²

Scottish artists found a new direction established by commissions in the field of interior decoration. They adopted a practice that ensured that, ‘for the most part they restricted themselves to two-dimensional decorative patterns and fight shy of the mighty vistas into space with which the Italians succeeded only by virtue of their genius’.³⁰³ Not a very flattering comment, but one which indicates correctly that Scottish decorative art was extremely distinctive.

The Patron/ Artist Relationship

The few documents that have survived relating to the relationship between patrons and artists demonstrated a relationship of trust and mutual respect. Two sources of information that were available had their genesis with Scottish painter John Anderson (fl. 1599-1649) and his apprentice, who became one of the most prominent artists in Scotland's history, George Jamesone (b.1589/90-d.1644).

Anderson was, according to Thomson, ‘the outstanding painter of his day’.³⁰⁴ His commissions were extensive including undertaking decorative painting at St. Nicholas Kirk in Aberdeen, Huntly Castle (then Strathbogie) and also at Edinburgh

³⁰¹ Finlay, *Art in Scotland*, 56, 40, 51.

³⁰² Michael Draguet, ed., *Rubens: A Genius at Work*, (Brussels: Lannoo, 2008) 230.

³⁰³ Finlay, *Art in Scotland*, 49.

³⁰⁴ Duncan Thomson, *The Life and Art of George Jamesone*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974) 51.

Castle.³⁰⁵ The relationship he had with at least one of his patrons was highlighted in the close relationship he had with Sir John Grant of Freuchie. Grant wrote to Anderson on 10 December 1634 addressing him as, 'werie good freind'³⁰⁶ whereby he requested that Anderson was to return to him, via the bearer of the letter, four portraits that Anderson was framing for him. He also requested that Anderson visit him at his home of Ballachastell near Inverness the following spring to undertake a commission to paint the ceiling in his gallery. Grant's correspondence takes an assuring tone as he pledged to Anderson that he would not approach any other painter to do this work whilst Anderson was still alive and hearty. He then made casual and friendly conversation regarding information regarding what was happening at the Scottish court.³⁰⁷ Thomson highlighted how this, 'gives a unique insight into the relations between a decorative painter and his patron; indeed it suggests a greater degree of intimacy than that between Jamesone and Sir Colin Campbell'.³⁰⁸ The relationship between George Jamesone and Sir Colin Campbell of Glenorchy is another example of the artist-patron relationship.

According to historian John Bullock, 'Their intimacy grew to an attachment and a personal friendship; and, considering Sir Colin's character and attainments, may be taken as a high tribute to Jamesone's'.³⁰⁹ Although renowned as a portrait painter, Jamesone was the most prominent artist of the period and had involvement in decorative art as well as portraiture. He had a selection of apprentices one of

³⁰⁵ Michael Apter, *Painters in Scotland, 1301-1700*, (Edinburgh: Edina Press, 1974) 24.

³⁰⁶ Original source in Thomson, *The Life and Art of George Jamesone*, 51. No further details of source specified.

³⁰⁷ Thomson, *The Life and Art of George Jamesone*, 52.

³⁰⁸ Thomson, *The Life and Art of George Jamesone*, 52.

³⁰⁹ John Bullock, *George Jamesone: The Scottish Vandyke*, (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1885) 72.

whom, named Michael Wright,³¹⁰ was sent by Jamesone to fulfil a commission he had acquired for the, 're-decoration of the 'kyngis loft' in the kirk of St. Giles'.³¹¹

Jamesone was commissioned by Sir Colin to execute a variety of paintings including portraiture of many members of his family as well as some of his contemporaries. This information was relayed in a letter written by Archibald Campbell who had also commissioned Jamesone. Thomson recorded:

In a letter written by Archibald Campbell to Glenorchy which shows that the latter had serious intentions of collecting works of art we learn that Jamesone had agreed to undertake the painting of unspecific pictures for Glenorchy. Three days later Archibald Campbell wrote again, this time enclosing Jamesone's note of his prices (twenty merks for the picture, thirty if framed): and asks Glenorchy to confirm his intentions at once.³¹²

In further correspondence Campbell relayed to Glenorchy that Jamesone had almost completed a commission for him and that the artist had requested that he send horses to Edinburgh so that he could transport the paintings.³¹³ Patrons also incurred expenditure for horse hire and other incidental expenses. This was also noted in an example involving painter Valentine Jenkin (fl. 1617-34) whereby payment was made for, 'horse hire, including the carriage of the painter, his tools and his stores'.³¹⁴

Communication between Colin Campbell and Jamesone demonstrated that they kept in contact regarding the delivery of commissions as well as Jamesone acknowledging payment for work already undertaken. The artist, 'acknowledges receipt of 100 merks for work completed and refers to pictures still to be carried

³¹⁰ Apted, *Painters in Scotland, 1301-1700*, 51.

³¹¹ Duncan Thomson, *The Life and Art of George Jamesone*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974) 26.

³¹² Thomson, *The Life and Art of George Jamesone*, 28.

³¹³ Thomson, *The Life and Art of George Jamesone*, 29.

³¹⁴ Apted, *Painters in Scotland 1301-1700*, 8.

out'.³¹⁵ Jamesone also conveyed his pricing of commissions highlighting the time scale for these.

Although few documents have survived which indicate what work was to be undertaken and the exact details of the precise commission, Apted claimed, 'Some form of agreement, formal or informal, must always have been made between employer and painter before work began, stipulating the nature and extent of the work and the terms of employment'.³¹⁶ Indication of previous arrangements could be glimpsed in documents relating to payment. This was noted by Apted in relation to Thomas Angus who was apparently paid, 'for the haille irne wyndois, cullering and laying in the foire entray and new work...set til him be task'.³¹⁷ Further examples were found in *Accounts of the Masters of Works for the building and repairing of Royal Palaces and Castles*:

Item to John Binning and James Warkman painteris for painting his Majesties haille rowmes in the palleice of Linlithgow both in sylfingis wallis dores windowis borderis abone the hingingis and for furnishing all sorts of cullouris and gold belonging thairto and lykwayes to thame for painting and laying over with oyle cullour and for gilting with gold the haille foire face of the new wark with the timber windowis and wondow brodis staine windowis and crownellos with ane brod for the kingis armes and housing gilt and set of and lykwyse to thame for gilting and laying over woth oyle cullour the four orderis abone the utter yet and furnishing all sortis of gold oyle and warkmanschip thairto and for laying over the tuo unicornes and gilting thame.....³¹⁸

It was evident from documents such as these that the painters must have had some written indication of what work was required prior to them undertaking the

³¹⁵ Thomson, *The Life and Art of George Jamesone*, 29.

³¹⁶ Apted, *Painters in Scotland 1301-1700*, 5.

³¹⁷ Original source quoted in Apted, *Painters in Scotland 1301-1700*, 5, no source details specified.

³¹⁸ Document 14 v Linlithgow Palace 1628-9, 24 March in John Imrie, John Dunbar eds., *Accounts of the Masters of Works for building and repairing Royal Palaces and Castles*, vol., ii, (Edinburgh: H.M.S.O., 1982) 269.

commission, particularly when considering, in some cases, the amount of work required and the precise details stipulated in the accounts.

Patron's payments to artists usually took the form of them being paid individually for each separate commission they undertook, however, during the early decades of seventeenth-century some artists were salaried.³¹⁹ Using painter David Pratt(fl. 1496-d.1503) as an example, Pratt was paid on a regular basis for both work done and work forthcoming, furthermore, 'separate payments were also made for colours and materials'.³²⁰ Pratt was paid regularly by the treasury for, among other assignments, 'making of the Kingis sepultur in Cambuskinneth'.³²¹ It was recorded that he was also paid in goods as well as cash, receiving clothes as payment on more than one occasion. Materials were also paid for separately. Works accounts show that payment was often given for the artist and his assistant, frequently referred to as his servant. This was demonstrated by payment for work undertaken at Falkland Palace where £3 10s was paid to the artist 'for him and his servant'.³²²

Further examples indicated that the master craftsmen probably found the royal works financially less attractive than working for private patrons. Journeymen craftsmen employed at the royal houses seem to have received the rates of the country, which could vary from place to place.³²³ Imrie and Dunbar also point out that payments were made by patrons, in this instance it was the crown, for drink and for work deemed to be dangerous or for overtime. They highlighted, 'One pleasing feature of the accounts is the evidence they provide of humanity and consideration

³¹⁹ Apted, *Painters in Scotland 1301-1700*, 7.

³²⁰ Apted, *Painters in Scotland 1301-1700*, 7.

³²¹ Apted, *Painters in Scotland 1301-1700*, 7.

³²² Apted, *Painters in Scotland 1301-1700*, 8.

³²³ Imrie, *Accounts of the Masters of Works for building and repairing Royal Palaces and Castles*, vol., ii, lvi.

shown towards employees and their dependants'.³²⁴ An example of this was noted when the crown made regular payments to Thomas Haddoway's widow for the support of their five children after he was accidentally killed at Edinburgh Castle whilst on a commission for the crown.³²⁵

Although contemporary documentation was scarce, the few sources that have survived demonstrated that relationships between artists and their patrons could be both formal and informal. It would appear that on some occasions they conversed regularly and in some instances patrons acquired other commissions for artists through their own personal contacts demonstrating mutual support and interaction. The relationships appear to have been amicable and through details on accounts the artist was well aware of what his undertaking was and how much he was to be paid for it. Perhaps not all had the close relationship George Jamesone and Sir Colin Campbell had but the relationship between the nobility and their artists, in any material unearthed, appeared to have been one of mutual respect. Relationships with the crown and their artists may have been more formal but there was still evidence that they cared for the artists as people and acted accordingly in times of need.

The Montgomerie/Stalker Relationship

Regarding Montgomerie and Stalker, again there was no surviving information that gave any indication of their relationship. How Stalker may have come to undertake the commission was, however, alluded to by Theresa Grant. Stalker's master, John Sawers, was a leading heraldic painter who was responsible for a commission at the, 'tolbuith' in Glasgow prior to 1636. He obtained the title of, 'painter burgess and

³²⁴ Imrie, *Accounts of the Masters of Works for building and repairing Royal Palaces and Castles*, vol., ii, lvi.

³²⁵ Imrie, *Accounts of the Masters of Works for building and repairing Royal Palaces and Castles*, vol., ii, lvi.

guild brother³²⁶ on 21 June of that year. Three months later Robert Montgomerie of Lochransay, Montgomerie of Skelmorlie's son, was also admitted as burgess of Glasgow.³²⁷ Grant claimed that it was possible that Montgomerie and Sawers met and a discussion regarding the commissioning of the aisle could have been forthcoming. As Sawers had other commissions to undertake at that period, namely work on the new Parliament House which he was involved with until 1639, he sent his apprentice, Stalker to undertake the aisle paintings. Although there is no factual support for Grant's claim, it is a suggestion well worth considering.³²⁸

When James Stalker was born is unknown, but, he would have been immersed into a society governed by secular art which his predecessors, half a century before, would scarcely have recognised. Scottish painters of this period gravitated towards the decorative arts and heraldic painting, both of which became extremely popular throughout Scotland during the post-Reformation period.

Biographical details relating to Stalker were scarce, and amounted to the scanty details that he was the son of David Stalker and was recorded as having flourished in Edinburgh during the period 1632-8. His master, John Sawers, was an Edinburgh painter of relatively high standing within the community of artists. Sawers' father was also a painter and this meant that Sawers the younger benefited from his father's experience. The passing on of trades from father to son was relatively common in this field, such as Binnings of Edinburgh who also ran a family business. Sawers the younger had two sons, one of whom followed in his

³²⁶ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation' in Church Monuments, Journal of the Church Monuments Society, vol., xvii, 2002, 75.

³²⁷ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation' in Church Monuments, Journal of the Church Monuments Society, vol., xvii, 2002, 75.

³²⁸ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation' in Church Monuments, Journal of the Church Monuments Society, vol., xvii, 2002, 80.

father's footsteps.³²⁹ As it was possible to transfer this type of business from father to son, this brings the question of talent under the microscope. It was likely with the extent of copying involved, that the skills could be learned with practice, whereas portraiture, landscaping and more detailed compositions required a more particular and refined talent.

As Stalker was apprenticed to Sawers, an indication of the type of work Stalker would have undertaken can be surmised. Sawers' success lay in heraldic painting; armorials and decorative art,³³⁰ it is, therefore, not unreasonable to suggest that Stalker would have specialised in this as well. The limits of Stalker's ability can be clearly seen on the aisle ceiling as the basic representations of form, particularly in relation to the seasonal and landscape paintings, were not executed by someone with a vast ability in portraiture or landscape painting. The faces are simplistic, the perspective poor and the iconography void of sophistication. The heraldic painting is, however, exceptional and this would be reflective of a man whose trade was decorative art.

Stalker had the advantage of being trained by a man from a solid background in decorative art. Sawers worked at Edinburgh Castle in 1617 and again in 1633. During the latter commission he had a team of artists working with him and Stalker may have been one of them. Sawers held the position of painter burgess of Edinburgh and guild brother and painter burgess of Glasgow. Just prior to the time Skelmorlie Aisle was being painted, he was also Carrick Pursuivant, later becoming Snowdown Herald.³³¹ These factors establish Sawers as a heraldic painter of some

³²⁹ Apted, *Painters in Scotland*, 91,82,27.

³³⁰ Apted, *Painters in Scotland*, 82.

³³¹ Apted, *Painters in Scotland*, 2,82. Also Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 128.

ability, a fact supported by the quality of his manuscript armorial.³³² As the heraldic representations of Skelmorlie Aisle were arguably the most accomplished areas of the ceiling paintings, it may be suggested that Stalker either learned his trade well from his master, or Sawers himself played some part in the ceiling decoration.

Sawers worked on the renovations at Edinburgh Castle for which he was paid £266 13s 4d ‘for paintit work done by him’ and a further £22 6s 8d:

mair to him for bywarkis done be him at the castell of Edinburgh as his particular compt gevin in be him to the maister of wark under his hand beares £4 for his chaigis expenssis depurset be him in registratioun of his band and raissing of letteris for chairging of him payment conforme to his band.³³³

He and his apprentices also worked on the new Parliament House, painting heraldic insignia as well as ‘pictures’. His tasks included cleaning existing art work, varnishing, glazing and applying gold colouring.³³⁴ At his death in 1651, his debtors included Lord Carnegie, who owed him £66 13s 4d, Lord Balmerino, £320 and the Earl of Roxburgh who owed him 400 merks. This demonstrated that the standard of Sawers’ work must have been exemplary for him to be commissioned by such prestigious members of the Scottish nobility. It also indicates the standard that Stalker was exposed to during his apprenticeship.

Stalker's signature and the date of the ceiling (Plate 30) were the only indication of his whereabouts during the period. There was no hint in printed records, or on any other art works, of what happened to him after this date. No trace of him has been discovered, nor was there any record of marriage or death. One explanation for this may be that he moved overseas to continue his career, or perhaps he chose to pursue another. It was also possible that he died, either at home

³³² NLS Manuscript Armorial MS 31.4.4. Also Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 128.

³³³ H.M. Paton *Accounts of the Masters of Works*, (Edinburgh, 1957, vol. ii) 387-8.

³³⁴ Apted, *Painters in Scotland*, 82.

or abroad. Although Sawers was still working until 1651, he too gave no indication of what happened to Stalker.

In glimpsing the lives of other artists of the period, for whom some details exist, it was possible to have at least a vague idea of some aspects of Stalker's life. He was likely to have been an apprentice for around seven years, as was the customary time. He would most likely have stayed with Sawers, eating and sleeping within his domain. Only after extensive training and the production of an 'essay', which was a piece of work assigned to the apprentice, on which he was examined, would he be fully trained.³³⁵ All apprentices were registered when they began their training along with the name, area in which they came from, and their father's name. In Stalker's case, only his father's name was recorded. Apted claimed, 'the majority of Edinburgh apprentices came, as one might expect, from the town or the Canongate, but a portion came from towns widely scattered over the Scottish lowlands and one or two from London'.³³⁶ Thus it was impossible to determine where Stalker may have come from.

He would probably have been one of three apprentices, as was the normal practice, although five or more have been recorded. This practice was, however, unusual. His apprenticeship, as well as his relationship with his master, would have been monitored by the guild who, in seventeenth-century Edinburgh, were a group within the Wrights and Masons. The title of the group, confirmed by royal charter under Charles I in 1635, meant they were responsible for overseeing a variety of tradesmen including glasswrights, masons, coopers, slaters and painters.³³⁷ Guild records were both fragmentary and inconclusive prior to 1669 and, sadly, little

³³⁵ Apted, *Painters in Scotland*, 2.

³³⁶ Apted, *Painters in Scotland*, 2.

³³⁷ Apted, *Painters in Scotland*, 2, 3.

information could be extracted from them. Later records, however, indicated that their function was to look out for the well-being of their members and this included the authority to interject during disputes between apprentices and their masters.

The principal intention of this chapter was to provide an overview of contemporary architecture, interior design and the relationship between artists and their patrons in Scotland during the Early Modern period. The chapter focussed on burial aisles and also domestic buildings, it also incorporated a discussion on the painted ceiling, its popularity in Scotland and the type of construction used for this style of decoration. The relationship between the patron and artist was considered in this chapter. The discussion focussed on contemporary examples and although details were few, an examination of the relationship between Montgomerie and Stalker was also touched upon.

The next step was to consider the sources available to Stalker, and other artists of the period. Through this it was possible, with more in-depth analysis, to ascertain the relevance of the symbolism depicted within the ceiling paintings. This allowed the paintings to be understood and the narrative constructed; a narrative that exposed Montgomerie's 'man-made dream' and allowed the viewer to share in the dialogue that he and Stalker articulated in paint.

CHAPTER THREE

SOURCES, ARTISTIC ORIGINALITY AND THE POSITIONING OF THE CEILING PAINTINGS

Eye wel and marke these silent posies,
Give ear to these speaking pictures.³³⁸

Artists, including Stalker, who were responsible for the execution of Scottish decorative painting, made use of the abundance of sources which arrived in Scotland from the continent. These sources, mostly in printed form, were employed as a prototype for a variety of the decorative arts, including providing ornamentation in architecture and domestic decoration. They could also be utilised as an effective tool which could be satisfactorily engaged as a vehicle for political persuasion, propaganda and polemics.

This chapter focused on contemporary sources with a particular emphasis on those selected by Stalker under the patronage of Montgomerie. It considered the changing role and use of religious symbolism and also discussed the role of the emblem book and how motifs were utilised in decorative painting throughout Scotland. The chapter discussed how unique the sources at Skelmorlie were and to what extent the choice of iconography was also utilised in other examples of Scottish decorative art. It also indicated sources personal to Montgomerie that Stalker incorporated, as well as sources that Stalker himself would have personally viewed. The chapter presented a discussion of the importance of the positioning of the paintings within the artistically constructed narrative.

³³⁸ Henry Hawkins, *The Devout Heart* (c.1634), (London: Scolar Press, 1975) 17.

A New Approach to Religious Iconography

As previously discussed, the role of the artist changed at the Protestant Reformation and the main focus of this was the execution of religious art. During the period, Episcopalianism, being encouraged to adapt to accommodate more Reformed thinking, adopted the Reformed practice of refuting Catholic iconography. It thus refrained from any overt symbolism that could be directly associated with the Catholic Church and took a more Protestant approach.³³⁹

The Catholic Church used images of the Saints, the Crucifixion, the Day of Judgement and representations of Jesus and Mary as these were all accepted components for the conveyance of their religious ideology.³⁴⁰ The Catholic focus had centred more on New Testament and devotional subject matter which the Reformers rejected. Post-Reformation, these were viewed by the Reformers as images of 'popery' and they were vehemently expunged. This ideology particularly targeted religious art and vivid colour schemes within church buildings, which were replaced with whitewashed walls and ceilings.³⁴¹ Although religious art was essentially frowned upon, images that relayed biblical narratives based on Old Testament narratives, were tolerated as long as they were not situated in the church building.³⁴² There had been a biblical tradition in the Old Testament of using signs and symbols and an abundance of examples demonstrated this including Kings 1:6 which recorded that Solomon's Temple contained a plethora of signs and symbols. These included fruit and flowers, images of the Ark of the Covenant as

³³⁹ F.L.Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 9Oxford: O.U.P., 1989) 1134.

³⁴⁰ Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 15.

³⁴¹ Peter Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, (New York:Rizzoli Publications, 1999) 3.

³⁴² Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 9.

well as carvings of angels and trees. Symbols had also been used as a means of communicating God's message. One clear example of this was noted in Genesis with the use of the rainbow, a sign of God's covenant with his people. Further examples of symbols were utilised when doors were painted with lambs blood as a sign of faith during the Passover and John 1: 32 described how the dove was a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit at Christ's baptism.³⁴³

Artists executing post-Reformation religious art incorporated the images into private decoration and did so with an emphasis on themes which adhered tightly to scripture; a focus on man's personal relationship with God or biblical narratives that acted as didactic tools including moral guidance. As Peter Murray claimed, 'Religious painting became a matter of private patronage and no artist in any of the Protestant areas who had any care for his livelihood or even his life could paint a picture of the Virgin Mary'.³⁴⁴ By representations of Christ, the Virgin and the Saints, the dialogue of Catholic art had absorbed the viewer into the into, 'the ineffable experience of the miraculous and the supernatural using the idioms of naturalism to convey a sense of hyper-reality of suffering and redemption'.³⁴⁵ Bath maintained, 'What the reformers found most offensive, of course, were images of the Virgin, of the saints and of the Godhead. These are likely to be idolatrous since they represent Christian mysteries, images of the divine'.³⁴⁶ It was these types of images that the Reformers refuted.

As well as representations of biblical narratives those that reflected God's world inclusive of realism and the wonders of nature were also acceptable. These held didactic properties but their religious emphasis was more covert in nature.

³⁴³ Holy Bible, John 1:32.

³⁴⁴ Peter Murray ed., *et al.*, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Oxford: O.U.P., 2001) 463.

³⁴⁵ Paul Arblaster, *Antwerp and the World*, (Lueven: Lueven University Press, 2004) 28.

³⁴⁶ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 124.

Without in-depth analysis they basically looked secular and free from any religious imagery. Representations of humankind at work also became a focus as these emphasised the Protestant work ethic and this too was deemed acceptable subject matter.³⁴⁷

Despite rigorous attacks on religious art, not all images relating to Catholicism were, however, fully expunged. As McKean noted, '...there was a continuing Catholic expression in Scotland after the Reform but, for political reasons, it became internalised and romantically retrograde in its recreation of a mediaeval past'.³⁴⁸ Examples of art relating to Catholicism were found within Scottish decorative schemes. Bath highlighted, '...the burgess John Watson painted not only an image of the Agnus Dei-Christ as a lamb holding a Banner of the Resurrection-but also- apparently an image of the Virgin Mary'.³⁴⁹ Further examples of Catholic imagery were also noted at Provost Skene's house in Aberdeen. Skene was a local burgess as well as provost of the region. His artistic scheme included images associated with the life of Christ, namely the, 'Annunciation, Crucifixion, Entombment, Resurrection, Ascension-but also separate images illustrating the Instruments of the Passion'.³⁵⁰ Further images, now almost entirely faded, were also discovered that indicated paintings of the Last Supper, Christ's Baptism and his presence in the Temple had also been executed. The paintings were dated 1626.

Imagery that would be regarded as Catholic in nature may not have been atypical but unfortunately very few examples of this type of subject matter have survived from the post-Reformation period to make it possible to ascertain how common this practise was. Iconoclasm became rife and one example of this was

³⁴⁷ Seymore Slive, *Dutch Painting 1600-1800*, (London: Yale University Press, 1995) 77.

³⁴⁸ McKean, 'Scottish Religious Architecture after the Council of Trent', 13.

³⁴⁹ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 124.

³⁵⁰ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 125.

demonstrated at the Marquess of Huntly's residence at Huntly which became a casualty when invading Covenanting armies took exception to its explicitly religious insignia. It had impressive red sandstone carvings of 'the five wounds of Christ, the instruments of the passion, a text, a roundel displaying the risen Christ in glory, topped by St Michael triumphing over satan'.³⁵¹ All of which were destroyed.

Representations such as IHS, the letters of which were a monogram for Jesus' name, and which was a typically Christian symbol were also unacceptable to the reformers. The symbol had been utilised throughout the centuries by the Catholic Church whereby the monogram had both Greek and Latin origins. It was widely used by both the Franciscans and the Jesuits who interpreted it as meaning *Jesus Habemus Socium* (i.e. we have Jesus as our companion).³⁵² Post-Reformation this too was deemed to be too close to Catholicism and its use was prohibited.³⁵³

Many images established within the Early Church and utilised within Catholicism were continued to be used by reformed artists but these were, 'invested with new and powerful meaning'.³⁵⁴ One example of these was the chalice. The symbol was associated with the Eucharist and specifically the Last Supper. It also symbolised the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and was a universal sign for the Christian Church.³⁵⁵ It was an image that would be regarded as primarily relating to the sacraments and thus fundamentally Catholic in nature. In its role, however, as an image which portrayed the Christian faith, it was also acceptable for Protestant use.³⁵⁶ This was witnessed by the number of Protestant emblem books which incorporated the image. The symbol was adapted so as not to contain fluid which

³⁵¹ McKean, 'Scottish Religious Architecture after the Council of Trent', 12.

³⁵² F.L. Cross, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Oxford: O.U.P., 1989) 690.

³⁵³ Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 690.

³⁵⁴ Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 466.

³⁵⁵ Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 279.

³⁵⁶ George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, (Oxford: O.U.P., 1961)163.

would have had a direct relationship to Catholicism and would have clearly been associated with the Eucharist.³⁵⁷

Post-Reformation, Catholic imagery was expunged from religious worship and replaced with a new ideology whereby the word of God was the focus. There were to be no distractions within church buildings and all aspects of Catholic teaching were to be removed and replaced with more austere furnishings and decoration.³⁵⁸

Sources: Continental Influence

A wide range of subject matter was used in Scottish decorative painting. The iconography frequently incorporated vernacular as well as Continental components. Many of the existing examples found throughout Scotland displayed emblems taken from European emblem books these included those found at Culross Palace and Rossend in Fife and Prestongrange in East Lothian amongst others.³⁵⁹ These volumes of emblems acted in an equivalent way to wallpaper books of today whereby artists chose their designs in accordance with their, or their patron's, intentions and wishes. The bulk of the books were imported from overseas and included designs that were in vogue across Europe during the period. In some cases designs were transferred directly onto the ceiling but they could also be modified in accordance with the space available and the requirements of the patron. The artist would compile a personal portfolio of his emblems and designs and these would be shared with his apprentices and used regularly in different settings.

³⁵⁷ Murray, *et al.*, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 279.

³⁵⁸ Williams, *Dutch Art in Scotland*, 13.

³⁵⁹ Bath, *Scottish Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 249, 258, 236.

Artists from overseas brought Continental sources which allowed locally based artists to create a new portfolio to be utilised in Scottish art. Principally overseas artists came to work at the royal court but they soon found additional work out-with this. Although several Continental artists were recorded at the Scottish court during the reign of James VI,³⁶⁰ employment of foreign painters did not find its genesis with this king. According to Hector Boece, James I (1394-1437), ‘brocht oute of England and Flanderis ingenious men of sindry crafts to instruct his pepill in vertewis occupacioun’.³⁶¹ It was to the Netherlands that the Collegiate Church of Holy Trinity, Edinburgh, looked in the 1470s when they wished to commission an altarpiece. The service of Hugo van der Goes (1440-1482) was secured and one of the few pieces of pre-Reformation art that still survives, *The Trinity Altarpiece*, was commissioned. James IV (1473-1513) employed the services of Meynart Wewyck, who also painted for Henry VII. It was from the Netherlands that a replacement was found for court painter David Pratt who was, ‘painter by the king’s command’,³⁶² until his death. Also, a French artist noted as, ‘Piers the painter’, was employed by the Scottish court between 1505-08. Arnold Bronkhorst (1556-83), the first named court painter, was employed by James VI. He was recorded as a, ‘Dutyeh painter’, and appeared to have been well deployed. He was paid to execute several portraits of the king as well as some of the nobility, including George Buchanan.³⁶³

Scottish imports included Dutch art as well as Dutch artists. Paintings were transported from the Netherlands to Scotland, both by royalty and by the nobility. This was recorded in the inventories of the Clerks of Penicuik. John Clerk (1611-74)

³⁶⁰ Apted, *Painters in Scotland*, 10.

³⁶¹ Hector Boece qtd in Grant Gibson, ed., *Scotland and the Low Countries*, (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 1996)89.

³⁶² Apted, *Painters in Scotland*, 75.

³⁶³ Macmillan, *Scottish Art*, 44.

ran a thriving shipping business transporting goods from the Continent to Scotland. Pitscottie stated that, ‘Sir John Campbell of Lundie and Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, ‘brocht hame thair pictouris into the kingis grace of Scotland and presentit and samin into him’.³⁶⁴ He not only had a good personal collection of paintings, but acted as an art dealer. A catalogue entitled, ‘Sent to Scotland in December 1668’ listed seventy works of art, half of which were Dutch or Flemish’.³⁶⁵ As Deborah Howard stated, Dutch paintings were frequently, ‘popularised through their own depictions as models of sober, thrifty, God-fearing homes’.³⁶⁶ Scotland endorsed these attributes and shared in their sentiments.

Despite a plethora of Continental artists, the majority of painters found working in Scotland were Scots but, though fairly numerous, their talent was underdeveloped. This was noted by the lack of Scottish painters present at the royal court.³⁶⁷ Local painters had little opportunity to excel and, during this period, few went on to become artists of note. The majority concentrated on heraldic painting or interior decoration as few had acquired the skill for portraiture or landscape paintings. The bulk of the designs and themes they used were from overseas sources. As Apted stated, ‘although the hands that held the brushes were normally Scottish, the subjects that they painted were not’.³⁶⁸

Influence came from France and Italy but it was Netherlandish artists who provided the greatest influence as these were the ones who frequently took up residence in Scotland. This was not surprising as a solid relationship in trade

³⁶⁴ A. Mackay ed., Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1899, vol I) 354.

³⁶⁵ Williams, *Dutch Art in Scotland*, 13, 15.

³⁶⁶ Deborah Howard, ‘Dutch Influence on Scottish Architecture’ in Julia Williams, *Dutch Art in Scotland*, 38.

³⁶⁷ Apted, *Painters in Scotland*, 11.

³⁶⁸ Apted, *Painters in Scotland*, 11.

between the Netherlands and Scotland was well established by the seventeenth century. Amiable relations between the two were well established by the seventeenth-century as Scotland looked to the Dutch, 'in innumerable matters commercial and cultural'.³⁶⁹ The two countries shared many similarities both in geographical and cultural terms. They had similar weather systems and neither country had a vast supply of natural resources and thus depended on trade to alleviate them. Their class structures both witnessed an increase in the burgh class and, for the Scots, an almost non-existent royal court³⁷⁰ which in Holland had been completely removed. Culturally, they shared interests in enhancing their private residences through interior decoration and exterior building. This included not only painting but the decoration of both the interior and exteriors of their private dwelling houses which received additions of inscriptions, dates and coats of arms. Dutch architectural practices were also adopted by the Scots including the design of buildings in the major cities.³⁷¹

The Netherlands nurtured their artists as, unlike Scotland; they could afford to do so as the wealthy burgesses took over commissions once paid for by the Church. Urban communities were also wealthy and were interested in collecting and commissioning art. Eminent artists, such as Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-69) and Franz Hals (1581/5-1666), painted the Dutch elite who served as burgomasters and aldermen, but the artists, distinguished as they were, also painted ordinary artisans. They mostly worked for an open market, but had also public and private patrons.³⁷²

Religious influences had led to both countries having inhabitants that were

³⁶⁹ T.C. Smout 'Scottish –Dutch Contact 1600-1800 as cited in Williams *Dutch Art and Scotland: A Reflection of Taste*, 21.

³⁷⁰ After 1603 James returned only once to Scotland while Charles visited in 1633, 1640 and 1641.

³⁷¹ Smout, 'Scottish –Dutch Contact 1600-1800 as cited in Williams *Dutch Art and Scotland: A Reflection of Taste*, 21.

³⁷² Honour *et-al.*, *A World History of Art*, (London: Laurence King, 1999)598.

regarded as austere in outlook and tone. They shared a similar work ethic, adopting the principle that hard work served the Lord better. As both were surrounded by the sea, it played a large part in their daily lives, as they were both dependent on the sea for trade and transport.³⁷³ In terms of education, the Scottish nobility frequently sent their sons to the University of Leiden to be educated. On their return, many brought continental ideas home with them. As the Scots utilised Dutch ideas in architecture and church furnishings, it is hardly surprising that they adopted their practices into paintings.³⁷⁴ Although Dutch influence was profound and had longevity, it did not overpower Scottish individualism.

Dutch artists had a leaning towards specialisation and this led to a particular interest in making artistic displays of their surroundings. They engaged with the land, people, customs and possessions, and their art was particularly naturalistic. They paid attention to the world around them and captured flowers, fruit, household furnishings, ‘garlands of fruit and leaves, playful putti or ornamental medallions fashioned after classical cameos’.³⁷⁵ cultural influences and images that reflected their personal environment.³⁷⁶ Like the Scots, the sea played a pivotal role in the lives of the Dutch and seascapes became a favoured theme for many artists. Genre scenes were also extremely popular and, by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries, many incorporated moralistic viewpoints and domestic virtue as was part of the belief system at the time. The genre paintings highlighted protestant ideology, emphasising that the home was as much a place of moral and religious teaching as

³⁷³ Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 3.

³⁷⁴ Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 3.

³⁷⁵ Erwin Panofsky, *Netherlandish Painting: Its Origin and Character*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1953) 8.

³⁷⁶ Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 3

the Church.³⁷⁷ They described their everyday pursuits, providing a, 'pictorial record of their culture'.³⁷⁸ Their topographical tradition depicted profile views of towns and cities and these always included aspects of the weather.³⁷⁹

Stalker's landscapes incorporated paintings of the sea and these had Dutch undertones in their colouring and execution which resulted in the paintings being described as, 'pseudo Dutch'.³⁸⁰ As he was part of the Scottish art scene at this time, he was clearly influenced by what he saw and must either have worked with Dutch artists or had learned enough of their techniques through Sawers.

Thus Stalker tried to emulate some of the finest artists working in Scotland during the early seventeenth century. He captured the essence of the Continent and brought his ideas to a small coastal town in the West of Scotland where many of his sources were extracted and re-adapted from Continental emblem books.

Emblem Books

The emblem book was one of the most popular sources of iconography during the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries, the greatest influx of which came, yet again, to Scotland from the Netherlands. The emblem book's major role was to relay a message by creating a fusion between the visual and the literary. This reached its climax in the portrayal of the relationship between the human and the divine. As emblems had didactic properties, many volumes adhered to religious teaching supporting both Protestantism and Catholicism.³⁸¹ Many became the basic pattern source for several of the Scottish Renaissance ceilings whereby eventually

³⁷⁷ Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 3.

³⁷⁸ Slive, *Dutch Painting: 1600-1800*, 1.

³⁷⁹ Bath, *Scottish Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 215-275.

³⁸⁰ Wells-Cole *Art and Decoration in Elizabethan and Jacobean England*, 62.

³⁸¹ Charles Moseley, *A Century of Emblemes*, (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1989) 23.

their use in architectural monuments resulted in even the poorest graves displaying an emblem or motif. They became a fashion which was adopted across all cultural and social barriers the images from which were used to adorn the residences of the living and the memorials to the dead. The popularity of the emblem book flourished until the end of the seventeenth-century and, although not quite as popular after this period, emblem books were still being composed into the nineteenth century.³⁸² As Stalker used emblems as part of the decoration on the aisle ceiling, he clearly had access to a selection of them.

The emblem consisted of the *pictura* (symbolic picture), the *inscripto* (motto or title) and the *subscripto* (passage of prose or verse) which incorporated a variety of topics, many of which were used didactically. The *inscripto* led the viewer into the picture, teasing the subconscious to prepare the mind for what was ahead. The *pictura* brought the accompanying *subscripto* to life. The three working simultaneously completed the narrative.³⁸³ Despite no emblem books being compiled in Scotland, they were frequently in circulation at the Scottish court and within the circles occupied by Scottish artists and the nobility.

Mary Queen of Scots' use of Claude Paradin (16th Century) *Devises Heroiques* (c.1551) demonstrated how in-vogue these volumes were. The queen used his designs in her personal embroidery.³⁸⁴ Other works were also associated with the Scottish court and Scottish decorative art, the most popular sources deriving from material by Etienne Delaune and Geoffrey Whitney. As Whitney's volume was dedicated to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, the text was used as a means of political statement and, more particularly, propaganda. The volume was designed to

³⁸² Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970) 1.

³⁸³ George Cautley, *A Century of Emblems*, (London: Macmillan, 1878) 11.

³⁸⁴ Edward Hulme, *The History, Principles and Practice of Symbolism in Christian Art* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Company, 1910) 97.

highlight the earl's virtues and was a symbol of support for the Protestant cause.³⁸⁵ Theodore de Beze (1519-1605), in his volume *Icones* (c.1580), dedicated his text to James VI. De Beze was responsible for the religious management of Calvinist theology in Geneva after the death of Calvin in 1564. His text centred greatly on images of personnel associated with the Protestant Reformation and incorporated a decorative border which was mannerist in style. This particular text was used as a polemic and demonstrates how emblematics could confidently be used as a means of propaganda as well as making a political and religious statement.³⁸⁶ In a similar vein, Andrew Willet (1562-1621), whose publication *Sacrorum Emblematum Centuria Una* (c.1552), was also a supporter of Calvinist theology. Willet preached in front of James VI and openly attacked the papacy. He was known at the Scottish court and was imprisoned by James for possessing the audacity to criticise the king's intention to consider a Spanish bride for his son Prince Charles.³⁸⁷ Willet's emblems were divided into three sections; those based on prophetic works, those focussing on the history of Israel and those drawn from nature.³⁸⁸ As James VI was not offended by the contents of emblem books, it is unsurprising that they became regular sources for decorative art. Not only did they incorporate material that corresponded with Protestant ideology, they could be effectively used didactically.

The fact that emblems were incorporated into the aisle ceiling indicated their availability to Stalker and other Scottish decorative artists. The choice of emblems offered an invaluable avenue into the mentalité and consciousness of the artist, but, more specifically, the patron. Through understanding the use of particular emblems,

³⁸⁵ Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems*, (Leiden: Platin, 1586) 66.

³⁸⁶ Theodore De Beze, *Icones*, (Geneva: Jean de Laon, 1580) 21.

³⁸⁷ Charles Moseley, *A Century of Emblems*, (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1989)111.

³⁸⁸ Andrew Willet, *Sacrorum Emblematum Centuria Una* (Cambridge:Legate,1592) No page numbers.

it became possible to unlock part of the narrative within the ceiling iconography. The use and selection of some emblems may have been, to some extent, influenced by vogue but principally the choice was indicative of the intentions of the artist, or the patron, in creating a particular work of art. Through the use of emblems, identity could be constructed and an indication of social status, cultural influences and, most particularly, religious ideology. Martin Andrews claimed:

Painting, like poetry, can represent spiritual lessons to us by depicting the world of sense. Natural objects can be invested with spiritual and moral meanings that can congeal into an emblematic iconography, a visual language every bit as articulate as a developed literary language.³⁸⁹

Through these visual sources a plethora of information could be extracted which, several centuries after the work was created, allowed the viewer a glimpse into the environment in which the work was executed.

Emblem books, in the most simplistic terms, were pattern books from which the artist could choose his designs. A wide range of source material exposed the artist to an assortment of ideas in which to base his own, and his patron's, choice of decorative imagery. The emblems could be copied directly or could be adapted. The choice by the artist synthesised with the patron's identity, allowed a completely personal and unique work to be executed. This is exactly what Stalker accomplished on the aisle ceiling.

The emblem could be used in its entirety or could be, and frequently was, separated into different elements. This was noted at Skelmorlie Aisle where on some occasions Stalker dissected the emblem and used only the parts relevant to his purpose. An example of this was detected in one image where he executed a fist holding a sword. The original emblem for this *In Utrumque Paratus* was composed

³⁸⁹ Martin Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art* (Oxford: OUP, 1999) 38.

by Geoffrey Whitney (1548-1601), from his text *A Choice of Emblemes* (c1586).³⁹⁰ In Whitney's version (Plate 31) both hands emerge from a cloud, the right one holding a sword, the left one, a trowel. The motif was from an original image by Claude Paradin taken from *Devises Heroiques*, which Whitney re-modelled in order to create an emblem which symbolised patriotism.³⁹¹ Paradin, in executing the original, declared that the function of the emblem was to encourage virtue by making abstract ideas memorable and permanent believing that their major use was didactic rather than decorative. His text was extremely influential as its contents were frequently copied by other artists. His designs were also used as a pattern book for architectural decoration, mountings designed for pageants and as a handbook used by craftsmen and embroiderers.³⁹²

Stalker dissected Whitney's version, using only the part which displayed the hand and sword (Plate 32). He also disregarded the accompanying *inscripto* but used part of the *subscripto*. The last two lines of the *subscripto* read:

That to defende, our countrie deare from harme,
For warre, or worke, wee eyther hande should
arme.³⁹³

Stalker used the second line to accompany his interpretation of the image of the hand and sword, but he inserted the first line beneath another painting, that of a lion rampant. Thus Stalker demonstrated his use of part of the *subscripto* allied with a Scottish symbol to emphasise Montgomerie's allegiance to his country. What Stalker did here was to create an individualistic display which incorporated factors about Montgomerie's persona intertwined with material acquired from the emblem book. He divided the complete emblem and only used parts of it in accordance with

³⁹⁰ Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes*, 66.

³⁹¹ Claude Paradin, *Devises Heroiques*, (France, 1551) 115.

³⁹² Moseley, *A Century of Emblems*, 73.

³⁹³ Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.

his own, and Montgomerie's, intentions thus emphasizing the 'aspirations of a particular individual'.³⁹⁴

The symbolic nature of emblems, and their need to be interpreted, made it ideal in the creation of ambiguity. The viewer was presented with a challenge as the artist made it necessary to apply his or her own personal cultural influences and experiences. Thus, the interpretation of the symbolism would be in accordance with the knowledge of the person who was deciphering the imagery. By performing this act, a deeper meaning or understanding of the work of art could be revealed.³⁹⁵ Consequently, some of the sources for the paintings would obviously have been known to Stalker or Montgomerie but are unknown to viewers observing the paintings today.

In using these types of sources, Montgomerie could convey a principal or idea that was both literary and visual. He could use images to emphasise aspects of his personality as well as his political and religious affiliations. This was a typically seventeenth-century concept as, at that point in time, humankind searched for a universal language.³⁹⁶ The elucidation of moral, ethical or religious issues were accommodated comfortably as the use of emblems acted as a, 'universal mode of conveying complex ideas economically'.³⁹⁷ Verses and quotations encouraged art to be viewed as narrative, emphasising the close relationship between the verbal and the visual. This was noted in Stalker's execution at Largs, and was also a feature of many of the other painted ceilings of the period. Since the mentalité of the era encouraged an interaction between the text and the image, they needed to be read

³⁹⁴ <http://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk> Accessed 21/8/2010.

³⁹⁵ Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 5.

³⁹⁶ Moseley, *A Century of Emblems*, 14.

³⁹⁷ Moseley, *A Century of Emblems*, 14.

simultaneously if the true meaning was to be revealed.³⁹⁸ Stalker captured this concept whereby the paintings, verses and scriptural quotations all acted together to provide one overall narrative. The fact that Stalker was selective in what he utilised indicated that he was only interested in the specific aspects of the emblem that he felt were suitable for his purpose. In the above example, the *pictura* and two lines of the *subscripto* served a purpose which the *inscripto* did not. Thus, in this example, it became possible to tease out some of Montgomerie's personality by understanding the iconography chosen to be displayed on the ceiling.

The emblem book therefore became pivotal in the expression of personal identities and ideologies. The depictions, in either their visual or literary form, were able to cross cultural and social perimeters and could be utilised to influence both the educated and illiterate. On many occasions, emblematisers borrowed emblems from an earlier period, such as the example noted above, where Whitney's emblem came from an original by Claude Paradin. Thus, the use of emblems included symbolic imagery and characterizations that had been borrowed from the past. These were now applied to contemporary values such as, 'the pursuit of wisdom, prudence or virtue'.³⁹⁹

Eventually, with regular use, original emblems were redefined and a host of new ones emerged. The use of the emblem gradually increased in popularity, although its role as a deliberate means of creating ambiguity eventually diminished during the seventeenth century in favour of the application of emblems for more specific purposes. This transition had, at its nucleus, the principal function of the emblem book as a tool for the instruction of moralistic and ethical ideology. It adopted the role of an *aide memoire*, used to instil a moral truth into the mind of the

³⁹⁸ Moseley, *A Century of Emblems*, 14.

³⁹⁹ John Hall, *Emblems with Elegant Figures*, (London: R. Daniel, 1658) 31.

viewer. This, in turn, reinforced moral teaching, encouraging the desire within the viewer to practice an impeccable standard of personal conduct, that which was emphasised within the emblem.⁴⁰⁰

The use of the emblem as metaphor was both illustrative and interpretative, as it, ‘allows the exploitation of one type of sense impression to explore another, it is also, in its widest sense, a major element in the value structure of a work of art’.⁴⁰¹ Metaphor allowed cohesion between reality and the imaginary, by fusing a sense of realism to an obviously imaginary object. In so doing, the resultant synthesis revealed the ethos of the work of art. By this use of the emblem, information could be transferred that was impossible to transmit to the viewer using any other means.

As Moseley suggested:

There is nothing that delights more, or which makes something slip more readily into the soul than pictures, nor anything which fixes the idea more deeply in the memory, or which more efficaciously inspires the will with force and energy.⁴⁰²

Late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century emblems were predominantly used to display intense spirituality and this, too, was captured by Stalker. The images, or *devotional foci*, could be preset and followed a particular format, although their translation did vary. The ambiguity, for which the period was so renowned, presented a challenge that the viewer interpreted and eventually evaluated. This interpretation would vary depending on which period the viewer was translating from. In other words, as touched on earlier, the translation and understanding of the emblem would vary in accordance with the experiences of the

⁴⁰⁰ Moseley, *A Century of Emblems*, 10.

⁴⁰¹ Moseley, *A Century of Emblems*, 8.

⁴⁰² Moseley, *A Century of Emblems*, 10.

viewer.⁴⁰³ Religious emblems, which were composed pre-Reformation, would naturally be interpreted in relation to the religious ideology of the period. This interpretation may, however, differ if viewed post-Reformation when there were different religious interpretations possible.

In some cases, emblems were commonly used and the meaning or interpretation universally understood. For example, in Christian art, the symbol of the fish was universally understood to represent Jesus Christ.⁴⁰⁴ If, however, the viewer did not understand the code, or have any experience of Christianity, then the symbol may well have been misinterpreted and thus the painting's true meaning misunderstood. Stalker utilised the fish symbol in his seascape vignette but, again, it is observed that he used the basic detail from an emblem but did not copy it exactly. This was particularly noted in its grotesque form.

Images of grotesque fish were a popular inclusion in many of the emblem books. The one utilised by Stalker was similar, but not identical, to that seen in Paradin's *Symbola Heroica* (c.1567). Here the fish was in monstrous form and was wearing a crown. Others were depicted holding a ring.⁴⁰⁵ Further examples include the text by Andrea Alciato (1492-1550), *Vircla* (c. 1531) where the grotesque fish was depicted in the company of putti and playing a harp. Other examples included a similar monster pulling an anchor.⁴⁰⁶ Whitney also used images of the grotesque fish in his emblem books; one emblem entitled 'Iniuriis, Infirmitas Jubiecta' included an image of the grotesque accompanied by the verse:

The mightie Jiſhe, deuowres the little frie,
If in the deepe, they venture for to staie,
If vp they Jwimme, newe foes with watching flie,

⁴⁰³ Moseley, *A Century of Emblems*, 10.

⁴⁰⁴ William Audsley, *Christian Symbolism*, (London: Day, 1865) 34.

⁴⁰⁵ Claude Paradin, *Symbola Heroica*, (Antwerp: Platin 1567), 24, 84.

⁴⁰⁶ Andre Alciato *Vircla*, (Augsburg: Heinrich Steyner, 1531) No page numbers.

The caruoraunt, the seamene, for theare praie,
Between these two, the fire is still de stoi'de,
Ah feeble [tate, on euerie [ide anoi'de⁴⁰⁷

This verse demonstrated the use of the grotesque in a metaphorical manner as a narrative of survival and battling foes. Stalker, however, omitted the verses and only used the image which he modified slightly to make unique. The verses did not relay the message he wished but the image did so he discarded what did not serve his purpose.

The seascape vignette at Largs also incorporated a popular theme included in emblem books, the theme of love. During the period, both Calvinist and Jesuit emblem books re-worked depictions of secular love to express and analyse the relationship between the human and the divine. Henry Hawkins (1577-1646), author of *The Devout Heart* (c.1634), displayed a series of heart images supported by devotional texts. Otto van Veen, or Vaneus, (1556-1629), created what was arguably the most important of all the emblem books focusing on the heart. His text *Amorium Emblemata* (c.1608) contained a collection of one hundred and twenty four love emblems. This volume was one example whereby a text which initially appeared to contain no religious symbolism and focused purely on the subject of love.⁴⁰⁸ However, as was the practice during the period, the symbolism was not merely a focus of human love, but possessed a dual purpose by emphasising the thematic concept that a route to divine love could be sought through human love. This theme was also noted in the text by Stephani Luzvic (1567-1640), *Coeur Devot*, (c.1628). Luzvic used a more direct Christian setting for his heart motifs and left the viewer with little need of decoding, since his various depictions contained obvious imagery

⁴⁰⁷ Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes*, 52.

⁴⁰⁸ Otto van Veen, *Amorium Emblemata*, (Antwerp: Hieronymus Verdussen, 1608) 34.

or texts within them.⁴⁰⁹ Anton Wiericx's undated text *Cor Iesu Amanti Sacrum* portrayed the heart metamorphosing through various stages until it became, 'a fit abode for Christ'.⁴¹⁰

Stalker, too, incorporated the heart theme into his seascape painting at Largs but captured something unique. His specific design was not found in any of the contemporary emblem books or other sources. The lady kneeling on the sand was executed holding a chalice in her right hand which displayed a burning heart (Plate 13). Here the emblem was used in its true function immersed in ambiguity incorporating both human and divine love. The heart portrayed by Stalker displayed flames bursting from its position within the chalice and due to the lack of any identifiable source is likely to have been composed by him. Luzvic, in his text *Coer Devot* (c 1628),⁴¹¹ displayed an image of a heart shaped like a bottle with flames protruding from the neck of the vessel,⁴¹² this was not, however, the source for Stalker's image. The image of the heart will be discussed again later in relation to the Douglas emblem, this section of research was only concerned with those images contained within emblem books.

Emblem books provided many sources for Scottish decorative art and these were incorporated into a variety of other painted ceilings. These included an extensive amount of emblems by Geoffrey Whiney incorporated into the decorative scheme at Culross Palace;⁴¹³ a selection designed by Claude Paradin which adorn the Great Chamber at Rossend Castle and a selection by Jan Vredeman de Vrie at

⁴⁰⁹ Stephani Luzvic, *Coer Devot*, (Antwerp, 1628) 54.

⁴¹⁰ Moseley, *A Century of Emblems*, 157.

⁴¹¹ Stephani Luzvic, *Coer Devot*, (Antwerp, 1628) 54.

⁴¹² Luzvic, *Coeur Devot*, 18.

⁴¹³ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 249.

Prestongrange⁴¹⁴ but many more schemes throughout Scotland include or are based on emblems.⁴¹⁵

Sources used for Scottish Painted Ceilings

In general terms, popular themes used for Scottish decorative art included animals and birds, scrollwork, grotesques, repetitive pattern work and designs, fruit and foliage, pastimes and representations of trade and agriculture.⁴¹⁶ At least some of these were incorporated into every ceiling although Sheila Mackay suggested that the components were, ‘often translated crudely but effectively by local artists’.⁴¹⁷ Many patterns were symmetrical and repetitive and the decoration had a tendency to be extremely busy leaving few blank spaces, every portion of available space was generally utilised. Further to these generic sources, a variety of other representations were also included. These helped to individualise the decorative work. This was witnessed by the execution of, for example, the Sybils incorporated into the artistic display at Mary Somerville's House at Burntisland and at Wester Livilands near Stirling. Other examples, included the nine Worthies, were found at Earlshall and Crathes Castle with the Cardinal Virtues, and the Five Senses also making appearances in several surviving and recorded examples.⁴¹⁸ History painting, in the form of biblical narratives, or episodes relating to classical literature, were also frequently represented.⁴¹⁹ The incorporation of biblical quotations and/or representations of biblical narratives and characters were also relatively popular.

⁴¹⁴ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 236.

⁴¹⁵ A full discussion on these are found in Bath, *Decorative Painting in Scotland*.

⁴¹⁶ Apted, *Painted Ceilings of Scotland*, 35.

⁴¹⁷ Mackay ed., *Scottish Renaissance Interiors*, 18.

⁴¹⁸ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 185-201.

⁴¹⁹ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 204.

Examples were noted at Traquair House in Innerleithen, Kinneil House in Bo'ness and, of course, Skelmorlie Aisle.⁴²⁰ Tara Tamling maintained:

A connection between Protestantism and an emphasis on biblical themes in the decoration of houses was not restricted to Britain but extended throughout northern Europe...The depiction of religious imagery on the surface of walls and ceilings therefore represents a significant decisions on behalf of the patron that the chosen subject matter will remain appropriate or fashionable.⁴²¹

Many examples of Scottish decorative painting that have survived to the present day also demonstrated the inclusion of heraldic insignia, regarded at the time as extremely important as it emphasised ancestry, affiliations and the personal identity of the patron. An extensive range was incorporated into the painted ceiling at Earlshall in Fife. Further examples were found at Delgaty Castle near Turriff, and at St. Machar's Cathedral in Aberdeen.⁴²²

Several ceilings also included painted components which were designed to create architectural characteristics. Examples of these included false vaulting or corbels and *trompe l'oeil* coffering which created false ribbing. This was observed by Bath who stated, in relation to Skelmorlie Aisle, 'the whole ceiling is a notable exercise in false architecture, its barrel vault being intersected by *trompe l'oeil* 'stone' vaulting and rib-work rising up from fourteen Mannerist *trompe* corbels which pretend to project through the cornice'.⁴²³ This was a feature shared with Newark Castle at Port Glasgow, Gladstone's Land in Edinburgh, Pinkie House in East Lothian and Old Gala House, Galashiels amongst others. This feature was a popular inclusion within painted ceilings as it effectively created architectural

⁴²⁰ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 269, 272, 145.

⁴²¹ Tara Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household* (London: YUP, 2010) 10.

⁴²² Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 221, 224, 132.

⁴²³ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 132.

attributes without the need for construction. According to Apted, vulgarity and humour were scarce⁴²⁴ but images of grotesques that were certainly vulgar were incorporated at John Knox House in Edinburgh⁴²⁵ and also at Prestongrange in East Lothian.⁴²⁶

Decorative compositions, particularly larger executions covering vast areas, contained an abundance of iconography that revealed the personal mentalité of the patron. One example of this was demonstrated at Pinkie House owned by one of Montgomerie's contemporaries Alexander Seton who had an exquisite painted ceiling incorporated into this personal residence.

Seton's Pinkie House Decorative Scheme.

As previously discussed, in chapter one, Seton was a man possessing wealth, position and power, a far cry from the parochial position held by Montgomerie. Seton was patron to William Schaw, the master of the King's Works and was himself extremely talented in architecture having built 'two of the most outstanding and innovative buildings of the period'.⁴²⁷ One of these was Pinkie House in Musselburgh, five miles from Edinburgh, the other Fyvie Castle in Aberdeenshire. Pinkie's decorative scheme was reflective of the owner's education, rank and personal ideology, although it is argued that his religious affiliations were not presented within the artistic display. The House was initially designed as an L-plan tower house built pre-Reformation to which Seton added a three tier extension. Painted ceilings were found in areas of this extension, as were decorative plaster ceilings. The long Gallery consisted of a coved ceiling where the paintings were

⁴²⁴ Apted, *Painted Ceilings in Scotland*, 35.

⁴²⁵ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 107.

⁴²⁶ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 117.

⁴²⁷ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 80.

executed in Tempera. The painted ceiling was noticeably absent of any religious iconography, the focus being classical and mythological decoration incorporating emblems and quotations from Horace. It also included Latin inscriptions displayed in rectangular cartouches.⁴²⁸ Monograms representing Seton and his wife, as well as heraldic insignia of leading national figures, the Earls of Winton; Cassilis; Bothwell; Borthwick and Angus accompany those of the Lord Yester, Ferquaird of Gilmerscroft and the Marquis of Hamilton, were also executed.⁴²⁹ Again the choice of subject reflected the stature of the man who commissioned the paintings. Through his associations, and the fact that to fully decipher his choice of emblems, knowledge of the classics would have been required, this was a man of considerable affluence and education. Seton utilised emblematic sources many of which were traced by Bath to those engraved by Otto van Veen's *Emblemata Horatiana*(c.1607).⁴³⁰ Bath highlighted, an interesting point, the picture accompanying van Veen's emblem, *I choose nothing more*, had been altered so that the face of the usual bearded figure had been replaced by's face Seton. This was an unusual action and clearly was, according to Bath, a form of self-fashioning as the figure was associated with the motto which encompassed the head.⁴³¹ By doing this, Seton put himself directly into the ethos of the image by identifying himself as a man of moderation and temperance. This demonstration of stoicism was a common practice during the period and the use of van Veen's emblem to accommodate this alteration was fitting as his volume was regarded as, 'a collection of stoic emblems'.⁴³² Other emblems in Seton's decorative scheme were identified as being

⁴²⁸ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 99.

⁴²⁹ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 235.

⁴³⁰ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 231.

⁴³¹ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 90.

⁴³² Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 83.

compiled by Denis Lebey de Batilly (1596) and these too focus on classical representations accompanied by stoic texts.⁴³³

Emblems focusing on peace were also included as they had a particular significance for Seton and the location of Pinkie House which was built on the site of the Battle of Pinkie.(1547). His nature which embraced humanitas reflected his belief that conflict between the two old enemies, Scotland and England, was now resolved and peace reigned. This was especially important to Seton as the man who presided over the Treaty of Union.⁴³⁴ This statement of neo-stoicism could be Seton's attempt at a compromise between his inward relationship with Catholicism and, as Bath states, 'the outward profession of Protestant faith that his national position demanded'.⁴³⁵ As the design of the long gallery replicated the Greek galleries of the past, an emphasis on stoicism would not be unexpected. As James VI displayed an adherence to this type of philosophy due to the teachings of George Buchanan, who put forward the idea of the 'Stoic king', it was therefore an acceptable practice for Seton to adopt.⁴³⁶ Seton died in 1622 and, as previously discussed, was buried within the burial aisle he had constructed at St. Bridget's Church, Dalgety.

Seton's painted ceiling demonstrated how emblems and designs could come together to reveal the mentalité of the patron. Through imagery Seton displayed a wealth of information about himself. His education, stoic nature, and affluence were all clearly recorded in his decorative composition. Due to his position as a crypto-Catholic who professed to support Reformed religious ideology it is perhaps unsurprising that the ceiling is free from religious iconography. Constructing

⁴³³ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 231.

⁴³⁴ Lee, 'King James's Popish Chancellor' in Cowan, *Renaissance and Reformation in Scotland*, 176.

⁴³⁵ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 96.

⁴³⁶ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 98.

reflections of the patron's personality was possible by carefully and deliberately selecting the sources, a procedure also undertaken by Stalker at Largs.

Stalker's Sources

Within the painted decoration of Skelmorlie Aisle, forty-one separate compartments relayed an abundance of designs and motifs. Many of these originated from printed sources but others, the more personal details found within the iconography, were taken from real life or provided by Montgomerie. These included aspects of Largs town; his home of Skelmorlie Castle; the aisle itself; the female figures; the heart which represented the Douglas family also the heraldic components, all of which were very personal to the patron. General components including fruit, flowers, animals, birds, all which were typically incorporated into Scottish decorative art, were mainly chosen for design rather than narrative purposes.⁴³⁷ Generic designs would not have had any specific relevance to Montgomerie personally, but were chosen as they were universally utilised in this style of art. Their choice would most likely have been suggested by Stalker.

Other features, including the iconography chosen from emblem books and the biblical quotations would also have been Montgomerie's choice. It is argued that the biblical narratives were specifically chosen to relay the narrative Montgomerie wished to display, therefore their choice would probably have been the result of considerable discussion between artist and patron. It cannot be dismissed, however, that as such a vast time elapsed between his wife's death and the building of the aisle, it may be possible that Montgomerie may have planned and chosen every detail himself, reducing Stalker to the rank of technician. Due to the intimacy of the

⁴³⁷ Apted, *The Painted Ceilings of Scotland*, 35.

building, it would certainly be unthinkable that Stalker would have chosen the iconography without intense discussion with his patron. This was typical of painted ceilings throughout Scotland, as much of the subject matter is both personal and individualistic.

Beginning with the representations of the seasons, Stalker's ideas for these seasonal vignettes were clearly taken from *The Four Seasons* series executed by Adriaen Collaert after Maarten de Vos (1532-1603). The background to the paintings incorporated many of the ideas executed by de Vos, for example the winter scene (Plate 33) and its resemblance to Stalker's *Hyems*. De Vos' winter scene clearly demonstrated ships struggling to stay afloat on a turbulent sea.⁴³⁸ This was also a feature adopted by Stalker. Again he demonstrated his use of the image as a basis for personalisation as he added saltires to the ships' masts although no flags are detected on the original print. This pattern was also present in Stalker's other three seasonal paintings whereby he selected certain aspects of de Vos' work and incorporated them into purely individualistic landscapes. The painting also retained the skating scene executed by de Vos, but Stalker moved it from the left to the right side of the painting. On the left Stalker altered de Vos' landscape scene to incorporate views that included a church. The church is noted having a painting of the aisle attached which indicated that it was an image of the Largs Old Parish Church. The aisle in the painting was positioned exactly in relation to where it was attached to the original building and looks very similar to how it looks today. It was, therefore, without doubt, a record of what Stalker saw in 1638. The artist adopted a similar pattern with the other three paintings and encapsulated some of de Vos' ideas

⁴³⁸ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 138.

but individualised them specifically for Montgomerie. There is no doubt that Stalker's basic source here originated with the artist from Antwerp.

The signs of the zodiac utilised by Stalker were again taken from the same originals by de Vos.⁴³⁹ De Vos incorporated the symbols within the perimeters of each of his seasonal prints but Stalker did not copy this as he chose to position them on either side of the painting that corresponded to them. The signs, however, were almost exact copies of those executed by de Vos. Again Stalker used what he wished from the available sources and did not feel obliged to capture the complete image.

Stalker included biblical quotations in his choice of iconography, displaying them in an oblong cartouche and surrounding them with miscellaneous designs (Appendix 2). There were twelve in number, eleven of which have been taken from the Geneva Bible. One quotation, however, has no known source and will be discussed shortly. The Geneva Bible was popular with those supporting Protestant ideology and was first published in Geneva in 1560.⁴⁴⁰ It contained a compendium of notes which incorporated a, 'Calvinist flavour'.⁴⁴¹ Passages were altered from translation to translation, with those thought to be unsuitable excluded. As the quotation in question does not fall into this category, it was problematic ascertaining why it was included. The quotation in question was, 'Blessed are the children that inlargeth the kingdom of heaven, and cursed are the children that inlargeth the kingdom of hell'.⁴⁴² This quotation has either been painted in error by Stalker or, more likely, by the restorers who may not have been able to see the lettering clearly during the restoration. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter five. That particular version of the Bible was extremely popular and had been used for private

⁴³⁹ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 139.

⁴⁴⁰ F.L.Cross ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, (Oxford: OUP, 1889) 555.

⁴⁴¹ Cross ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 555.

⁴⁴² Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.

reading for over fifty years.⁴⁴³ Such personal components were likely to have been chosen by the patron in order to display the desired message. As the current climate was one of religious turmoil, Montgomerie would be unlikely to have left this choice to Stalker, as any error may well be a costly one.

The theme of fruit and flower garlands were found in abundance within many of the emblem books, and it was difficult to assign any specific volume to Stalker's choice. These patterns were commonly used, and Stalker's inclusion of these designs were more for aesthetic value as a decorative pattern rather than to convey any specific meaning. His choice of this type of decoration would stem from the fact the images were aesthetically pleasing rather than their value as a, 'speaking picture'. Since a survey of contemporary sources has not revealed the genesis of Stalker's designs, it was likely he constructed them using his own ideas. The style of decorative work was found surrounding the biblical quotations where they were intertwined with scrollwork, birds, snails and eclectic designs.

The image of the lady by the sea posed a conundrum as the figure was not found to have its source in any figure recorded in classical or biblical literature. Bath maintained that the figure did not, 'correspond to any of the allegorical figures in standard Renaissance mythologies such as Ripa, Catari or Contile'⁴⁴⁴ but suggested that she may have been Ecclesia, who represented the Latin, or new, Church. Ecclesia, however, was never portrayed wearing the type of apparel, or appears in the pose, of the Largs painting (Plate 34). She was traditionally depicted as an upright figure wearing a long robe and a crown and traditionally held either a chalice or a model of a church in her left hand and had a cross on a long staff in her right.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴³ Cross ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 555.

⁴⁴⁴ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 135.

⁴⁴⁵ Murray, *et-al.*, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture*, 156.

Although Ecclesia could be associated with the chalice, no identified examples displayed her holding a vessel containing a burning heart. It was also noted that the figure at Largs was holding the vessel in the opposite hand from that of Ecclesia in traditional imagery. Furthermore, Ecclesia was traditionally portrayed alongside Synagoga, a female figure who represented the synagogue, or old Church, and she was absent from the image. Synagoga was usually blindfolded, and traditionally depicted wearing a crown in a tilted position. As noted in the Book of Lamentations 5:16-17, 'The crown has fallen from our head...our eyes have grown dim'.⁴⁴⁶ These figures highlighted the triumphant crowned Church, in the case of Ecclesia, and the dejected one, represented by Synagoga, a reference to the old and new covenants. The old was the recorded bond between God and his Chosen People as included in the Old Testament. This was established by God's giving of the law to Moses, as recorded in the book of Exodus 19: 5-6. The new, represented by the life and death of Jesus Christ, had direct significance to the Eucharist.⁴⁴⁷

Teresa Grant suggested that the figure may have its origins with Boccaccio's *Decameron* and suggested the figure could represent the daughter of, 'Tancred, prince of Salerno, [who] slays his daughter's lover, and sends her his heart in a golden cup...'.⁴⁴⁸ Ghismonda was intended to eat the organ resulting in her demise.⁴⁴⁹

Bath discussed this and argued:

...we need not read the Skelmorlie Aisle image as an explicit reference to Boccaccio once we recognise how closely all the narratives participate in the sacramental symbolism surrounding the idea of eating the heart in both sacred and profane texts.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁶ Murray, *et-al.*, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture*, 156.

⁴⁴⁷ Murray, *et-al.*, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture*, 122.

⁴⁴⁸ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation: The Painted Ceiling at Skelmorlie Aisle', in *Church Monuments*, *Journal of the Church Monuments Society*, Vol., xvii, 2002, 77.

⁴⁴⁹ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation: The Painted Ceiling at Skelmorlie Aisle', in *Church Monuments*, *Journal of the Church Monuments Society*, Vol., xvii, 2002, 77.

⁴⁵⁰ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 144.

He suggested that due to the images popularity in Catholic devotional texts of the Sacred Heart, the image has dimensions of Catholicism and was therefore more likely to have been related to religious texts than directly related to Boccaccio.⁴⁵¹ The classic story was a popular one during the sixteenth-century, but no flames were recorded in association with the heart in the tale in the *Decameron*. It was also difficult to assess if the source would have been available to Stalker. Grant maintained, in relation to English translated editions of the text, 'Whether these books were common in Scotland is now difficult to verify: Pollard and Redgrave show no copies in Scottish research libraries and the National Library of Scotland does not list any'.⁴⁵² This raised the question if it was not an easily assessable source, how would Stalker acquire it.

The image of the flaming heart traditionally represented religious fervour⁴⁵³ and no exact match was found for Stalkers representation. Images of flaming hearts varied little and, in most cases, were simplistic in composition that he would not have required a prototype. John Calvin had an image of a hand holding a flaming heart as his personal motto⁴⁵⁴ but although the image was not an exact match to Stalker's representation it did not vary greatly.(Plate 35) As this chapter was only concerned with sources, this theme will be discussed in further detail in chapter six which concentrated on extracting the intrinsic meaning of the painting in question.

The execution of the kneeling position loosely resembled a figure of a 'Penitent Magdalene' (Plate 36) depicted in *The Forman Armorial*.⁴⁵⁵ The majority

⁴⁵¹ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 144.

⁴⁵² Grant, 'Devotional Meditation: The Painted Ceiling at Skelmorlie Aisle', in *Church Monuments*, *Journal of the Church Monuments Society*, Vol., xvii, 2002, 78.

⁴⁵³ Edward Hulme, *The History, Principles and Practice of Symbolism in Christian Art*, (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1910) 99.

⁴⁵⁴ www.info@banneroftruth.co.uk Accessed 11 February 2013.

⁴⁵⁵ *The Forman Armorial*, Lyon Court, Manuscript 17, 247-8 as cited in Bath, *Renaissance*

of the text was compiled by Scottish decorative painter James Workman (fl. 1587-1633)⁴⁵⁶ who became Marchmont Herald in 1597.⁴⁵⁷ Bath argued that, ‘the inclusion of such sketches suggests that the whole of this much-stained and dog-eared manuscript was used as an artist’s pattern book’.⁴⁵⁸ It was therefore quite possible that Stalker used this as the basis of his female figure as the source would have been readily available. If this was the case it was noted that he altered the majority of it as it was only the position of the torso and legs in the painting that resemble Workman's figure. Workman's image did not look straight ahead nor was her right hand raised. Her hair, flowing to her shoulders, supported no head-dress and her clothing was scanty and feet noticeably bare.⁴⁵⁹

Another possible source used as a basis for the figure was executed by Stalker's master, John Sawers, in his Manuscript Armorial. He included in this the arms of the Earl of Sterlein which incorporated a supporter in the form of a mermaid. (Plate 37) The head and torso of the figure and also the gesture of the hands was very similar to that in *The Sea* painting.⁴⁶⁰ The head of the mermaid figure was looking to the side rather than to the front as was depicted at Largs but the figure also had long flowing hair. As Sawers' sources would have been readily available to Stalker it is quite likely this may have been his source. Again, it was not an exact copy but aspects of the figure match Stalker's image quite closely.⁴⁶¹

Decorative Painting in Scotland, 155.

⁴⁵⁶ Apted, *Painters in Scotland*, 108.

⁴⁵⁷ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 154.

⁴⁵⁸ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 155.

⁴⁵⁹ *The Forman Armorial*, Lyon Court, Manuscript 17, 247-8 as cited in Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 155.

⁴⁶⁰ Arms of the Earl of Sterlein taken from John Sawers' Manuscript Armorial, N.L.S. Advocate's Library MS 31.4.4, f, 140.

⁴⁶¹ Arms of the Earl of Sterlein taken from John Sawers' Manuscript Armorial, N.L.S. Advocate's Library MS 31.4.4, f, 140.

Stalkers painted the figure by the sea clothed in a richly decorated robe and gown accompanied by a headdress containing the image of a crescent moon. The style of headdress was typically worn by the goddess Diana but the rest of Stalker's image did not match any recorded source of the goddess. Titian (1490-1576) provided the most famous painting of her and, although she was illustrated wearing the crescent moon headband,⁴⁶² Stalker's painting was no match for this. Again Stalker created an image that was personal to Montgomerie and one which individualised the painting by its inclusion.

When considering the aisle was designed specifically for his wife Margaret, it must be suggested that the figure may have been intended to be a representation of her. As the figure was positioned with prominence and was the focal point of the painting, it was obviously of special importance. In such an intimate setting, and given that no other source has been discovered, it is argued that it is unlikely to have been a random figure.⁴⁶³

In the background behind the figure of the lady Stalker captured the image of a town with a church spire stretching into the sky which is probably representative of Largs town. If Stalker had painted the prospect from a south-easterly position it would have shown the town in the background as demonstrated. It was certainly not taken from the location of their home of Skelmorlie Castle as the castle sits to the west of Largs near Skelmorlie village and beyond the town of Largs. No view of Largs town can be detected from Skelmorlie and the village did not contain a church.⁴⁶⁴ The topography does not support the painting being taken from a position to the west of Largs. Also, the town in the painting was a reasonable size and there

⁴⁶² Titian, *Diana and Actaeon*, (1556-9), National Gallery, London.

⁴⁶³ This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six.

⁴⁶⁴ N.L.S., Map Images: Town plans/views (1580-1919), Ordnance Survey Map, Ayr Sheet, 111.12(Largs), 1857.

was no corresponding town west of the castle. The town was quite well populated as demonstrated by the size of the church building which was crowned with a spire of the same shape as is indicated in the *Hyems* vignette. No parish registers have survived from this period to give a clear indication of how many communicants attended, but, as a market town which held its own fair,⁴⁶⁵ the size of the town portrayed in the painting is likely to represent Largs. As was typical practice during the period, prospects need not have been photographic representations. Artists frequently took aspects of reality and remodelled them to accommodate their own purpose. This may be what Stalker has done here; after all, it would have been just as easy to paint reality as it would have been to create a prospect from his imagination.

The rest of the iconography within this painting had no known source in printed material and included a selection of ships, individuals, trees and aspects of the land. Images of ships were popular during the period, but there were found to be no particular printed sources that identified specifically with Stalker's representations. As the area was coastal, there would have been plenty of ships within the locality that Stalker would have been able to see and therefore use as his sources. Much of the iconography in this vignette has not been taken from emblem books, but has been designed by Stalker to represent artefacts, prospects and people important to Montgomerie and with direct significance to him. This will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.

The second of the paintings that was not part of the seasonal scenes was a landscape containing a woman with a horse (Plate 12). It is argued that this, too, was a unique painting whose sources, with the exception of the horse, have not been

⁴⁶⁵ *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald* (Friday 2nd March 1900).

located in any contemporary texts. The image of the horse was not taken from the Montgomerie stable as one might expect in such a personal painting, rather it was a copy of an animal taken from a set of forty engravings by Hendrik Golzius (1558-1617) which illustrated *The Royal Stable of Don John of Austria* (c 1579) entitled 'Equus liber et Incorporates' (Wild and untamed horse) (Plate 38).⁴⁶⁶ The only major difference between the two is that Stalker's horse was painted a mid brown shade, while the original was a basic print from the engraving and was in varying shades of grey. Stalker has copied the image almost exactly, and with such precision and detail, that he must have had a copy of the print before him when he worked on it. Other aspects of the painting show a representation of the Montgomerie family home as it looked at the time. Skelmorlie Castle at present, despite having had additions and alterations to the building during the nineteenth century, is still recognisable as being the house in the painting (Plate 12). Thus Stalker was again demonstrating individualisation by including components that were completely personal to the Montgomeries.

An extensive study of sources did not unearth a match for the figure of the lady. Since the building and surroundings had personal significance for Montgomerie, it is fair to assume the figure did also. It is argued that in such an intimate setting the figure may represent Margaret Douglas, portrayed with her home of Skelmorlie Castle behind her. Grant, however, has another suggestion:

The lady gesturing towards a horse is a conundrum: neither Boccaccio nor Child's ballad book include a story which securely matches the scene depicted. This group must have an iconographical significance paralleling Ghismonda's and one is tempted to posit a lost ballad to explain it.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁶ Hendrik Goltzius, *Equus Liber Et Incompositus*, from *The Royal Stable of Don Juan of Austria* (c.1579), Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge, 23.K.2-305.

⁴⁶⁷ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation: The Painted Ceiling at Skelmorlie Aisle', in *Church Monuments*,

Apted suggested that the figure may have had its genesis with an emblem executed by Geoffrey Whitney '*Pulchritudino vincit*, 'To the fairest' (Plate 39) which showed a woman reclining in a landscape with various animals, including a prancing horse not unlike that in the Skelmorlie Aisle painting'.⁴⁶⁸ Although there was noted a vague similarity in the figure of the horse, despite it facing in the opposite direction to that in Stalker's image, there were too many other differences for this to be Stalker's source. There is no doubt the source for the image of the horse rests with Hendrik Golzius.

The sources for the two small figures and the dog to the left of the female remain elusive. The figures were seen to be male, one more mature than the other. They were captured in frivolous pursuit and appear to be playing with the dog. Montgomerie had a daughter who died before her mother and a son who lived to maturity and married in 1617. Two grandsons resulted from this marriage⁴⁶⁹ and it may be that the two male figures represent Montgomerie's two grandsons. They would have been quite young when Margaret died, but fourteen years later when the aisle ceiling was being painted, they may well fit the ages of the two boys in the painting. Since this painting contains principally personal iconography that renders it completely individualistic this suggestion must surely be worthy of consideration.

Many of the sources of the period focussed particular attention on Protestantism and its adherence to the Old Testament. This factor provided the ideology for several of Scottish painted ceilings, including Stalker's. Old Testament narratives, as previously discussed, provided moral teaching and were acceptable within Reformed ideology. Stalker incorporated this ethos by the inclusion of Adam

Journal of the Church Monuments Society, Vol., xvii, 2002, 78.

⁴⁶⁸ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 136.

⁴⁶⁹ NAS, GD3/1/7/2/5.

and Eve (Plate 14), and also the brothers Esau and Jacob (Plate 15). The images Stalker incorporated had their origins in engravings executed by Etienne Delaune from his series of six Old Testament prints (c 1565).⁴⁷⁰

The original engravings, (Plates 40 & 41) incorporated a vast amount of detail which was copied by Stalker onto the ceiling. Although aspects of his representations differ slightly from that of Delaune, Stalker must have had access to the prints as the detail was copied so precisely that only by using the originals at close hand would Stalker have been able to copy so exactly. Here Stalker again added his own touch by sculpting them slightly differently as he used aspects of the original incorporated with his own artistic ideas.

Stalker's execution of ten of the twelve Badges of the Tribes of Israel resembled those in Speed's *Genealogies*⁴⁷¹ (Plate 42). The likeness was too precise for him not to have had a copy of Speed's version at hand and therefore demonstrated that Stalker had access to this text. According to Grant, Speed's version was relatively common, she claimed, 'by the end of the seventeenth-century, Speed's versions of the shields seem to have become generally adopted'.⁴⁷² His versions were used in handbooks which discussed the subject of heraldry. Dobie noted that three English parish churches also contained shields baring the same theme, the only one which was still in existence at the time Dobie was writing (1847) was Prestbury Parish Church in Cheshire.⁴⁷³ Why two of the badges have been omitted is discussed further in chapter six

⁴⁷⁰ Wells-Cole, *Art of Decoration in Elizabethan and Jacobean England*, figs 441/2.

⁴⁷¹ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation' in *Church Monuments*, *Journal of the Church Monuments Society*, vol., xvii, 2002, 80.

⁴⁷² Grant, 'Devotional Meditation' in *Church Monuments*, *Journal of the Church Monuments Society*, vol., xvii, 2002, 80.

⁴⁷³ Dobie, *The Parish Churches and Burying Grounds of Ayrshire*, 64.

Incorporating nature into decorative art was common and examples of flora and fauna were ubiquitous to Scottish ceiling paintings. Examples were found at Northfield House in East Lothian; Garnock House in Ayrshire and Provost Skene's House in Aberdeenshire.⁴⁷⁴ Animals and birds were frequently depicted, often chosen for the ambiguity of their symbolism. Many, for example the lamb, had strong links to Christian iconography and despite demonstrating the seasons, specifically Spring, also emphasised the Christian meaning within the emblem. Alciato's *Les Emblemes* (c.1542) emphasised this by including emblems that incorporated landscape scenes depicting shepherds with their flocks being terrorised by wild animals.⁴⁷⁵ The survival of the large group and the slaughter of only one lamb was immersed in Christian symbolism. Stalker included animals and birds in his vignettes but designed them personally, with the exception of the vignette incorporating the horse and those included in his copies of contemporary emblems that he utilised where the representations of nature were already included.

The artist used another popular theme incorporated into art during the period, that of Grotesques. He utilised this style in his variation of Delaune's execution of *Adam and Eve* and *Esau and Jacob*. He also used this feature in the embellishment that surrounds the oval cartouches containing the paintings of *Justice* and *Fortitude*. These images depicted metamorphoses from the animate to the inanimate. For example, plants transformed into animals or humans into images of the horrific. The end result of this transgression was an osmosis of categories which resulted in hybrid forms and distorted images.⁴⁷⁶ They focused on the fantastical and the artistic licence of the artist to create something unique. Hans Vredeman de Vries, *Grottesco*

⁴⁷⁴ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 12,227, 223.

⁴⁷⁵ Andre Alciato *Les Emblemes* (Paris:Christian Wechel, 1542) 74.

⁴⁷⁶ Alixe Bovey, *Monsters and Grotesques in Medieval Manuscripts*, (London: British Library, 2002) 27.

(c.1565) depicted a set of sixteen engravings and was the basic source for the painted ceiling at Rossend.⁴⁷⁷ The use of grotesque was noted in *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (c.1611) and was described as, ‘Pictures wherein (as please the painter) all kinds of odde things are represented without anie peculiar sence, or meaning, but only to feed the eye’.⁴⁷⁸ They were used extensively throughout the Early Modern period, having been previously used comprehensively in Medieval manuscripts.⁴⁷⁹ The monstrous imagery depicted usually possessed a symbolism that related to the text but, as Alixe Bovey suggested, ‘Sometimes, surely, they are simply a playful or mildly subversive expression of artistic imagination’.⁴⁸⁰ Stalker utilised this idea by copying Delaune’s depiction of Adam and Eve which incorporated grotesque heads emerging from scrollwork. He adopted the same principal in his execution of Esau and Jacob where, on an image beneath the brothers, cords trailing on the ground emerge into a face.

The paintings of *Justice* and *Fortitude*, two of the Cardinal Virtues,⁴⁸¹ were also surrounded by examples of grotesque designs. The figures were executed by Stalker in their traditional manner; Justice, accompanied by scales and sword and wearing the customary blindfold and Fortitude, displayed bare armed carrying a pillar over her shoulder. The figures were each encapsulated in an oval cartouche which displayed landscaping to the rear of the painting. Again these figures were taken from originals by Delaune, on this occasion from his *Liberal Arts* (c.1560-70) series. Delaune’s figures of *Retorique* (Plate 43) and *Aritmetique* (Plate 44) are captured by Stalker who also utilised his detailed eclectic border designs. As the

⁴⁷⁷ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 14.

⁴⁷⁸ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 109.

⁴⁷⁹ Bovey, *Monsters and Grotesques in Medieval Manuscripts*, 27.

⁴⁸⁰ Bovey, *Monsters and Grotesques in Medieval Manuscripts*, 27.

⁴⁸¹ Cross ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 239.

detail was intricate and the fact that Stalker has copied it so precisely, he must have had direct access to Delaune's print.⁴⁸²

Establishing the sources of the iconography used within the paintings had a dual purpose. Firstly, identification made it possible to retrieve important information relating to both the artist and the patron as it indicated what was available to Stalker and gave an insight into the mentalité of his patron. Secondly, this provided another piece of the ceiling narrative as establishing the sources provided a platform from which it was possible to ascertain why the particular themes and components were chosen and what they meant. The procedure also related to Panofsky's second stratum which indicated that an understanding of the sources allowed for a greater understanding of the work of art as the components frequently portrayed political, personal or religious ideology.⁴⁸³

Skelmorlie Aisle: Artistic Originality

The extent to which Stalker's paintings at Largs were original was investigated and this determined that the aisle paintings shared some basic iconographic themes with other Scottish painted ceilings of the period and with established emblems. It was, however, ascertained that Stalker did not copy any of the sources exactly and many themes shared with other decorative schemes in Scotland varied in composition.

Generic displays of fruit and flowers, garlands, birds and animals, were contained within many of the decorative schemes, for example, Rossend Castle; Burtisland; and St. Mary, Grandtully but there were no precise examples of the exact iconography executed at Largs being duplicated on other examples of

⁴⁸² Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 134.

⁴⁸³ Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, 6.

surviving or recorded painted ceilings.⁴⁸⁴ The theme of signs of the zodiac, paintings of the seasons and labours of the land, were also found in surviving examples of painted ceilings⁴⁸⁵ but again these were no exact match to those at Largs.

Shared themes also included biblical quotations. These were found at Traquair in Innerleithen and at Rossend Castle at Burntisland but, although they shared the theme of incorporating biblical quotations, the quotations were totally different to those at Largs. The same applied to the theme of biblical narratives. Old Testament panels were included, for example, in the painted ceiling at Dean House, Edinburgh but again these were different tales from those included at Largs. Further examples were also found at Crathes Castle in Deeside and at Cullen House, Banffshire. Earlshall had a representation of the figure Fortitude but again this was different.⁴⁸⁶

In selecting emblems, Stalker adapted the original sources to varying degrees to make the ceiling design completely unique. Although the basis of the designs in some cases, mainly the emblems of Esau and Jacob and Adam and Eve, were taken from emblems by Etienne Delaune, Stalker's executions were not exact copies.⁴⁸⁷ The closest image to an exact copy was found to be the image of the horse in *The Land* painting. This was an almost exact copy of Hendrick Golzius' emblem.⁴⁸⁸ An adaption of one emblem from the aisle, *In Utrumque paratus*, by Geoffrey Whitney (c. 1586) is closely copied at Blyth's Close in Edinburgh; Bay Horse Inn at

⁴⁸⁴ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 217-275.

⁴⁸⁵ An extensive discussion of the subject matter and their sources is found in Michael Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*.

⁴⁸⁶ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 206.

⁴⁸⁷ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 130.

⁴⁸⁸ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 137.

Dysart and also at Rossend.⁴⁸⁹ This too was fairly close to the original but had been adapted by Stalker making it unique.

The seasonal paintings had their origins with emblems by Adriaen Collaert but again Stalker altered these. By the inclusion of personal components, for example, images of the church building with the aisle attached, he again personalised the scenes. Aspects can be recognised as reflecting the original but the overall design was unique. Ravelston House, which is now destroyed, had representations of the twelve monthly labours with the corresponding signs of the zodiac⁴⁹⁰ but there was no evidence to suggest that these were the same as those at Largs.

The two paintings of *The Land* and *The Sea* were completely unique with the exception of the image of the horse in *The Land*. The painting by the sea incorporated components that have not been traced to any contemporary printed source and capture aspects of the locality that were visible at the time. These include, for example, ships, boats and the buildings in the background including the church spire. The other painting of the lady on the land contained images that again were completely personal. The image of the house was very similar to Skelmorlie Castle, the Montgomerie family home and it is argued was a representation of this. The image of the horse, as previously stated, was a close copy of an established emblem.

Scrollwork, heraldic representations, fruit, flowers, animals and birds were found in almost all of the painted ceilings. The practice of incorporating pseudo-architecture, as found at Newark Castle in Renfrewshire, for example, was also relatively popular. Signs of the zodiac were featured on a few ceilings, such as Mary

⁴⁸⁹ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 135.

⁴⁹⁰ Brydall, *History of Art in Scotland*, 65.

Somerville's House at Burntisland. Grotesques were also reasonably popular and were seen at Pinkie House in Musselborough among other places.⁴⁹¹ What was particularly striking was that the Largs paintings incorporate all of the traditional themes and include examples of all of the above.

Individualism and personal identity were major themes of Scottish decorative art, as each creation reflected the person who commissioned it and the location for which it was designed. Stalker's composition at Largs contained a wealth of artistic originality. Despite some of the images having their genesis with established emblems, Stalker altered these to make them totally individual. Although themes were shared with other Scottish decorative art schemes in other buildings, although the themes were similar the precise content or execution was different.

The View from the Church and the Positioning of the Paintings

In visiting the Grande Salle in Lyons, visitors were conducted through the rooms in a specific order so that they were guided to reading the iconography on display in a particular sequence thus relaying the narrative they contained in a very specific order. When the Lyonese Consulate wished to alter the symbolic meaning of the iconography displayed on the ceiling, they adopted the practice of altering the entrance point through which the visitors entered the room. Depending on where they entered, determined what visual images faced them and, therefore, the starting point of the narrative the paintings contained.⁴⁹² Jodi Loach maintained that by doing this, 'Schemes of architectural or painted rhetoric...acquired a new emphasis,

⁴⁹¹ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 215-275.

⁴⁹² Judi Roach, 'Architecture and Emblematics', in Alison Adams *Emblems and Art History*, (Glasgow: Glasgow Emblem Studies, 1996) 9.

without changing their constituent painted decoration in any way'.⁴⁹³ This could be easily achieved as, 'Built spaces enable designers to exploit several registers at once and to play on relationships between them, thereby opening up a wealth of possibilities of multiple meanings and of ambiguities'.⁴⁹⁴

A pre-determined viewing sequence was also executed into the painted ceiling at Earlshall in Fife, in relation to its display of heraldic devices. Here, in the long gallery positioned on the second floor, the ceiling was dissected into rectangular compartments each containing a combination of animals, the Cardinal virtues, and heraldic displays, including those of European royalty and the Scottish nobility. The central panel contained square compartments and these were the only ones that did not display animal motifs.⁴⁹⁵ Bath claimed the key to the reading of the panels rested with an understanding of the heraldic programme displayed.⁴⁹⁶ The majority of the heraldry displayed at Earlshall was also included in the manuscript armorial compiled by Sir David Lindsay of the Mount. Bath explained that this included, 'the three magi and nine Worthies; indeed the manuscript has the same overall structure as Earlshall's heraldic scheme'.⁴⁹⁷ Bath pointed out, however, that:

the correspondence between the Lindsay armorial and the Earlshall ceiling is thus close enough to suggest that both represent a common heraldic tradition. The armorial is not, however, the direct source of the heraldic scheme in the gallery, since a number of coats of arms on the ceiling are not found in the manuscript and the ceiling includes their heraldic supporters and mottoes whereas the manuscript shows only a shield.⁴⁹⁸

The ceiling design was meant to be read from east to west, thus following Lindsay's armorial sequence which began with the devices of royalty followed by those of the

⁴⁹³ Roach, 'Architecture and Emblematics', in Adams *Emblems and Art History* 9.

⁴⁹⁴ Roach, 'Architecture and Emblematics', in Adams *Emblems and Art History* 9.

⁴⁹⁵ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 147.

⁴⁹⁶ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 147.

⁴⁹⁷ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 152.

⁴⁹⁸ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 153.

Scottish nobility and it was fully intended that the decorative scheme should be read in this way.

In viewing the type of paintings displayed within the Skelmorlie Aisle it was necessary to consider Early Modern attitudes towards the displaying of paintings. The majority of paintings during this era had some degree of religious significance, overt or covert, many of which were frequently displayed within the important rooms of private residences. Tara Hamling highlighted that the Early Modern practice of incorporating religious imagery at a focal point within a room, principally above the fireplace, had a dual purpose; firstly, to engage the viewer with the religious philosophy incorporated within the imagery; and secondly, so that there was no opportunity for the images not to be seen by anyone entering the room. As the fire itself was frequently the focal point it served to illuminate the decoration surrounding it and, therefore, illuminate the imagery.⁴⁹⁹ The area was, 'a natural gathering point for individuals and groups seeking warmth from the fire so they were also the symbolic centre of social interaction.'⁵⁰⁰

In the case of decoration on the ceiling, particularly that which was complex and on particularly high ceilings, she argued that this was not intended to be the focus of prolonged viewing. She claimed, 'due to the inherent physical difficulties in the process of viewing, the study of imagery on ceilings requires an interpretive approach which places the visual qualities of the imagery second to the impact of its presence'.⁵⁰¹ She continued in relation to religious paintings on ceilings, religious

⁴⁹⁹ Tara Hamling *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, (Newhaven and London: YUP, 2010) 255.

⁵⁰⁰ Hamling *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 255.

⁵⁰¹ Hamling *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 256.

imagery, 'allowed Protestant patrons to exploit the power of the visual in the service of reformed faith while minimising the risk of idolatrous abuse'.⁵⁰²

Tamling's idea that ceiling paintings were not intended to be scrutinised for any great length of time was considered in relation to the paintings within Skelmorlie Aisle. The ceiling was at a distance of twenty feet from the floor therefore this made the decoration far enough away to provide a spectacle of colour but, due to the busy patterns and the number of separate compartments projecting imagery, the length of time that it would take to mentally absorb the full content of what was displayed would be physically impossible in a short space of time. The action would be both lengthy and very uncomfortable.⁵⁰³ Investigation determined that analysis of the paintings could only be undertaken over a lengthy duration if the viewer was lying in a supine position, otherwise it could only be observed head raised for a short period of time. This raised the question of whether or not Montgomerie intended to have the aisle paintings scrutinised by visitors or whether the aisle was predominately a private place visited by personal friends and family.

If the paintings were not designed for public viewing and, as Montgomerie was naturally well aware of what the iconography above his head depicted, he did not require to constantly look up and interpret the paintings. Tamling pinpoints this in relation to one of her own case studies, she stated:

why depict such a sophisticated and detailed scheme of religious iconography, the kind of narrative iconography one expects to communicate meaningful messages requiring time to interpret, if its positioning on the ceiling makes it almost impossible, certainly highly uncomfortable to view?⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰² Hamling *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 256.

⁵⁰³ Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 256.

⁵⁰⁴ Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 257.

If it was considered that the aisle had a dual purpose, that of a place of commemoration and also a place of private prayer, then the ceiling iconography also had a dual purpose. Hamling explained:

According to Protestant advice manuals, ordinary meditation should be performed as a solemn and solitary ritual...this kind of meditation should include an examination of conscience and pious contemplation. For members of the family, this activity would usually take place in intimate and private spaces.⁵⁰⁵

Images could promote sincere devotion and meditation and the use of moralistic biblical narratives guided the person to meditate on moral correctness. Images that were familiar were not intrusive and did not disturb the actions of prayer. It was believed that iconography possessing personal significance actually aided devotional exercises.⁵⁰⁶ This adds credence to the suggestion that Montgomerie used the aisle as a place for private prayer. There he was surrounded by images that were familiar and acted as an *aide memoire*. This will be explored further in chapter four.

The idea of the eyes having to be raised to view the paintings portrayed the symbolic action of 'spiritual ascent'.⁵⁰⁷ This was a point that Deborah Howard made in relation to the positioning of the Laird's Loft immediately above the tomb:

more vividly than in any other family aisle of the period, the patron's resurrection was visually symbolised by the presence of the live figures in the family aisle directly above the door of his tomb. Here there was no need for effigies of the children of the deceased, for they would be there in person every Sunday.⁵⁰⁸

It is argued that it was not intended that the public would view these paintings as the view from the church would put the laird's loft in focus and not the ceiling. The painted ceiling would have been somewhat obscured from the body of the church as

⁵⁰⁵ Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 227.

⁵⁰⁶ Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 227.

⁵⁰⁷ Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 227.

⁵⁰⁸ Howard, *The Architectural History of Scotland: from the Reformation to the Restoration*, 203.

the barrel design of the ceiling would obscure the paintings. Also, those gathered would not be facing the aisle therefore there was little or nothing in view of the congregation apart from the family in the laird's loft who they would only see through the aperture from the church. Being a private burial aisle, which the family entered from their own access, the public had no need to be in that particular part of the church building as they entered the church from another entrance. As Montgomerie, and his immediate family, knew exactly what the imagery was and what it meant, there was no need for them to constantly adopt the uncomfortable position of having to look up to interpret the paintings.⁵⁰⁹

To determine whether it was intended that the aisle paintings were to be read in any specific order it was necessary to regard what was visible from a variety of strategic points. Starting with the central panel of the ceiling, the heraldic images and the associated wording which accompanied them were designed to be read from south to north. This was due to the fact that the wording, when viewed from that position, would have been facing those seated in the Laird's Loft. If viewed from the church the writing would be upside-down thus served no purpose, therefore, it was not intended that the central panel was to be read from the body of the church. Of the heraldic displays the intertwined coats of arms of Montgomerie and Douglas were positioned closest to the laird's loft where the family could clearly view them.

When viewed from the position of the Laird's Loft, the images of Esau and Jacob and the figure of Justice are to the left with those of Adam and Eve and the figure of Fortitude to the right. The emblem of Adam and Eve is in an elevated position between *Ver* (spring) and *The Land* and in this position. *Ver* can easily be identified with its relationship to birth, new life and creation and , therefore, could

⁵⁰⁹ Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 227.

be directly associated with Adam and Eve.⁵¹⁰ It was not, however, quite so easy to identify why Esau and Jacob were positioned above and between *The Land* and *Hyems* (winter). Ploughing would normally be regarded as a Spring activity, despite hunting being applicable to any time of year, thus the positioning of this image remains a conundrum. Investigation into the two brothers did not unearth any connection between them and the seasons autumn and winter.⁵¹¹

Again from a position of the laird's loft facing the entrance point of the old church building and reading from the left side (south-west), an anti-clockwise journey through the paintings began with the scene *Ver* (Spring) followed by *The Sea* then came *Aestas* (Summer). Continuing with the anti-clockwise movement the next painting (positioned on the opposite facing wall to the right of the laird's loft) was *Autumnus* (Autumn) followed by *The Land* and then came *Hyems* (Winter) which ended at the south-east position. It was instantly noticeable that these components followed a cyclical pattern and were intended to be read as such. Bath observed, 'The sequence of the seasons and zodiac signs immediately above it, however, starts at the south-west corner, and runs round to the south-east'.⁵¹² He then added, 'the central two landscapes of the six, however, are not seasonal, and do not seem to be part of the temporal sequence'.⁵¹³ It is, however, argued that this was not the case as seaside scenes were naturally more associated with summer therefore, the image of *The Sea* alongside spring and summer corresponds precisely. Scenes of land can be associated with any season but *The Land* painting within the aisle does, however, incorporate images of fruit and vegetables so a connection to autumn, the time of harvest, could be made. The paintings occupy the space between the autumn

⁵¹⁰ Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 16.

⁵¹¹ Murray, *Christian Art and Architecture*, 247.

⁵¹² Bath, *Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 134.

⁵¹³ Bath, *Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 134.

and winter scenes and again this was deliberately positioned. The seasonal paintings were accompanied by their associated zodiac signs as would be expected.⁵¹⁴ Grant maintained that the two paintings of land and sea reflected each other. She claimed, 'Their opposing positions show that they belong together emblematically...following Stalker's schematic placement which creates an opposition of land and sea'.⁵¹⁵

A sequence was also followed with the Badges of the Twelve Tribes of Israel but where the other images run in an anti-clockwise format from the south-west corner, these images did not. The badges, in relation to the position of *Ver* (spring) began with the sixth son and followed in an anti-clockwise rotation through the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth sons on the west side with the first son following on from the tenth son and on the east wall which then resumes with the second, third, fourth and fifth sons. Although the badges do run in sequence, the starting point, which one would expect to have been the first son, beginning at the south-west corner, is replaced by the sixth son. From the north-east position the badges run from the first son in a clock-wise movement until it terminates with the badge of the tenth son at the north-west corner. Again Bath highlighted this, he observed, 'This implies a sequence that would start at the north-west corner, and runs round to the south-east'.⁵¹⁶ No explanation has been unearthed that has indicated why the badges were positioned in this way and not corresponding to the narrative sequence of the seasonal and land and seascape paintings. The fact that two of the twelve badges have been omitted is discussed in detail in chapter five.

As the major components of the ceiling decorative scheme follow a specific route from the south-west corner this would support the intention that the paintings

⁵¹⁴ Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, 34.

⁵¹⁵ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation' in *Church Monuments*, *Journal of the Church Monuments Society*, vol., xvii, 2002, 77.

⁵¹⁶ Bath, *Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 134.

were to be read in this sequence. The images follow a journey through the seasons, beginning at the south-west corner, with associated zodiac signs and labours of the year. The two paintings of land and sea are juxtaposed between images that reflect the time of year within these two paintings. The emblem of Adam and Eve was clearly associated with spring and positioned accordingly. That of Esau and Jacob was found to have no association with autumn nor winter and therefore why it was positioned between these two seasonal paintings remains unknown. Similarly, why the badges of the Tribes of Israel did not follow the same sequence is also unknown but the rest of the imagery followed a very particular narrative beginning at the south-west corner.

In view of this, it became clear that the paintings were indeed designed to be read as one complete narrative. Each compartment had a meaning of its own but it also contributed to a bigger picture when read in conjunction with the other panels. The images complimented each other and together a complete narrative could be constructed. The seasons linked together with the two paintings containing the figures of the lady and the associated zodiac symbols. As will be demonstrated, other elements and features of the ceiling iconography also contributed to the overall narrative. This narrative will be re-constructed and discussed in the following chapters.

The aim of this chapter was to consider contemporary sources, those selected by Stalker and the positioning of the ceiling iconography. The Protestant Reformation and the removal of the royal court to London both had a major impact on the role of the artist and his sources in Scotland. A focus on secular rather than religious art emerged and this was well established before Stalker was born. If the ceiling decoration included religious iconography, in most cases it supported

Protestantism, but there were examples which included Catholic content. This was noted, for example, at Provost Skene's House in Aberdeen.

It was evident that Stalker had access to a variety of emblems and other sources when planning his composition of the Skelmorlie Aisle ceiling. As his master, John Sawers, was involved in painting royal residences, an array of sources would become available that he would share with his apprentices. Stalker demonstrated knowledge of the material and established the ceiling paintings within the aisle as containing the most in-vogue iconography of the period. Despite the aisle being in a relatively small town far from the flamboyancy and spectacle of the city, he still utilised the same selection of iconography normally available to the crown and the wealthier Scottish nobility. Continental influences were incorporated alongside vernacular sources to produce a unique synthesis of Scottish and European designs. The contemporary practice of using emblematics created a narrative that was constructed through both word and paint. The use of particular emblems was indicative of the *mentalité* and intentions of the patron. In Stalker's case, he utilised the most in vogue choices available and selected material from Geoffrey Whitney, Etienne Delaune and Maarten de Vos. The material they produced allowed Stalker to choose his iconography with discretion, selecting in accordance with his patron's wishes.

The majority of the components he selected were not merely chosen for aesthetic value, but were chosen to highlight certain factors that Montgomerie wished to display. This allowed individualism as Stalker adopted the practice of altering established sources to make them unique. Many of the components of the ceiling paintings also contained images that had their genesis with Stalker or Montgomerie as well as recording the locality. Knowledge of the sources used

provided further information which allowed the narrative to be systematically constructed. Understanding where the sources came from indicated what was available to Stalker, what he borrowed from printed sources and what he personally created through his own visual experience or through artistic creativity. This information presented a platform from which a clearer understanding of the paintings' narrative could be exposed.

The positioning of the paintings was deliberately chosen so that the narrative read from the south-west corner in an anti-clockwise direction round to the south-east. Positioning them in this manner allowed the viewer to embark on a journey through the season beginning with spring and ending with winter. This could be associated with the cycle of life and thus an appropriate inclusion for a burial aisle. Each component executed had a story to tell in its own right but read together they constructed a greater narrative. The individual components complimented each other by having some degree of relevance to the patron and were not chosen at random, all of which came together to complete reveal the maximum narrative. This is further explored in the following chapters.

As the decoration at Largs was executed for a burial aisle, it may be expected that the subject matter of the iconography chosen would have its origins in the theme of death. As this was an avenue yet to be explored, establishing the genre of art provided a vast amount of information relating to Montgomerie's intentions in having the aisle decorated in this manner, adding yet another contribution to the overall narrative of the ceiling paintings. This was undertaken in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

ESTABLISHING GENRE: DEATH AND MEMORY WITHIN THE CEILING ICONOGRAPHY.

When the Painter Timanthes having portrayed Iphigenia before the Altar reedie to perish, while hee had drawne the portrature of manie mourning about her, and had spent his cunning in setting foorth their grief at last he came to Agamemnon the Damosels Father and cast a vaile over the face of his portrature, he not being able by anie arte to expresse so great a sorrow.⁵¹⁷

The Sacrifice of Iphigenia (Plate 4), painted by Timanthes in the 4th century BC, was the subject of the scene tenderly described above by Zachary Boyd (1585-1653), a Protestant minister and contemporary of Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie. Boyd, in his narrative of the drama presented before him, captured both feelings of intense human emotion and expressions of unimaginable grief. The act portrayed was one of overwhelming sorrow as Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter; an act which Timanthes captured as beautifully as Boyd expressed it. Here, the visual form exudes such outpourings of sorrow in a manner which conveyed the message clearly and left the viewer in no doubt of the pain and anguish felt. The depth of feeling was captured and conveyed in paint where words were not enough.

Within the ‘speaking pictures’⁵¹⁸ of Skelmorlie Aisle, using Renaissance metaphor as his veil, Montgomerie followed in Timanthes’ footsteps and, expressed through art, the anguish of losing his wife. As the aisle was constructed over a decade after Margaret Montgomerie’s death, it must be construed that at this point, Montgomerie was still grieving her loss, a loss which he too articulated in paint.

⁵¹⁷ Zachary Boyd, *The Last Battell of the Soule in Death*, (Edinburgh: 1629) 18.

⁵¹⁸ Bath, *Speaking Pictures: English Emblem Books and Renaissance Culture*, 280.

Within the imagery of the ceiling paintings a narrative awaited to be revealed. The unveiling of this may be expressed by the words of Hamlet,

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart
Absent thee from felicity a while,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story.⁵¹⁹

As no written texts from the period made reference to Skelmorlie Aisle, or the reason why Montgomerie had it constructed, the ceiling paintings themselves remain the only surviving evidence that indicated Montgomerie's intentions. Historian Keith Brown claimed, 'lady Montgomerie was a good wife and was much missed by her husband',⁵²⁰ a statement which was easy to accept considering both the expense he incurred and the affection he displayed in having the aisle constructed and decorated in the way he did. Whatever Montgomerie's intentions were in having the paintings executed in this manner, it was evident that they were a clear expression of love and loss.

In accordance with the Latin inscription on Margaret's tomb, the couple had been associated for thirty-six years. Writing in 1847, William Dobie claimed that the interpretation of the Latin inscription stated that the couple had been 'married' for thirty-six years but it is argued that this was not the case. Dobie's interpretation of the inscription was incorrect. He mistakenly interpreted the word 'consociato'⁵²¹ to mean marriage when in actual fact the word means 'associated with'.⁵²² This explained why the arithmetic in relation to the inscription did not add up. If the couple were married in 1593, which was clearly stated on their marriage certificate, then Margaret's death in 1624, as witnessed by the engraving on her tomb, would

⁵¹⁹ William Shakespeare, 'Hamlet Prince of Denmark' in *The Works of William Shakespeare* (London: Frederick Warren and Company, 1911) vol.,ii, 346-50.

⁵²⁰ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 144.

⁵²¹ Dobie, *The Parish Churches and Burying Grounds of Ayrshire*, 13.

⁵²² Collins Latin Dictionary, (Glasgow: Collins, 2000) 48.

mean they had been married thirty-one years and not thirty-six years as claimed by Dobie. From these calculations it appeared the couple had known each other for five years before they were actually married.

As the genre of paintings executed by Stalker was an avenue previously unexplored, the question as to whether Montgomerie used, ‘the discourse of death to serve the needs of the living’⁵²³ was addressed. Ascertaining this contributed further to the narrative of the ceiling paintings. The following chapter identified the genre of art commissioned by Montgomerie. A study of traditional funerary art of the period was undertaken as was a consideration of commemorative art. Identification of genre highlighted Montgomerie’s intentions in selecting the iconography. The question whether the imagery exuded the theme of death, as may have been expected within a burial aisle, or whether his purpose was to create an artistic display that was a celebration of life and provide a place for private prayer, was explored. Attitudes towards death in Early Modern Scotland was also examined to gauge the extent to which Montgomerie was influenced by contemporary ideology. Furthermore, issues of idealisation and individuality was also surveyed, as these were particularly pertinent to the production of commemorative art during this era.

Life and Death

As Anne Gordon professed, ‘death was a part of life’ and a practice of rituals involving turning mirrors to walls to, ‘prevent the spirit catching sight of itself’⁵²⁴ and removing the corpse feet first so that it could not see the way to return, are examples of practices that were adopted throughout Scotland. Death was an accepted

⁵²³ Peter France, ‘Peopling the Pantheon; Discourses of Death’ as cited in Peter France et-al *Death and Memory*, (Stirling: University of Stirling Publications, 2000) 16.

⁵²⁴ Anne Gordon, *Death is for the Living*, (Edinburgh: Paul Harris Publishing, 1984) 11.

part of life and, irrespective of social status, how to deal with it was universally known.⁵²⁵ These practices were a medieval legacy but although, by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries they were still practiced, the change in religious ideology altered Scottish society's relationship with the dead and how to deal with them. The result of this change was a secularisation of the dead as they took on a new role in the lives of the living. Low life expectancy, high infant mortality and the sudden and horrific death caused by the plague during the Late Medieval and Early Modern periods also altered people's attitude towards death. This resulted in the practice of both the mental and physical separation of life from death.⁵²⁶

Death was a constant visitor and as such the pre-Reformation Church, in Scotland and beyond, had a particular attitude towards the dead and dying. This was based on an orthodox structure that, 'reassured the dying and comforted the living'.⁵²⁷ Prayers and masses were said and the attention directed towards the dying had its focus on preparing them for the life to come. There was a close relationship between the living and the dead with the greatest fear facing the Christian world being that of dying unprepared. The adopted Calvinist ideology in Scotland was accompanied by fear and uncertainty in issues surrounding death and how best to prepare oneself for what was inevitable. There was a 'strong lay understanding of physical death not as an end, but a necessary stage on the way to eternal life'.⁵²⁸ This was a transition for which one had to be well prepared.

⁵²⁵ Gordon, *Death is for the Living*, 11.

⁵²⁶ Gordon, *Death is for the Living*, 11.

⁵²⁷ Andrew Spicer, 'Rest of their bones': fear of death and reformed burial practices. As qtd in William Naphy *et-a.*, *Fear in Early Modern Society*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997) 167.

⁵²⁸ Audrey-Beth Fitch, *The Search for Salvation*, (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2009)21.

Memorialisation and commemoration became important factors, whereby the use of art in relation to death expanded. At this point, ‘a sophisticated ritual was developed in response to death, accompanied by a rich culture of visible artefacts’.⁵²⁹ Scotland was influenced by practices from the Continent where there was an increase in the demand for *ars moriendi* texts, described by Phillippe Aries as, ‘treatises on the art of dying well’.⁵³⁰ Scottish examples of this type were found in David Lindsay, an Edinburgh minister’s *The Godly Man’s Journey to Heaven* (c.1625), Zachary Boyd’s *The Last Battle of the Soul in Death* (c.1628) and William Murray’s *A Short Treatise of Death* (c.1631). Montgomerie was an educated man and as the decoration in the aisle supports, was well acquainted with religious scripture. He would also have been aware of *ars moriendi* texts and would have been familiar with artistic representations of death.

These texts worked alongside artistic representations of the subject which had their genesis in the early sixteenth-century. The most famous of these was a set of engravings, which were eventually printed, depicting the *Dance of Death* (c.1538), executed by Hans Holbein the Younger (1497-1543).⁵³¹ These were circulated throughout Europe and their theme reflected the ethos of the period by capturing humankind’s preoccupation with the subject of death. Originally the concept was displayed on walls of churchyards or burial grounds showing figures, both living and dead, processing in hierarchical social position. It would not have been surprising to find representations of these figures in the decorated ceiling but it is noted that no such representations are included. The skeletal figures demonstrated by Holbein acted as *Memento Mori* (remember you will die) and also included

⁵²⁹ Nigel Llewellyn, *The Art of Death* (London: Reaktion Books, 1991) 7.

⁵³⁰ Phillippe Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, (London: Alan Lane, 1981)105.

⁵³¹ Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Dance of Death* (Facsimile of original 1538 edition) (New York: Dover Publications, 1971) x.

images such as skulls, winged angels and hourglasses.⁵³² Holbein's intention, according to Jean de Vauzele, who introduced the original version, was that, 'since no one has ever seen death, which is such a disembodied thing, the artist is merely presenting an image of it, a concrete embodiment of what is really an abstraction'.⁵³³

The theme offered a way to articulate a process that could only be imagined. Thus, the portrayal of individual scenes of daily life conveyed, through their moral didacticism, lessons of mortality which related to all rungs of society. It highlighted that an understanding of the inevitability of death, and the importance of preparing for it, was, and should be, an integral part of life. The figures targeted the inescapability of death accentuating its disregard of social position by incorporating an emphasis on how death levels all of humankind. The figures' prime intention was to highlight the necessity for human humility and the inevitability of divine justice. Issues such as the unknown time of death were also a central theme. The skeleton within each image disrupts the daily pursuit of the individual, which is indicative of the fact death strikes indiscriminately and without warning.⁵³⁴

The popularity of these types of texts, both visual and printed, indicated a renewed general interest and concern surrounding issues of death and dying. European society at this time developed an obsession with the transition of the soul to the afterlife. The result of this was a focus on daily practices that centred on the preparation for death. As Johan Huizinga maintained, 'no other epoch has laid so much stress as the expiring middle ages on the thought of death. An everlasting call of *memento mori* sounds through life'.⁵³⁵ This preoccupation, which Huizinga

⁵³² Holbein the Younger, *The Dance of Death* (Facsimile of original 1538 edition) x.

⁵³³ Holbein the Younger, *The Dance of Death* (Facsimile of original 1538 edition) x.

⁵³⁴ Holbein the Younger, *The Dance of Death* (Facsimile of original 1538 edition) x, xi.

⁵³⁵ Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, (London: Edward Arnold Publishing, 1998) 134.

declared resulted in a society exuding morbidity, was refuted by Eamon Duffy who believed that it was indicative of, ‘a practical and pragmatic sense of continuing value of life and the social relations of the living’.⁵³⁶ Either way, a daily focus on death prevailed. The treatises were transformed into plays, woodcuts, engravings and paintings which focused on the drama of death centring around scenes of the dying in their final hours. The focus of the texts was on the fragility of life and the inevitability of death.⁵³⁷

The importance of the discussion on the *Dance of Death* was that it clearly defined what was absent from the Skelmorlie Aisle ceiling. These traditional portrayals of death and dying were widely known and accepted but, with the exception of two small skulls carved into the monument and two copied from Delaune's emblem of Adam and Eve,⁵³⁸ the theme was not graphically or overtly portrayed within the ceiling paintings. Imagery relating to death usually incorporated the symbolic figure, ‘Time’, portrayed as an aged man, skulls symbolizing mortality, the hour glass representing time running out while visions of angels and demons determined whether the viewer was faced with a good or bad death.⁵³⁹ As with *memento mori*, cadavers and skeletons were designed to warn the living to take action. These texts employed moral didacticism and were a means of encouraging one to make peace with God before death. They also taught the living what lay ahead for them.⁵⁴⁰ The action of filling the dying person with, ‘holsom fere and

⁵³⁶ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, (London: Yale University Press, 2005)303.

⁵³⁷ Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, 116.

⁵³⁸ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 128.

⁵³⁹ Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, 116.

⁵⁴⁰ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 315.

dred'⁵⁴¹ was thought favourable to them dying unprepared.⁵⁴² This genre of art was not found within the ceiling paintings.

Montgomerie was, however, well aware of symbols relating to death. This was evident as, in his married coat of arms, which was clearly displayed on the outside of the building, there was a representation of worms eating pieces of rotted fruit.⁵⁴³ Furthermore, as previously stated, on the monument and on the Delaune emblem utilised by Stalker, there were two small skulls. Montgomerie was therefore familiar with symbolism relating to traditional funerary art, but he chose not to have this displayed on the ceiling. Thus it became evident that his intention was to create imagery that was free from all forms of fearful illustrations of death.

Imagery of the *memento mori* style was readily incorporated into Scottish art. Examples included the watch belonging to Mary Queen of Scots which was in the form of a skull.⁵⁴⁴ This demonstrated how daily objects of a practical nature were designed to incorporate didactic qualities. The same design was frequently found carved into grave stones, examples of which can be seen throughout Scotland. In Ayrshire, examples of engraved skulls and crossbones are found on gravestones in practically every town. Skulls, crossbones and skeletons are noted from Wigtownshire to Aberdeen.⁵⁴⁵ Tombs bearing skulls, crossbones and hourglasses, accompanied by the words '*memento mori*' were prominently displayed in graveyards. Evidence of this was found, for example, in the burial ground of Greyfriars Church in Edinburgh.⁵⁴⁶ Old Largs burial ground, where Skelmorlie Aisle

⁵⁴¹ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 315.

⁵⁴² Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 315.

⁵⁴³ Charles Burnett, *et-al.*, *Scotland's Heraldic Heritage*, (Edinburgh: The Stationary Office, 1997) 89.

⁵⁴⁴ Hulme, *The History, Principles and Practice of Symbolism in Christian Art*, 97.

⁵⁴⁵ Betty Willshire, *Scottish Epitaphs* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 1996) 21.

⁵⁴⁶ Willshire, *Scottish Epitaphs* 21.

stands, housed a monument to the Boyles of Kelburn, another prominent local family of the era. Images of mortality in the form of winged angels and skull and crossbones were visible on their family monument. The inscriptions were faint but dates 1610, 1634 and 1647 are clearly seen. As Montgomerie died in 1651, it was evident that he had seen these.⁵⁴⁷

There was a peace and tranquillity surrounding the theme of death within the aisle. There was no need for a reminder of death, death was already present. It was at the nucleus of the exercise and, despite his attempts to veil this, it was impossible to remove it from the equation. As Bossuet penned in the oration he compiled for the funeral of Henriette d'Angleterre, daughter of Charles I, 'for all her glory, the tomb records her absence, not her presence; her immortal soul is elsewhere'.⁵⁴⁸

The Theatre of Death

What Montgomerie commissioned in the paintings was reminiscent of baroque theatre, whereby he created a lavish setting in which to allow the paintings to perform, to convey their narrative. As Paul Binski stated, 'the dead person was thus framed by a new and occasionally grandiloquent rhetorical language of gesture'.⁵⁴⁹

Montgomerie wished to have Margaret, whose body would be in the supine position, facing the ceiling paintings, surrounded by colour, vibrancy and scenes and symbols that were familiar to her. There was drama incorporated into the iconography which captured the dead woman in a manner far from that displayed on, for example, a traditional effigy which captured 'a recumbent person in a state of frozen

⁵⁴⁷ Burial ground of Largs Old Parish Church, Largs, Ayrshire.

⁵⁴⁸ France, 'Peopling the Pantheon; Discourses of Death' quoted in France *Death and Memory*, 6.

⁵⁴⁹ Paul Binski, *Medieval Death*, (London: British Museum Press, 1996) 99.

awareness'.⁵⁵⁰ Margaret was not to be remembered deathly still, she was to be immortalised in paint, a lasting reminder of the life she had left behind.

Montgomerie created his own *aide memoire* focussing on life not death. As Brown stated, at the Reformation, 'the Church retreated from ritual [thus] the nobility created their own elaborate and secular death rituals'.⁵⁵¹ The paintings thus created their own ritual by orchestrating an interaction between the dead and the living. This was achieved by inviting the viewer to take part in the narrative unfolding before them. On close inspection, it became clear that the drama within Stalker's creation was commemorative.

Death was frequently captured within commemorative art, a popular practice during the late Medieval and Early Modern periods. Examples included paintings, jewellery, embroidery and stonework. The theme of death was still at the nucleus of this exercise and, although expressions of warning could be incorporated into this genre, much of commemorative art acted more as a trigger to memory; it was an *aide memoire*.⁵⁵² It is argued that this was exactly what Montgomerie wished to achieve by his choice of iconography. He created a narrative of visual signs to assist in sustaining the memory and the presence of the dead. Much of the subject matter relating to commemorative art possessed therapeutic, rather than sorrowful properties, and this, too, was part of Montgomerie's intentions. If he used the aisle as a place for private prayer, as legend states, then again he would not wish to be surrounded with graphic images of death.

⁵⁵⁰ Binski, *Medieval Death*, 93.

⁵⁵¹ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 270.

⁵⁵² Elizabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1999) 93.

Art was used as a catalyst for sparking the memory whereby its, 'symbols of transmission'⁵⁵³ helped the bereaved to recall the past and make sure those who had died were not forgotten. These practices created a focus, something tangible to keep the dead alive and thus, commemorative art became very much part of everyday existence. Unlike today's society, whereby commemorative art is designed by others, during the seventeenth-century, and earlier, it was frequently designed by the person themselves or someone very close to them. This permitted individualism and a creation that was totally personal.⁵⁵⁴

During the same period, more emotional attachment began to evolve within families, as Brown stated, '...by the early seventeenth-century, husbands and wives were expressing their feelings more openly'.⁵⁵⁵ This display of emotional attachment did not only involve married couples but incorporated other members of the family. This resulted in paintings being commissioned of a deceased loved one before burial a practice which became a permanent way of remembering them. This was a different type of commemoration since images of this nature could also be used as a means of political statement and propaganda.⁵⁵⁶ This was demonstrated in Scotland during the reign of James VI. The period of the 'bloody shirts' saw blood soaked garments of murdered victims being paraded before the king by members of the deceased's family looking for justice for their loved ones' untimely deaths.⁵⁵⁷ An example of this was noted in the painting *The Memorial of Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley, King of Scots, c. 1567/8* (Plate 46) which Darnley's parents commissioned after his death. The complex iconography included an image of the dead Darnley in

⁵⁵³ Van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe*, 93.

⁵⁵⁴ Van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe*, 93.

⁵⁵⁵ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 155.

⁵⁵⁶ MacMillan, *Scottish Art 1460-1990*, 47.

⁵⁵⁷ MacMillan, *Scottish Art 1460-1990*, 47.

supine position on a highly decorated tomb and incorporated many prolonged inscriptions. The body was displayed within a chapel where standards relating to those in the painting are visible. Darnley's parents and brother were also included in the painting as was an image of Darnley's son, the infant King James VI. The figures are seen kneeling in front of an altar on which rests a figure of the risen Christ. The young king prays by his father's side above which the inscription, 'God judge and revenge my cause' is situated.⁵⁵⁸ What was arguably one of the first examples of a Scottish landscape is visible in the foreground. The landscape represented the field at Carberry where Mary Queen of Scots was captured. A banner, carried by Mary's enemies during the confrontation, was also included in the painting. The painting was both commemorative and accusatory, as it indicated that Darnley's parents believed both Bothwell and Mary were implicated in the murder of their son.⁵⁵⁹

A further example was seen in the painting *The Memorial of James Stewart, Early of Moray*, c. 1591 by an anonymous artist. Here, the painting of Moray portrayed in what Duncan Macmillan describes as, 'a stark and graphic image'⁵⁶⁰ was presented to King James VI by the earl's mother who had the painting commissioned.⁵⁶¹ Again its nature was accusatory, indicating her belief that the king played a role in her son's death. Moray's life was extinguished by the actions of the Earl of Huntly, in a scheme which the king was apparently well aware of. The earl, depicted naked, apart from a modest cloth covering his lower torso, was displayed awaiting burial and clearly on display were the gunshot and stab wounds which robbed him of his life. The action of having the death commemorated in this way

⁵⁵⁸ MacMillan, *Scottish Art 1460-1990*, 47.

⁵⁵⁹ MacMillan *Scottish Art 1460-1990*, 47.

⁵⁶⁰ MacMillan *Scottish Art 1460-1990*, 47.

⁵⁶¹ MacMillan *Scottish Art*, 47.

was of such importance that the funeral of the dead earl was postponed to allow time for the painting to be executed.⁵⁶² This type of graphic imagery was not uncommon, as Charles McKean noted, it was, ‘a ritual that was neither infrequent nor effective’.⁵⁶³ Eventually commemorative art was to change from the realism it possessed to incorporate softer and less graphic subject matter. Artistic displays of a graphic nature offered permanence, a lasting memorial, and a reminder of past events.⁵⁶⁴ Once again it was noted that this type of portrayal of the dead, albeit still commemorative, was both alarming and indelicate, and not a type of artistic realism adopted by Montgomerie or Stalker.

A typical component found within art relating to death, and also Scottish decorative art, was the inclusion of individualism whereby paintings contained personal imagery that made the subject matter completely personal to the patron. This was a feature incorporated into the aisle paintings. Hope and despair unite to produce a particular ethos towards death and bereavement. The early seventeenth-century was a time of, ‘symbolic sensibility [whereby] an analysis of values depended upon a complex reading of a symbolic system at the root of the culture’.⁵⁶⁵ Montgomerie’s focus in having the aisle decorated in this manner may have been ignited by Margaret’s loss but, he preserved her memory within an ideology centred on individualism. The paintings were personal and the philosophy involved was that which had its nucleus in the self. Montgomerie thus created an environment which was positive containing no graphic images relating to the ethos of the building. Her memory was preserved in a manner that created a sense of permanency, something

⁵⁶² Macmillan, *Scottish Art*, 47.

⁵⁶³ McKean, *The Scottish Chateau*, 12.

⁵⁶⁴ Van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe*, 94.

⁵⁶⁵ Bettie Anne Doebler, *Rooted Sorrow*, (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1994) 19.

that would remain stable, immortalised. Montgomerie, even in old age, in serving the needs of the living through commemoration of the dead, would be able to look back and remember.

The Body Divided

Through art, changing attitudes and issues surrounding the understanding of the status of the body after death, could be recorded. The body, which had in death been traditionally viewed as one entity, due to reformed ideology, developed a different status. A greater emphasis, centring on the cadaver as a source of decay and disease, became highlighted, and the body came to be viewed as having two dimensions, one social and the other natural (or biological). After death the natural body deteriorated and decayed, a graphic reminder of mortality.⁵⁶⁶ This emphasised the fragility of human life. The social body, on the other hand, remained intact and did not possess the degrading and frightening properties that nature deemed inevitable for its natural twin. The latter was no longer regarded as a desirable commodity to be accommodated within the realms of the living. The social aspect, therefore, became the important focus of seventeenth-century death. The social body possessed more permanence, compensating for the absence of that which was natural.⁵⁶⁷

Through the paintings, Montgomerie found a medium in which to preserve his wife's social body. He had no desire to be reminded of that which was natural. Thus, 'in the process of dying, the death of the natural body was followed by efforts to preserve the social body as an element in the collective memory'.⁵⁶⁸ Images reflective of the social body focussed on the individualism of the dead person as well

⁵⁶⁶ Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, 241.

⁵⁶⁷ Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, 241.

⁵⁶⁸ Llewellyn, *The Art of Death*, 48.

as emphasising their place within the wider fabric of the community.⁵⁶⁹ This idea of place within the community was frequently highlighted by the inclusion of heraldic imagery. Montgomerie, too, adhered to this practice by including heraldic displays as visual testament of Margaret's affiliations, lineage and social position. This will be discussed in more detail in a chapter six.

The concept of the natural and social bodies was of optimum importance to post-Reformation visual culture and, as such, artists of the Early Modern period strove to incorporate this into their art. Funerary monuments and commemorative art helped to preserve the social body and the place of the individual within the society in which they existed.⁵⁷⁰ After death, the disposal of the deceased had to take place in a manner befitting the dead and the bereaved, as well as preserving the social fabric. According to Llewelyn:

One of the most important aims of the funeral, and of the subsequent construction of a permanent commemorative image was the preservation of social cohesion and the denial that any one individual death presented an irreparable threat to continuity.⁵⁷¹

Thus the building of monuments and the execution of paintings preserved the memory of the dead and established them in the realms of the eternal. This, in turn, assisted in securing an aura of family and place, as paintings and buildings tied the deceased and their family to that special area that was reserved exclusively for them.⁵⁷² They could therefore be reunited in social, rather than natural, terms, which effectively placed the dead, 'in the cultural terms of the living, as the monumental

⁵⁶⁹ Doebler, *Rooted Sorrow*, 19.

⁵⁷⁰ Llewellyn, *The Art of Death*, 48.

⁵⁷¹ Llewellyn, *The Art of Death*, 54.

⁵⁷² Peter Marshall, 'Fear, purgatory and polemic in Reformation England' as cited in Naphy, *Fear in Early Modern Society*, 150.

body was in it a signal of continuity'.⁵⁷³ At this point the social body became, 'an artificial construction sustained as a figment of the collective imagination'.⁵⁷⁴ By creating the aisle, Montgomerie built an area which was personal space, preserving the memory of his wife and, at the same time, prevented him dwelling on any thoughts of finality. Her story was not over; he was keeping it alive. His inclusion of scenes of personal and familiar content could effectively preserve her memory. The natural body was not the focus, it was the victim of destruction and decay and beyond his control, so he dismissed any thoughts of it and preserved what he could.

One factor that was, however, frequently incorporated into individualised commemorative art was the issue of idealisation.⁵⁷⁵ Although, due to a lack of primary sources, it was difficult to make a definitive statement regarding idealisation within the paintings. The unsophisticated representations of the imagery portrayed by Stalker, however, made a persuasive argument against this. There was nothing extravagant or unbelievable within the paintings; on the contrary, they were executed in a basic form. No known sources have been unearthed that match the female figure displayed within the two personal landscape scenes of land and sea but in such a personal environment it may be suggested that they could represent Margaret Douglas. If this was the case then it was noted they are executed in a simplistic fashion, making it difficult to imagine any representations of over exaggeration.

The figures were not portrayed in an unimaginable pose or performing unbelievable acts. Her identity was not being elevated to the ranks of saints or scholars. There was no claim to an affinity with higher realms or heavenly choirs,

⁵⁷³ Marshall, 'Fear, purgatory and polemic in Reformation England' as cited in Naphy, *Fear in Early Modern Society*, 150.

⁵⁷⁴ Llewelyn, *The Art of Death*, 104.

⁵⁷⁵ Doebler, *Rooted Sorrow*, 21.

nor was she represented as the wonderful mother or wife, as was a major theme for women during this period.⁵⁷⁶ She was not portrayed offering alms to the poor or doing heroic deeds. She was portrayed simply dressed, not flaunting any lavish clothes or being established as the epitome of fashion. The inclusion of such components as the family home and the aisle, both of which are discussed in greater detail in the following chapters, was simple, every day memory recorded in paint. The representations were personal, they were not there to impress the public or convince them of any elevated position of the deceased within the social fabric. It is argued that they were almost certainly free from idealisation.

Painting Death

In ascertaining the relationship between the ceiling iconography and death, a study of the contents of the paintings was also required. The plants and animals, general designs and scroll work were chosen for their decorative, fashionable and aesthetic properties, having no direct relationship with the theme of death.⁵⁷⁷ Images of the Cardinal Virtues were more in keeping with their secular, rather than religious, qualities and heraldic displays were included to indicate lineage, affiliation and social status. These components will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six but, for the purposes of this chapter, they have no connection to the theme of death. Some components found within the ceiling paintings may be interpreted as having an indirect relationship to the theme, but, as already noted, these deviated from typical depictions of the genre. These include paintings of biblical figures.

⁵⁷⁶ Doebler, *Rooted Sorrow*, 21.

⁵⁷⁷ Werner Telesko, *The Wisdom of Nature*, London: Prestel, 2001) 7-92.

The biblical paintings of Jacob and Esau have no direct association with the theme of death or dying.⁵⁷⁸ They could, however, be regarded as a representation of feud which ended peaceably. As discussed in detail in chapter one, feud involved the loss of life but eventually resolved peacefully. The inclusion of the brothers may have some indirect relationship to death here but this is greatly covert. There was, however, a link to the theme found within the paintings of Adam and Eve. Since, through their actions of breaking God's laws, death entered the world thus their presence within the biblical paintings can be associated with the theme,⁵⁷⁹ 'until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust and to dust you shall return'.⁵⁸⁰ It was also within this painting that the two skulls were included which, as has been previously discussed, do have a direct relationship to death.

The eleven quotations taken from the Geneva Bible⁵⁸¹ that were incorporated, as well as the one quotation which although sounding as if it was biblical was not found in any version of the bible,⁵⁸² have also a relationship with the final rite of passage. The quotations were either directly connected with death, mourning or comfort or focused on advice or encouragement to follow a pathway that religious ideology of the age would endorse.⁵⁸³ They possessed religious didacticism, resembling that incorporated into Holbein's drawings, but were free from the frightening and horrific aspects of persuasion. They focus on a softer, more encouraging approach that gave comfort and hope rather than alarm and fear. Their focus on judgement and repentance would be in keeping with Montgomerie's dual

⁵⁷⁸ Murray, *Christian Art and Architecture*, 247.

⁵⁷⁹ Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 15.

⁵⁸⁰ The Holy Bible, King James Version, Genesis 3:19.

⁵⁸¹ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 132.

⁵⁸² J.S. Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (New Jersey: World Bible Publishers, 1994) 173-1452.

⁵⁸³ Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, 173-1452.

purpose of the aisle also being used as a place for private prayer. Montgomerie had a reputation for retreating into the vault to pray as stipulated by Rev. Gilbert Lang who claimed, 'Sir Robert used to descend into the vaults at nights, for his devotions; thus burying himself, as it were, alive'.⁵⁸⁴ Bath maintained that, 'Montgomery's inscription on his own coffin suggests the whole aisle was erected as a retreat for private devotion, to which much of its surrounding iconography would have served as a stimulus'.⁵⁸⁵ The content of the biblical quotations would certainly support the suggestion that prayer was one of its functions.

The inscriptions, which began at the south-west corner of the building read:

- **'Blessed are they that movrne, for they shall be comforted'. Matthew 5.4.**

This inscription is one of the nine beatitudes taken from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount as recorded in the gospel of Matthew. The focus here was one of mourning and of comfort and therefore was relating to the bereaved rather than the deceased. This was the only inscription that was directly related to the bereaved.

- **'But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the heavens shall pass away with a noise'. 2 Peter 3. 10.**

The inscription here was in actual fact only part of the verse which related to the day of judgement. It highlighted the suddenness of the end of the world which again related to death.

- **'He that hideth his sins shall not prosper, but he that confesseth and forsaketh them shal have mercie'. Proverbs 28.13.**

Again, the emphasis here was on the day of judgement and the necessity to prepare to have a good death. The didactic properties were clear.

- **'Be though faithfull unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life'. Revelations 2.10.**

Again the focus was the day of judgement and the promise of eternal life. The life hereafter was to be achieved through allegiance to faith.

⁵⁸⁴ Rev. Gilbert Lang qtd. in Grant '*Devotional Meditation*', 72.

⁵⁸⁵ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 142.

- **‘Trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord God is strength for evermore’. Isaiah 26.4.**

Death and the next life were again highlighted in this inscription. Trust and faith in God as the route to eternal life, were advised.

- **‘Blessed are the children that inlargeth the kingdom of heaven, and cursed are the children that inlargeth the kingdom of hell’.**⁵⁸⁶

This inscription was problematic as it was not from the any version of the bible. The theological language was incorrect, as hell was never, in theological terms, described as a kingdom. It thus appears likely that although the content of the quotation may have biblical implications, the inscription itself is fabrication.⁵⁸⁷ This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

- **‘The first man Adam was made a living soule, and the last man Adam was made a quickening spirit’. 1 Corinthians 15.45.**

This was a standard text used during a funeral service. According to Christian scripture Adam was the first man and Jesus regarded as the last Adam. As the redeemer of mankind, Jesus redeemed man from death as a route to hell and gave eternal life.

- **‘Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the saints’. Psalms 116.15.**

This Psalm centred on death and taught the value of loyalty to God. It highlighted the Christian belief in life after death.⁵⁸⁸

- **‘I am sure that my redeemer liveth, and he shall stand the last on the earth’. Job 19.25.**

This quotation was taken from the traditional Order for the Burial of the Dead and thus had a direct relationship with the funeral service.⁵⁸⁹

- **‘Take heed to thy foot; when though enterest into the house of God, & be more neere to here then to give the sacrifice of fooles’. Ecclesiastes 4.17.**

⁵⁸⁶ J.Barton ed., *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, (Oxford: OUP, 2001)310-1274.

⁵⁸⁷ This will be discussed in more detail in chapter six.

⁵⁸⁸ Barton, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 310-1274.

⁵⁸⁹ *The Scottish Book of Common Prayer*, (London: OUP, 1889) 218.

This quotation had no significance to death. The inscription had its genesis in the teaching of religious obedience, faith and the fear of God.

- **‘Come unto mee all yee that are weary and laden, and I will ease you’.**
Matthew 11.28.

This inscription recorded Jesus’ words. The message here was comfort, faith and support. The inscription did not necessarily relate to death but arguably could, so the theme of death was not completely absent from this quotation.

- **‘I am God [almighty], walk before mee, and be thow upright’.** Genesis
17.1.⁵⁹⁰

God uttered these words to Abraham, the content of which was immersed in biblical teaching. The ethos of the inscription was a guide to how life should be lived. It encouraged the keeping of the commandments and the strength that came from faith.⁵⁹¹ Analysis indicated that the inscriptions either related to the theme of death or focussed on judgement.

The theme of death may also have an indirect relationship to the paintings of the four seasons. In this chapter the seasonal paintings were discussed in relation to death, but a more extensive analysis was undertaken in chapter six. Paintings of this theme were very much in vogue during the period and were regarded as reflecting the handiwork of the, ‘divine creator’.⁵⁹² The months were frequently associated with having mystical significance relating to the biblical assertion that God, as the giver of humankind, is also the giver of nature.⁵⁹³ Images of the seasons can relate to fundamental moments in human life: for example, birth is associated with spring, maturity with summer, aging with autumn and death with winter.⁵⁹⁴ They were frequently represented by the agricultural labours which were associated with each

⁵⁹⁰ Barton, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 310-1274.

⁵⁹¹ Barton, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 310-1274.

⁵⁹² Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Art in Scotland*, 58.

⁵⁹³ Matilda Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2005) 34.

⁵⁹⁴ Telesko, *The Wisdom of Nature*, 62.

season; sowing, mowing, harvesting and hunting. Spring, as the giver of life, was also the season where Easter, a time of rebirth, human redemption and the victory of life over death is celebrated.⁵⁹⁵ The signs of the zodiac, like the seasons, were also a popular theme during the Early Modern period. As they signified the movement of time throughout the year, they too were associated indirectly to the theme of death. The months passed through the year as the months passed throughout life.⁵⁹⁶

Representations of ships on the sea were incorporated into the landscape paintings and these possessed dual symbolism. They could signify both secular and religious attributes as they could be associated with the transference of the body from this world to the next.⁵⁹⁷ There was a link here between the iconography and the theme of death.

The seasonal painting *Hyems*, which incorporated the church in Largs as well as an image of the aisle, may also be viewed as having associations with death. The church would almost likely have been where Margaret's funeral service would have taken place. The aisle, the building in which her remains lay and the monument and ceiling paintings constructed, was also included. In view of the church building having been demolished in 1802, the ceiling painting is the only surviving artistic impression of what it looked like during the period in which the aisle was constructed. Its direct connection with the rites of passage clearly tied the building to issues of life and death and thus an association with the theme of death was established. The painting of the aisle, which reflects how it looks today, highlighted the realism associated with the greatest part of the content displayed within the landscape paintings. This will be discussed in more detail in a chapter six but for the

⁵⁹⁵ Holbein the Younger, *The Dance of Death* (Facsimile of original 1538 edition) 5.

⁵⁹⁶ Holbein the Younger, *The Dance of Death* (Facsimile of original 1538 edition) 6.

⁵⁹⁷ Barton, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 356.

purposes of this chapter and the theme of death within art, the painting of the aisle acted as a reminder of what lay within. The deathly remains of the natural body were to be found in the vault which was looked upon from above by the splendour and vibrancy of the life portrayed within the painted ceiling.

The landscape painting which contained the figure of a woman and a horse may have some relationship to the theme of death. A local traditional tale which stated that Margaret Douglas was killed by the kick of a horse is part of the oral tradition in the Largs area. There were, however, no contemporary sources to verify this claim. The old *Statistical Account of Scotland* stated that the paintings included an image of, ‘the premature death of a lady of the family, who was killed by the kick of a horse’⁵⁹⁸ This led to the claim that it was Margaret Douglas but, as has been stated, no contemporary sources exist to support this. Other suggestions that Montgomerie’s daughter was killed by the actions of a horse were also without foundation. This will be further discussed in a chapter six but for the purposes of this chapter, if the oral tradition is to be believed, a connection to the theme of death could be established.

Audrey-Beth Fitch maintained that late medieval society had a particular way of expressing what awaited humankind after death. She wrote:

in their images or conceptions of heaven, people gave expression to dreams of earthly perfection; rather than an extraordinary and foreign world, heaven was a perfect earthly world, a sought-after place of peace, plenty and happiness.⁵⁹⁹

This view, it may be argued, was also shared by Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie. In commissioning the painted ceiling he too wished to capture, ‘a sought-after place

⁵⁹⁸ Rev. John Dow in Sinclair ed., *Statistical Account of Scotland, 1791-1799* vol. xi, Ayrshire, 513.

⁵⁹⁹ Fitch, *The Search for Salvation*, 40.

of peace, plenty and happiness'.⁶⁰⁰ What he did not wish was to have his wife's remains resting in a dark, dull place surrounded by graphic symbols of death. Although death was at the nucleus of the exercise, at the nucleus it was to remain. The graphic and alarming features of death within art were not to be endorsed within the ceiling paintings.

This chapter investigated the genre of art displayed within the ceiling paintings of Skelmorlie Aisle. In so doing it determined that the era was obsessed with the inevitability of death and, as such, drawings representing the hour of death were frequently displayed throughout Scotland and Europe as a whole. These were detected on gravestones and monuments as well as in printed form. Many acted as *momento mori* and were composed of images such as skeletons, winged angels and hour glasses. Preparation for death was a major concern and frightening symbols of death had forceful didactic properties.⁶⁰¹ Hans Holbein's depictions of *The Dance of Death* were frequently replicated, and were the most popular illustrations of the theme. It was noted, however, that although the ceiling paintings and Holbein's series were both composed of forty one panels, none of those within the aisle depict any images that follow in Holbein's footsteps.⁶⁰² These were frightening images and not in keeping with Montgomerie's intentions in creating a place of commemoration and private prayer.

Holbein's style of shocking imagery was not alone in creating an alarming aura surrounding the theme of death. Paintings, which displayed the figures of dead loved ones, were executed bearing explicit wounds of death. Gruesome knife or gunshot wounds were eerily exhibited and death was recorded portraying a depth of

⁶⁰⁰ Fitch, *The Search for Salvation*, 40.

⁶⁰¹ Llewellyn, *The Art of Death*, 11.

⁶⁰² Holbein the Younger, *The Dance of Death* (Facsimile of original 1538 edition) x.

realism. These paintings were often intended as a means of political statement and/or propaganda.⁶⁰³ No images of this nature were commissioned by Montgomerie as his intention incorporated neither of these reasons.

Of the other iconography depicted on the ceiling, including two of the biblical characters, the figures of Adam and Eve do have an association with death. This was also the case with some of the biblical quotations. The other biblical figures, those of Jacob and his brother Esau, had no direct connection with this them although they are related to feud but, in their narrative the feud ended peacefully without bloodshed. The seasons and the signs of the zodiac related to the passage of time so they too can be vaguely associated with death, but as both were popular themes during the period their inclusion is somewhat ambiguous.

It was argued that the iconography was principally commemoration, personal memory and individualism, belonging to the genre of commemorative art. Some components, for example the flowers, birds, animals and general designs were commonly found within the genre of traditional Scottish decorative art, bearing no relationship to death and haven been chosen for aesthetic properties. Commemoration, incorporating more subtle iconography that had an indirect bearing on death, was appropriate for the building in which the paintings were displayed. A direct relationship with the theme of death was noted in only two components, those of the two small skulls placed in the vicinity of Adam and Eve. No other traditional illustrations relating to the theme are incorporated.

Through the paintings Montgomerie could preserve and celebrate his wife's live form. He could record her life, her pleasures and features of her life that were important to her. Further to this, he could envisage what may be in the afterlife. He

⁶⁰³ Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, 116.

perhaps wished to believe that she was, as Audrey-Beth Fitch stated, still in a 'perfect earthly world'.⁶⁰⁴ What he had portrayed within the paintings was the preservation of her social body, an assertion of individualism and the belief that Margaret's memory was worth preserving.

Montgomerie's intention was to create a ceiling of commemoration where, within the privacy of the aisle, he could retreat and remember. It is highly probable that used the building for private prayer thus even more reason why he would not wish to be surrounded by graphic scenes of death and decay. As was discussed in chapter three, familiar images encouraged prayer therefore the setting was conducive to this act. The biblical quotations were in keeping with the theme of prayer as most centred on penitence and faith. This was a private, family area but today it is open to the public whereby its theatrical setting shares with the viewer the importance of the woman portrayed and the esteem in which she was held. The osmosis of the secular and religious iconography displayed represented what was effectively, 'a sense of loss, the hoped for resurrection and the precise identification of the deceased'.⁶⁰⁵ Montgomerie did not use, 'the discourse of death to serve the needs of the living'.⁶⁰⁶ The paintings did not endorse a discourse of death. He wished to remember his wife in a personal and realistic way.

As Timanthes painted a veil to mask his sorrow at the loss of a woman who was irreplaceable, one that time was not to be permitted to forget, so, too, did Montgomerie. His actions in having the aisle decorated in such a manner were a display of love and the grief he felt in losing his wife. In the words of Martha Wolfenstein, 'a painful and protracted struggle to acknowledge the reality of the

⁶⁰⁴ Fitch, *In Search of Salvation*, 73.

⁶⁰⁵ Llewellyn *The Art of Death*, 57.

⁶⁰⁶ France, *Death and Memory*, 16.

loss'.⁶⁰⁷ Montgomerie was a man of his time and the components within the iconography endorsed that. He wished to create a lasting memorial, a touching commemoration that would immortalise his wife; the focus was entirely on Margaret. As Aries suggested, the seventeenth-century, 'presented another image of death: the subterranean vault, a large enclosed space that was not, like hell, another world; it was of the earth, but void of life, a camera obscura'.⁶⁰⁸

Exposure of the genre of art displayed contributed another component directly relating to the overall narrative of the ceiling paintings. Montgomerie commemorated life within a building which was directly associated with death. Within the paintings there was an acceptance of the beyond but it was not too far away as to have lost touch with the living and the lives of those left behind. The paintings became, 'a commemorative monument, to be visited as one visits a friend living in the country. The memory of the deceased has completely replaced the fear of death'.⁶⁰⁹ Stalker displayed the deceased surrounded by nature, as was witnessed in the landscape paintings, 'in front of the door of the vault the artist has depicted the countryside. The day would come when nature would no longer be imitated around the tomb, when the tomb itself would be transported into real nature'.⁶¹⁰ That day was to be evaded, as Montgomerie, by commemorating her in paint, strove to preserve his wife's memory and make sure she was not forgotten. Albeit expressed in a different fashion, the depth of Montgomerie's grief had no less intensity to that displayed by Timanthes in the form of Agamemnon losing his daughter. He too expressed his loss through paint where words were not enough. J.C. Schmitt claimed

⁶⁰⁷ Martha Wolfenstein qtd in G.W. Pigman, *Grief and the English Elegy*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1985) 6.

⁶⁰⁸ Aries, *The Hour of our Death*, 16.

⁶⁰⁹ Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, 347.

⁶¹⁰ Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, 461, 348.

that, 'the dead have no existence other than that which the living imagine for them'⁶¹¹ and Montgomerie, using the most fashionable decoration of the day, not only imagined, but created, an everlasting memorial to his wife. In the aisle he could be surrounded by familiar images, as depicted in the seasonal paintings and also the two paintings including the figure of the lady, an intimate place where he could retreat, remember and pray.

⁶¹¹ J.C. Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: the Living and the Dead in Medieval Society* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1998)128.

CHAPTER FIVE

PAINTING THE WORD: ANALYSIS OF THE RELIGIOUS ICONOGRAPHY.

The Harmony of Christianity had broken. The Church's unity had shivered into fragments, each arguing with one another and tormenting the evidence of scripture and tradition to justify itself, each ready for devastating war with its opponents.⁶¹²

As previously discussed, after the Protestant Reformation, religious sentiment reinforced its ideology within secular art. It emphasised that only that which could be seen should be displayed artistically with the *Sola Scripta* dictating that only what appeared in the bible was regarded as canonical. The Protestant world reflected God's order and artists translated these religious ideals in human terms. Art was only permissible if it reflected God's world through Protestant teaching, thus it shunned themes and people displayed in Catholic art such as images of Christ, the saints, the Virgin, and miracles. That type of content portrayed material that was intangible and so needed to be expunged. Protestant art possessed didactic qualities that were instructive, whereas Catholic imagery, although also possessing teaching qualities, was more devotional in nature.⁶¹³

This chapter considered the meaning of the explicitly religious iconography displayed within the ceiling paintings. It focused on motifs that had a direct relationship with biblical scripture and ascertained why the particular emblems and components were chosen. It demonstrated how the themes and motifs were not chosen at random and indicated the reasons why this was the case. It highlighted the

⁶¹² Drury, *Painting the Word*, 121.

⁶¹³ North, *Art and Commerce in the Dutch Golden Age*, 129.

significance of these particular components to Montgomerie and the reasons why he deliberately chose them to be included within his painted narrative.

The ceiling paintings contained an abundance of symbolism which conveyed a particular message as long as the viewer had the knowledge to interpret it. The practice was not new in the seventeenth-century as Christians, particularly in the early period, used symbolism that was significant to them and which was both allegorical and submerged in hidden meaning. The full meaning was clear to those who executed it but it was often unrecognisable to others, particularly when viewing the work centuries after its execution. Although it was greatly utilised in Christian art, symbolism could also convey secular meanings.⁶¹⁴

Dutch Influence at Skelmorlie Aisle

The influence of Dutch art and artists on their Scottish counterparts was discussed in chapter three but in this chapter it is discussed in relation to the paintings within Skelmorlie Aisle. Post-Reformation Dutch art was particularly informed by the countries religious ideology and this approach was also adopted by artists in Scotland whose religious viewpoint was similar. It was typically allegorical and included both explicit and implicit religious symbolism. Features that reflected Old Testament teaching were common as was a reflection of God's work through paintings of natural subject matter.⁶¹⁵ These components were included within the aisle iconography where nature and biblical narratives combined. Realism was a central feature whereby the utilisation of realistic subject matter was displayed in scenes of everyday life. This feature was popularly displayed within seasonal paintings which intertwined harmony of colour with a breadth of balance and

⁶¹⁴ Hulme, *The History, Principles and Practices of Symbolism in Christian Art*, 2.

⁶¹⁵ Williams, *Dutch Art and Scotland*, 14.

serenity.⁶¹⁶ Ruined buildings added an atmospheric perspective as they signified nostalgia offering a glimpse towards the past.⁶¹⁷ Human ambitions were cast aside as they decayed in irreversible stages reflected in the deteriorated buildings displayed. The weathered stone and brick contrasted with the subtle colours to further emphasise the ambience of the paintings.⁶¹⁸ These features were all noted within the ceiling paintings of the aisle. From the religious depictions of Adam and Eve and Esau and Jacob to the genre scenes incorporated into the landscape paintings; Dutch influence and Protestant ideology are explicit.

Symbolic forms within religious art were divided into three distinct categories; those that still survived in their recognised form and were frequently used in biblical texts, for example the fish or dove; those that were no longer used regularly but their significance was understood, an example of this would be the Ark; and thirdly those symbols that were clearly understood during the time of their use but are no longer known to us now. The symbols often held more than one meaning and this extended to the use of language, colour and number as well as the actual form executed.⁶¹⁹

Old Testament Narratives

Stalker adhered to Protestant ideology by incorporating two Old Testament narratives into the ceiling paintings. The first of these was the most commonly utilised narrative from the Old Testament, that of Adam and Eve (Plate 15). The motif displayed the couple in association with one of the two trees from the Garden

⁶¹⁶ Hulme, *The History, Principles and Practices of Symbolism in Christian Art*, 3.

⁶¹⁷ Hulme, *The History, Principles and Practices of Symbolism in Christian Art*, 3.

⁶¹⁸ Hulme, *The History, Principles and Practices of Symbolism in Christian Art*, 2.

⁶¹⁹ Hulme, *The History, Principles and Practices of Symbolism in Christian Art*, 3.

of Eden, the tree of knowledge of good and evil.⁶²⁰ The motif represented the eating of forbidden fruit and the subsequent expulsion from paradise. The early Church considered Adam to be a prefiguration of Christ and the image displayed the fall of man which brought death into the world, ‘for since by man came death by man came also the resurrection of the dead for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive’.⁶²¹ Imagery of the two figures was frequently utilised in Christian art as well as being used in literature.

The subject matter was frequently depicted in Books of Hours and was also a popular theme in Netherlandish art. Adam and Eve, whose names mean ‘earth’ and ‘fire’ in Hebrew, were seen as natural elements and therefore natural companions particularly as Eve was born of Adam’s rib.⁶²² The emblem could also represent partnership as it was a representation of the first special relationship between man and woman, and this may have been one reason why Montgomerie chose this particular emblem. Through the tree of knowledge humankind understood that, ‘the knowledge of good and bad is the ability to distinguish, and subsequently choose, between right and wrong in a moral sense...humankind attained a moral conscience and was forced to exercise moral decisions’.⁶²³ It was a story of repentance, and moral judgement.⁶²⁴ The symbolism related directly to a narrative that the Kirk would have no difficulty in approving. The theme was also associated with, the introduction of death into the world and thus was a fitting emblem for a mausoleum. The emblem was chosen deliberately by Montgomerie and was a clear and decisive

⁶²⁰ Holy Bible, King James Version, Genesis 2.17

⁶²¹ 1 Corinthians 15. 21, 22.

⁶²² Murray *et-al.*, *Oxford Companion to Christian Art*, 3.

⁶²³ Watson Mills, ed., *The Lutterworth Dictionary of the Bible*, (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1994) 930,

⁶²⁴ Mills, *The Lutterworth Dictionary of the Bible*, 931.

choice to provide one piece of an overall narrative that would be revealed when the forty one compartments were read as one complete image.

The second of the Old Testament narratives depicted on the aisle ceiling was the story of the twins Esau and Jacob (Plate 16). The brothers, who were the sons of Isaac, became founding fathers of the two hostile peoples, the Israelites and the Edomites.⁶²⁵ For Montgomerie, this idea of hostility and two tribes could be seen to relate to the two types of Christianity in Scotland, the old and the new. Catholicism and Protestantism were indeed hostile to each other and therefore a link can be demonstrated here by the choice of this emblem. Furthermore, the traditional story portrays the twins as contrasting personalities and enemies. Esau, the hunter and elder of the two, sold his birthright to Jacob, the farmer, for a mess of pottage, due to being faint from hunger. The younger further alienated the older brother when he deprived him of his father's blessing. Jacob, dressed in Esau's clothes, presented himself to his blind father, Isaac, pretending to be Esau: thus Isaac gave Jacob the blessing instead of Esau. Esau, therefore is deprived of the material inheritance of his birthright as the first born son, and, furthermore, he is deprived of the dying Isaac's blessing from God, which is given to his younger brother through trickery.⁶²⁶

Much of the narrative of the two brothers focused on relations between the two and the fact that it was deemed that God chose Jacob rather than Esau as heir to his father, 'God in his sovereignty is not bound by the natural or legal principle of inheritance by primogeniture but inscrutably singles out younger sons to carry out his purpose.'⁶²⁷ The relevance of this, with regard to the emblem's inclusion in the aisle paintings, is that the younger brother received what rightfully should have been

⁶²⁵ Murray, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art*, 247.

⁶²⁶ Barton, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 55.

⁶²⁷ Barton, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 55.

the elder's birthright. It is possible that the motif had particular significance for Montgomerie as it reflected his position as a second son, acquiring his older brother's birthright due to him being killed alongside his father at the hands of the Cunninghames. Although the circumstances were different from those of Esau and Jacob, the end product was the same. There was a distinct connection here, as the younger brother received the birthright from the father rather than the first born, and this may account for Montgomerie's choice. Whether Montgomerie had a difficult relationship with his brother is unknown, as no documents have survived giving any information on either his brother or the relationship he had with him.

Another interpretation of Montgomerie's inclusion of the tale of the two brothers could have a relationship to feuding. As discussed in chapter one, his family had been involved in deadly feud long before his birth and he personally had been involved from a young age.⁶²⁸ The feuding years had been an influential part of Montgomerie's life and reports indicated that in the latter years he was filled with remorse. Through the Old Testament narrative, Montgomerie could be recording this element of his life. As the feud between Esau and Jacob ended amicably,⁶²⁹ it may be that Montgomerie was making indirect reference to the fact the feuding years had come to an end.

Jacob became an Old Testament Patriarch who was renamed Israel after an encounter with a divine figure.⁶³⁰ The twelve tribes of Israel, ten of which were represented by badges on the aisle ceiling, and will be discussed in detail shortly, refer to him. The badges of the tribes have particular significance to covenanting ideology. The Covenanters believed they were the chosen people just as the

⁶²⁸ Robertson, *Ayrshire: Its History and Historic Families*, 122.

⁶²⁹ Barton, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 55.

⁶³⁰ Chiara de Capoa, *Old Testament Figures in Art*, (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2003) 110.

Israelites had done.⁶³¹ Edward J. Cowan stated, 'There was even a parallel and inconclusive debate, in which both Scots and Dutch participated, as to whether each represented God's chosen people, their countries a second Israel'.⁶³² Thus if Montgomerie was indeed a supporter of the Covenanters, the motif and the badges would have particular significance for him. As previously touched upon, although associated with Covenanters, no documents have been unearthed that indicated that Montgomerie himself was one.

A further connection with the use of the emblem of Esau and Jacob was its direct link to Scotland. According to tradition, the Stone of Scone, better known as the Stone of Destiny, the inauguration stone of Scottish kings, supposedly served as Jacob's pillow on his way to Bethel.⁶³³ The stone was, and still is, a great symbol of Scottish identity and patriotism; thus the tale provided another reason why the emblem may have particular significance. The story was implicit, but Montgomerie would have been well aware of its relevance. Patriotism was pronounced throughout the ceiling paintings by the inclusion of saltires on the ships, by inscriptions and by the heraldic displays. It is argued that the emblem of Esau and Jacob had too many special connections to Montgomerie for it to have been chosen at random.

The Tribes of Israel

The previous emblem related directly to the incorporation of the badges of the Tribes of Israel, but it was noted that two had been omitted. The source, as previously discussed, was taken from Speed's *Genealogies*. There was, however, no

⁶³¹ Edward J. Cowan, 'The Making of the National Covenant' qtd in John Morrill ed., *The Scottish National Covenant in its British Context*, (Edinburgh: EUP, 1990) 77.

⁶³² Cowan, 'The Making of the National Covenant' qtd in John Morrill ed., *The Scottish National Covenant in its British Context*, 77.

⁶³³ Genesis 28.11,18.

evidence to indicate that this theme was incorporated into other examples of Scottish decorative art.

The twelve tribes were named after Jacob's sons, but why Stalker omitted the two sons, Naphtali and Gad, remains a mystery. The shields were, 'displayed in order of seniority of the sons of Jacob, and commence at the north end of the east wall'.⁶³⁴ Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Asher, Issachar, Zabulon, Joseph and Benjamin are present, but the two absent, Naphtali and Gad, should have completed the twelve. There was nothing very specific about either brother that would lead them to be omitted intentionally. The name Gad referred to good fortune and in Hebrew meant banding together. The tribe of the same name in scripture was frequently attacked by raiders but could adequately defend itself. Gad was the seventh son of Jacob but the first by Leah's maid Zilpah. This was also the name of an earlier prophet and the same name was given to a pagan god who was worshipped by the Canaanites.⁶³⁵ Naphtali was Jacob's sixth son, the second son of Bilhah, Rachel's maid. The name was associated with a female deer roaming free in the mountains of Galilee.⁶³⁶ The fact that both of the omitted names were offspring of concubines rather than full wives may be significant, but they were not the only brothers to be the offspring of the maids, Ascher and Dan also fell into this category.⁶³⁷ If this was the connection then it must have had some significance to Montgomerie for him to have made the decision that they were to be excluded.

Another explanation for their omission may be that in observing the construction of the ceiling there was not enough space to incorporate another two badges. This may have been due to poor planning, although, due to the intricacy and

⁶³⁴ Wilson, *The Skelmorlie Aisle and Monuments at Largs*, 9.

⁶³⁵ Mills, *The Lutterworth Dictionary of the Bible*, 313.

⁶³⁶ Barton, *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, 65.

⁶³⁷ Mills, *The Lutterworth Dictionary of the Bible*, 604.

quantity of the designs, the ceiling must have been carefully planned before execution thus poor planning could have been avoided. If poor planning was the cause, it still did not explain why those specific two badges were chosen as subjects of omission. Teresa Grant offers some explanation regarding why Gad and Napthali were omitted. She claimed that as they were displayed on the outer position of Speed's family tree Speed, 'chose to omit them according to their position rather than on grounds of seniority or matriarchal lineage'.⁶³⁸ (Plate 42)

The importance for Montgomerie may have lay in the fact the shields were part of a heraldic tradition whereby there was a link between biblical and Montgomerie's personal ancestry. Grant explained that the shields:

parallel the family heraldry with which the aisle is decorated and imply a connection between the Montgomeries of Skelmorlie and biblical lineage, at least in terms of its importance, but also insomuch as they are all chosen people of God.⁶³⁹

As the shields displayed within the aisle were taken from Speed's text, Grant added that the principal intention of this text was to use the children of Israel as a demonstration of the blood line from Adam through to Christ. This was representative of a direct link between Christ and all believers with the Montgomerie's being 'chosen'.⁶⁴⁰ The link is further emphasised by the inclusion of heraldic banners being held by the figures Adam and Eve on the aisle ceiling.⁶⁴¹

Biblical Quotations

⁶³⁸ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation' in Church Monuments, Journal of the Church Monuments Society, vol., xvii, 2002, 80.

⁶³⁹ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation' in Church Monuments, Journal of the Church Monuments Society, vol., xvii, 2002, 80.

⁶⁴⁰ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation' in Church Monuments, Journal of the Church Monuments Society, vol., xvii, 2002, 80.

⁶⁴¹ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation' in Church Monuments, Journal of the Church Monuments Society, vol., xvii, 2002, 81.

It was argued that religious affiliation was represented in both image and word on the aisle ceiling. Protestant focus on words of scripture made it an expected component of this type of decoration and was a feature found in several other examples of Scottish painted ceilings. As discussed in chapter four, the aisle decoration included oblong cartouches which contained biblical texts. When viewed from the starting point of the south-west corner, they read in visual order (Appendix 2). The quotations were taken from the Geneva Bible,⁶⁴² which was, ‘the first truly popular, relatively inexpensive and readable, English Bible’⁶⁴³ and written under the watchful eye of John Calvin. It had a wide audience in Scotland due to Calvin’s influence and contained illustrations, chapter summaries, chapter and verse divisions and maps amongst its features. It was eventually superseded by the King James Version which was first issued in 1611 and which gained great popularity becoming far more popular than its predecessors the ‘Great Bible’ (c.1539) and the Bishop’s Bible (c.1568).⁶⁴⁴

The wording of the quotations focussed on judgement and penitence, reinforcing the function of the aisle as also being used as a place where Montgomerie went to pray. Several reports indicated that Montgomerie retreated regularly into the aisle for prayer, ‘Montgomery...in the after part of his life, repaired hither at night for devotional exercises; by these means burying himself as it were alive’.⁶⁴⁵ The most striking feature about the quotations related to the text, ‘Blessed are the children that enlarge the kingdom of heaven, and cursed are the children that enlarge the kingdom of hell’, as this was not a biblical quotation. As previously stated, no version of any bible contained this text. It is argued that there

⁶⁴² Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 132.

⁶⁴³ Mills, *The Lutterworth Dictionary of the Bible*, 604.

⁶⁴⁴ Mills, *The Lutterworth Dictionary of the Bible*, 604.

⁶⁴⁵ Sinclair, *Old Statistical Account of Scotland*, 1791-99, vol. xvii, 513.

were three possible explanations for this inclusion. Firstly, the quotation may have been incorrectly painted by Stalker, although this was deemed unlikely as Montmerie would certainly have chosen the scriptural quotes and was unlikely to have made an error in the wording. Secondly, the text was so faint that the artist restoring the cartouche during the restoration process made an error in compiling the text from faded paintwork. Thirdly, that the wording was chosen deliberately. Again, this is deemed unlikely as the wording of the statement is not biblically sound nor is it proper. The phrase, 'cursed are the children that inlargeth the kingdom of hell' is not the type of statement that would be associated with children as children, in theological terms, are never associated with hell.⁶⁴⁶ There is a further theological error in referring to hell as a kingdom as it is never described as such. Hell is understood as, 'the realm of the dead' or 'the eschatological place/state of torment for the wicked'.⁶⁴⁷ The word 'kingdom' is reserved to demonstrate the authority of a king, and can be used in both spiritual and secular terms to describe either the Kingdom of God or the authority and power of a king of a specific land. Neither of these interpretations can be applied to 'hell', therefore another error has occurred here.⁶⁴⁸ The reason why this phrase was incorporated remains a conundrum.

Early Modern Landscape Painting

The Old Testament narratives and the biblical quotations represented overt demonstrations of religious affiliation but the use of religious symbolism within the ceiling paintings does not end here. At first blush, landscape paintings, particularly those incorporating the four seasons, may appear to be secular but during the period

⁶⁴⁶ James Strong, *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, New Jersey USA: Abingdon Press, 1986) 247-253.

⁶⁴⁷ Mills, *The Lutterworth Dictionary of the Bible*, 369.

⁶⁴⁸ Mills, *The Lutterworth Dictionary of the Bible*, 369.

they were immersed in religious symbolism.⁶⁴⁹ Although this feature is not initially obvious, they can most certainly be regarded as examples of religious paintings. After the Reformation, Protestant artists turned their attention to landscape paintings as a means of conveying a combination of both secular and religious imagery.

Landscape scenes may be far removed from religious art displaying Catholicism but, in accordance to Protestant theology, they were as akin to religious art as the masterpieces executed by Peter Paul Rubens in defence of Counter-Reformation ideology. Since the practice of displaying seasonal scenes was incorporated into illuminated manuscripts by the early Christians, it was not new during the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries. Landscape painting, particularly genre painting displaying ordinary people taking part in daily pursuits, became popular. It was regarded as inoffensive to the religious sensibilities of the Protestant elite and its depictions of people occupied in daily tasks demonstrated the Protestant work ethic.⁶⁵⁰ The symbolism was implicit rather than explicit and, during the period, the subject matter avoided any imagery that could be construed as supporting Catholicism. Edward Norgate, who bought paintings for Charles I, remarked that landscape paintings were ‘of all kinds of pictures the most innocent, and which the devil himself could not accuse of idolatry’.⁶⁵¹

During Medieval times the seasons, accompanied by signs of the zodiac, were popular themes, and this was a partnership that Stalker also approved. The zodiac as an iconographical motif appeared regularly during the Renaissance. It related to the passage of time and the, ‘philosophical and moralising representations

⁶⁴⁹ R. Fuchs, *Dutch Painting*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978) 23.

⁶⁵⁰ Fuchs, *Dutch Painting*, 46.

⁶⁵¹ Edward Norgate qtd in Gordon Campbell, *Renaissance Art and Architecture*, (Oxford: O.U.P., 2004) 147.

of the horoscopes of great men'.⁶⁵² The astrological traditions of the past were reinvented, whereby the heavens were seen to influence the, 'sublunar world'.⁶⁵³ Although they were not Christian symbols, they did appear frequently in Christian art, and were typically in conjunction with the labours of the months.⁶⁵⁴ Late Medieval and Early Modern belief systems taught that the actions of humans were influenced by the planets and stars, which was an old pre-Christian concept, greatly believed in the Medieval period.⁶⁵⁵

The months had frequently mystical significance, displaying the belief that all labour was honourable as, 'the God of Grace is also the God of nature'.⁶⁵⁶ They related to fundamental moments of human life and the human seasons, with spring representing birth, summer as a time of maturity, autumn illustrating the notion of decline and death being associated with winter. The seasons could thus be linked to the life cycle, whereby the scenes demonstrating the fragility of nature and could be seen to allude to the biological cycle of life, 'The seasons go round and round, birth, copulation and death tread on one another's heels and we are caught up in them as in an everlasting circle of recurrence'.⁶⁵⁷ Their symbolism constructed a channel between time and eternity, of what was now and what was hereafter:

The medieval and Renaissance period partnered the seasons with the agricultural labours associated with each season; sowing, mowing, harvesting and hunting. From the first openings of Spring to the last desolation of winter, the days of the year are emblematical of the state and of the duties of Man; and whatever may be the period of our journey, we can scarcely look up to the heavens, and mark the path of the

⁶⁵² Matilda Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2005) 32.

⁶⁵³ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 32.

⁶⁵⁴ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 32.

⁶⁵⁵ Murray, *The Oxford Companion to the Christian Church*, 38.

⁶⁵⁶ Hulme, *The History, Principles and Practices of Symbolism in Christian Art*, 216.

⁶⁵⁷ Drury, *Painting the Word*, 4.

sun, without feeling, either something to animate us upon our course, or to reprove us for our delay.⁶⁵⁸

The seasons were related to the terrestrial world, the realms of nature constructed from matter. They represent an orderly calm, a peace and, 'harmony of human labour and human ingenuity with the movements of the natural world'.⁶⁵⁹ This included the weather, which was a popular focus as it reflected cosmological forces and highlighted the four elements of fire, water, earth and air.⁶⁶⁰ Human interaction with these four elements was of paramount importance as they not only displayed a reality that was contemporary, but it emphasised, 'human accord with divine providence'.⁶⁶¹ Dynamic qualities of the weather represent dimensions that were out-with human control displaying how, yet again, God's hand was seen in everything and humans were mere components of a greater world. God was the supreme artist and God's work had great religious significance.⁶⁶²

Landscape paintings displayed a combination of reality and illusion as the artist would always strive for perfection, their brush capturing nature that they frequently attempted to improve. This created a tug of conscience, as God created nature and therefore it was not deemed possible to improve it. They, therefore, adopted a practice of minimalism.⁶⁶³ Artistic invention such as clouds and light did not remain still until they were painted, so the artist effectively captured the moving world.⁶⁶⁴ Since the paintings were not executed outdoors, and they were to be representative of real life, knowledge of the scene or a sketch would be used as an *aide-memoire*. This allowed the artist to create realism although this was frequently

⁶⁵⁸ Rev, A. Alison qtd. in Richard Pigot, *The Life of Man Symbolised*, (London: Longmans, 1866) 37.

⁶⁵⁹ Lawrence Goedde, qtd. in Peter Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 24.

⁶⁶⁰ Goedde, qtd. in Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 24.

⁶⁶¹ Goedde, qtd. in Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 24.

⁶⁶² Goedde, qtd. in Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 24.

⁶⁶³ Slive, *Dutch Painting 1600-1800*, 1.

⁶⁶⁴ Slive, *Dutch Painting 1600-1800*, 1.

interlaced with aspects which were composed from the artist's imagination. Naturalistic components were the major feature of their paintings, but they were frequently enhanced. Trees were perhaps larger, rivers wider, grass greener, enhancing reality rather than copying it directly. The composition was usually horizontal and offered a restricted panoramic view. People and animals were not generally the major features; the landscape, countryside and other natural features were the focus. Images of God's creation such as clouds, hills, rock formations, sea, rivers, the weather and the sky were deemed far more important.⁶⁶⁵

In landscape paintings, human figures, although often included, did so more as God's creation than representing specific people. Humankind was of lesser importance than the natural scenes surrounding the human form. The sky, denoting the realm of heaven, played a major role by creating spaciousness and wide views over the countryside, all of which was surveyed by God's watchful eye.⁶⁶⁶ This concept threw a veil of piety and devotion over the entire scene:

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth...and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth...While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.⁶⁶⁷

Landscapes frequently included secular activities and labours of the land, even if they were not specifically seasonal paintings. Displays of a simple life automatically brought to mind feelings of quiet contemplation which reflected the relationship between man and God. Again, this concept originated in the Netherlands where all aspects of countryside were painted and landscapes were

⁶⁶⁵ Slive, *Dutch Painting 1600-1800*, 2.

⁶⁶⁶ Slive, *Dutch Painting 1600-1800*, 2.

⁶⁶⁷ Genesis 9:13,16, Genesis 8:22.

predominant themes.⁶⁶⁸ Dutch art instructed that there was an intimacy in nature and Dutch artists ‘approached reality with a purity of feeling, and even an awe and devotion that were almost religious and cannot be called completely devoid of any ideal or spiritual value’.⁶⁶⁹ Art reflected human experience coupled with Calvinist theology this paradox opened a doorway for an abundance of subject matter⁶⁷⁰ which could be viewed naturalistically, but also possess metaphorical significance.

Stalker’s Seasons

Stalker’s paintings of the seasons were clearly influenced by Dutch artists both in colour and execution. The paintings came under the umbrella term of ‘tonal paintings’ as they incorporated basic tones and colours that were naturalistic. Since they did not involve a vast array of colours, they could be applied speedily and relatively cheaply. Earthy colours such as browns, greens, reds and yellows dominated throughout the landscapes. This practice was demonstrated within Stalker’s paintings although, with the restoration having taking place, some of the colours displayed today are not in their original form. Furthermore, with the time that has lapsed since their execution, the colours would have faded so that a true representation no longer exists.⁶⁷¹

Stalker created an ideal based on components that existed at the time, for example the Church, aisle and Skelmorlie Castle, but he would also have incorporated imagery that was based upon an original source that he altered in some

⁶⁶⁸ Madlyn Millner Kahr, *Dutch Painting in the Seventeenth Century*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1982)9.

⁶⁶⁹ Slive, *Dutch Painting 1600-1800*, 177.

⁶⁷⁰ Kahr, *Dutch Painting in the Seventeenth Century*, 9.

⁶⁷¹ Kahr, *Dutch Painting in the Seventeenth Century*, 9.

way. An example of this would be the seascape in the *Hyems* painting which is obviously, due to the turbulent seas close proximity to the buildings, lacking in realism. This was the customary practice and was one that Stalker endorsed.

The spaciousness of his landscapes, coupled with the atmospheric ambience, were the dominating features as nature became a stage for biblical symbolism. Stalker paid great attention to detail in the seasonal paintings, showing brickwork and blades of grass which, with the manipulation of light and shadow, created drama, providing a balance between the two. Capturing nature in this way unified the organic characteristics of the painting setting an instant mood of calm and stability or equally could capture turbulence and uncertainty.⁶⁷² Where the earth and the sky converge, the land is seen to burst from the sides of the paintings to continue its journey beyond the boundaries of the picture plane. The horizontal compositions, demonstrating the expanse of land which is God's creation, offered continuity without limitations.⁶⁷³ Artists of landscape paintings placed their own visual experiences in their executions, creating imagery that encapsulated both time and place. By doing this, they persuaded the viewer that what they were witnessing was true to life. Executions of this type of subject matter instilled feelings of delight in the seasons, the times of the year and the practices and pursuits that accompanied them.

The richness of the colours relating to each season added to the naturalism captured by the artist, and feelings of nostalgia were evoked in observing the countryside and the processes of change that both time and the weather dictated. This type of art displayed a combination of humankind's relationship with their

⁶⁷² Slive, *Dutch Painting 1600-1800*, 177.

⁶⁷³ Comment, *The Panorama*, 7.

surroundings and with God. An understanding of the allegorical implications of the physical world provided a framework for understanding society and morality.⁶⁷⁴

Artists captured what they could survey; people, possessions, pastimes, labours, the land, sea, sky and animals. The idea was that what was portrayed was an enhanced image of what could be seen through the lens of a camera, and effectively, was to be viewed as 'poetic truths'.⁶⁷⁵ These scenes were moralistic in nature, and although they were not pictorial sermons, they covertly relayed in painted form the religious ideology they supported. Many scenes displayed domestic virtue which was reflective of the period in which conduct books determined how one should live. The books incorporated Reformed teaching and endorsed the perspective that moral behaviour was as important in the home as it was elsewhere. The home became a focal point for religious instruction and this was encapsulated within genre paintings. Ordinary aspects of daily life reflected God's creation, and thus everyday scenes became a central focus as everything God created was of value and worth capturing in paint.⁶⁷⁶

Stalker demonstrated his adherence to this philosophy within his landscape paintings by incorporating both imagery that was observed from reality and that which he composed by applying a practice of selective realism. He sought to demonstrate the importance of the local church and the aisle in his landscape *Hyems*, but would no doubt have refrained from incorporating aspects that he did not deem acceptable to accompany his imagery. For example, if the grass around the church building had been untidy he would automatically correct this in his painting. Blemishes on buildings would be overlooked, as would tarnished paintwork on

⁶⁷⁴ Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 13.

⁶⁷⁵ Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 2.

⁶⁷⁶ Slive, *Dutch Painting 1600-1800*, 177.

boats, messy farm scenes or any component that made God's world look in any way imperfect. His paintings were literary documents and each and every component had to embrace and contribute to the overall narrative on display.

Everyday life was captured in the paintings whereby the community was observed at work and play within an ambience of calm and contentment.⁶⁷⁷ Montgomerie's relationship with the community, and with God, was demonstrated in abundance as the scenes relayed their narrative through symbolism and metaphor. Stalker incorporated local scenes within a tranquil rural society, highlighting aspects that had significant importance to Montgomerie. Land, sea and sky take the dominant roles as these represented God's creation and were therefore of supreme importance.

Beginning with *Ver* (spring) the painting presented two central figures standing on the riverbank fishing, whilst a boat sailing on the river also contained two figures. The act of fishing and the inclusion of a boat or ship have particular religious significance due to being popular themes utilised to represent the Christian Church.⁶⁷⁸ Ships had metaphorical significance, including symbolising the Church, the state or ships of fortune and had a long history. The Ark was the first sea-using vessel associated with the Church whereby it was seen as a 'way out' of earthly existence to the eternal, through salvation. Eventually the vessel was adopted as the symbol emphasising the saving role of the Church, as the vessel protects life on the sea. They were particularly reminiscent of the Ark bringing the deceased to the underworld. This was a theme that was also utilised in both Greek and Egyptian

⁶⁷⁷ Further information on this subject can be found in, for example, EJ Cowan, Lizanne Henderson eds., *A History of Everyday Life in Medieval Scotland*, (Edinburgh: EUP, 2011), Elizabeth Ewan ed. *et-al Women in Scotland c.1100-c.1750*, (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2002), Ian Whyte, *Agriculture and Society in Seventeenth Century Scotland*, (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1979).

⁶⁷⁸ de Capoa, *Old Testament Figures in Art*, 56.

mythology and eventually, in Christian terms, it came to symbolise the Resurrection.⁶⁷⁹ The vessel indicated a journey and also expressed an, ‘impulse to search, discover and seek change’.⁶⁸⁰ A journey could represent discovery and initiation, and it was representational of imaginary voyages into the, ‘realms of the beyond or into uncharted regions’.⁶⁸¹ This could mean the inner journey of the soul after death alongside the search for the Promised Land and the happiness, truth and immortality that Christians believed would accompany it.⁶⁸²

Eternal life was assured by faith and hope and was regarded not as, ‘a perpetuation of the concrete personality, but as an ascension of the immortal soul’.⁶⁸³ Water in general symbolised cleansing and regeneration as is evidenced with its use during the sacraments, and, in particular, baptism. The theme of the sea and rivers was incorporated throughout the seasonal paintings and will be discussed again later. The sea contained fish and sea creatures and the Apostles were regarded as ‘fishers of men’. The fish itself symbolised the Christian soul living in the waters of baptism as the fish lives and thrives in the water.⁶⁸⁴ The ‘Great Fish’ also symbolised Jonah and the resurrection.

One other inclusion in the *Ver* painting was a representation of a bridge spanning the river. Bridges joined land but also represented a journey from one land to the next. The execution of bridges within paintings of a mausoleum, symbolised the journey of the body from this life to the next.⁶⁸⁵ The joining of land, of hearts

⁶⁷⁹ de Capoa, *Old Testament Figures in Art*, 56.

⁶⁸⁰ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 224.

⁶⁸¹ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 224.

⁶⁸² Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 224.

⁶⁸³ Panofsky, *Studies in Iconography*, 184.

⁶⁸⁴ de Capoa, *Old Testament Figures in Art*, 56.

⁶⁸⁵ George Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, (Oxford: OUP, 1961) 154.

and a movement from one prospect to another could also be signified here.⁶⁸⁶ Stalker incorporated several bridges in his seasonal paintings and they were not chosen by chance. These constructions possessed clear and concise symbolism.

Stalker incorporated the composition of two figures several times in the *Ver* painting. This theme of two was found throughout the seasonal paintings and in religious terms signified, 'the natures of Christ, human and divine'.⁶⁸⁷ Irrespective of sex, two figures also symbolised the importance of a couple. Two figures in the painting were depicted on the land fishing and also on a boat. This symbolism continued to be a theme as a few cottages were also represented in the painting in front of which two men were industriously at work. Furthermore, two men stroll with two dogs, a symbol of companionship and fidelity, by the side of the river. Stalker included too many examples of two figures for this not to have had particular significance.⁶⁸⁸

Naturally some of the symbolism is unknown to the viewer today, but it would have been fully understood by Montgomerie. He would have known exactly what the constant use of two figures represented and, considering the venue for the painting, it was also possible that the intention was to represent the companionship and togetherness he had with his wife.⁶⁸⁹ The theme was extended to a hill beyond the buildings where a man was noted riding a white horse and was attended by two figures on foot.

As was expected of the genre, people working on the land were a prime feature. Some prepare the soil for sowing, whilst one was executed in the act of ploughing and another sowing the seed. A windmill, again a gesture relating to the

⁶⁸⁶ Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, 154.

⁶⁸⁷ Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, 154.

⁶⁸⁸ Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, 154.

⁶⁸⁹ Audsley, *Handbook of Christian Symbolism*, 97.

work of the land, was displayed in the background. The Protestant work ethic was demonstrated here by incorporating humankind actively working God's land. The belief that capturing everyday life and toils reflected God's creation was a feature frequently included in landscapes of the period.⁶⁹⁰ Open spaces which included scenes of human endeavour and human drama emphasised the importance of the natural world. Peace and harmony displayed a pictorial concord between humankind and 'fundamental cosmological forces'⁶⁹¹ that during the seventeenth-century were viewed as weather systems. The Book of nature was a divine revelation, parallel to the bible, as humankind was seen interacting with natural forces. This was viewed as a positive metaphor of, 'human accord with divine providence'.⁶⁹²

The work theme was intertwined with pastimes as the figure appearing closest to the viewer was depicted sounding a horn whilst four hounds are seen chasing a stag and hind. They dart towards the forest area to the right side of the background of the painting. Representations of hunting would be expected, as it was a popular pastime during the era and spring was a perfect time to enjoy the sport. The stag and hind, two animals of different sex, again symbolised a couple and a perfect, natural partnership. The animals possessed a regal countenance and pose with dignity, and this, too, would have metaphorical significance for Montgomerie. The hunting of two animals could signify the possibility of one, or both, losing its life. This highlighted issues of anxiety and the fear of separation and death. The animals dart together into the unknown natural environment of the forest, which was part of God's creation.⁶⁹³ As Montgomerie was to rest in the aisle after his own death, the metaphorical significance of these animals could signify Montgomerie

⁶⁹⁰ Khar, *Dutch Painting in the 17 Century*, 9.

⁶⁹¹ Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 25.

⁶⁹² Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 24.

⁶⁹³ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 244.

and his wife being together again, entering the safety of an unknown realm symbolised by the forest, but one that they believe was a safe haven. Again religious significance was demonstrated here and perhaps this was a focal point for the patron.

Spring was a time of youth and gaiety and had very particular religious significance. Rebirth and human redemption were alluded to through Christ's Resurrection, which took place at Easter, and was seen as a victory of life over death, a renewal.⁶⁹⁴ This had particular significance within a mausoleum, with the hope of the deceased attaining eternal life in heaven. The painting possessed some aspects of realism, but certain features, such as the bridge, were badly composed, and although the bridge may have actually existed, it could not have done so in this form. The painting displayed aspects of de Vos' work but additions to the painting, such as buildings and the general landscape that are Stalker's creations, may be construed to represent what was visible to him. Since some components within the other seasonal paintings displayed reality it may be construed that aspects of this painting were the same.

The toil of the seasons was demonstrated as again was typical of the genre. Animals were incorporated in relation to the labours and fields were depicted having been prepared for planting and regeneration. Again the religious symbolism here related directly to renewal and birth and the fact that death was not the end. A new cycle brought new hope and a journey began where, in the previous season, it had ended.⁶⁹⁵ *Ver* with its relationship to birth and renewal, was a fitting inclusion for a burial aisle and, particularly with local scenes incorporated, made the painting especially significant for Montgomerie. It was a painting of hope and expectation through God's grace.

⁶⁹⁴ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 34.

⁶⁹⁵ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 32.

Aestas also followed the traditional practice of the genre and images of working the land coupled with summer pastimes were incorporated. In this painting, once again the symbolism associated with the number two emerged, as couples, were painted enjoying each others company. These were demonstrated beside family scenes that included images of children. The figures enjoyed the summer weather, as was affirmed by the use of a parasol carried by one of the ladies. This again was obviously a theme of special significance for Montgomerie and represented the importance of family, of couples and of community. His public role was important as, although he had a personal identity, as laird of the parish, he also had a public one. Within the painting Stalker highlighted the synthesis between Montgomerie's private and public roles as the images of the couple and family were juxtaposed alongside those of a community at work and at leisure.

Groups of buildings occupied a large portion of the scene within this painting, and again, the theme of two reoccurs. Two men sit on stools shearing sheep in the shadow of trees whose branches display an abundance of leaves. The figures are mature specimens, as corresponded to the season both in natural and human terms. At the front of a bridge another two figures stand in the water; one appears to be dipping a black ram in the water. This dipping process contained explicit Christian symbolism as the toil represented baptism.⁶⁹⁶ There was, however, an example of dual symbolism here, as the figure could just as easily be extracting the sheep from the rigours of the water. On the one hand, the dipping symbolised baptism, whilst the saving of the sheep had a direct relationship to the role of Jesus

⁶⁹⁶ Hulme, *The History, Principles and Practice of Symbolism in Christian Art*, 176.

as the Good Shepherd as well as being related to Jesus being symbolised as the *Agnus Dei*.⁶⁹⁷ The figure was seen to save his ram just as Jesus saves his flock:

If a man have a hundred sheep and one of them go astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.⁶⁹⁸

Jesus, who referred to himself as the Good Shepherd, was the saver of men and thus, either through baptism or through extraction from the rigours of the unknown, religious ideology underpins this image.

The stream was painted with a, ‘a two-span footbridge across it; a man is standing on the bridge leaning on the parapet and fishing or testing the depth of the water’.⁶⁹⁹ The uncertainty of life could be alluded to in his action of trying to ascertain the depth of water, as it clearly was an act of testing something that was unfathomable and is within the realms of the unknown. The uncertainty lay in what was beneath the stick the figure was holding, just as life held a wealth of uncertainties.⁷⁰⁰ Once again a bridge was depicted in the painting and this too, alongside the bridge in *Ver*, had connotations of the crossing from one land to another, or from the land of the living to that of the dead and beyond to eternal life.

Stalker also included figures to the right of the painting engaged in hay-cutting and the stacking of bales, with the associated farm buildings clearly seen in the background. The foreground scene displayed the occupation of milking cows. Again, the labours of the season, and the animals associated with them, were demonstrated, as was normal practice within the genre. The components of the

⁶⁹⁷ Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 25.

⁶⁹⁸ St Matthew’s Gospel, Chapter 18.12-13. 904.

⁶⁹⁹ Houston, HS Unpublished Report.

⁷⁰⁰ Audsley, *Handbook of Christian Symbolism*, 37.

painting possess realism and in view of the fact elements of some of the other paintings are taken from real life, it is realistic to assume that, at least in some respect, Stalker has conveyed what was visible to him. Certain features of the subject matter, perhaps his representation of natural components, would be enhanced, as it was the artist's duty to, 'improve on it according to the idea he had formed in his imagination of perfected nature as even the greatest artist remains somewhat bound within the framework of his or her time'.⁷⁰¹ Summer was a time of brightness, of maturity and of fulfilment and Stalker encapsulated all of these features in his painting of this month and its activities.

Autumnus again revealed the labours of a rural community, while reaping the fruits of the labours of the earlier two seasons. An orchard was observed to the left of the painting displaying its offering of fruit ready to be picked and enjoyed. The scene displayed many rural buildings and offered an ambience of peace and tranquillity surrounding the undertaking of daily chores. Autumn was a time of harvest and the painting demonstrated figures in full activity of this chore. In the centre of the composition Stalker painted a canopied construction, which may have been a grain store, supported by wooden stakes. To the front of the structure, numerous barrels were displayed which appeared to have been filled within the canopied area. A male figure was depicted carrying a filled barrel away from the structure whilst, again the theme of two was incorporated as two figures appear to be actively processing the grain. Several more figures are seen carrying barrels in the direction of the farm buildings. Again, these tasks represented a rural community undertaking the toils of the land.⁷⁰² As Largs was surrounded by sea to the west and

⁷⁰¹ Slive, *Dutch Painting 1600-1800*, 6, 68.

⁷⁰² Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 32.

farmland surrounding in the other directions, rural scenes were much in keeping with the overall area and were an appropriate inclusion within the ceiling paintings.

Hard work was coupled with a sense of relaxation and joviality, as one of the buildings on the left of the painting demonstrated. The building named, 'The Swan Inn', signified by the sign above the entrance doorway, was on the first floor of the building which acted as a cellar on its ground floor. Access to the inn was granted by ascending a staircase to the left of the structure and a figure of a man was inserted undertaking climbing the structure. This scene demonstrated that there was always time to relax after a hard day and rest, food and drink are readily available. No contemporary documents have survived to provide evidence that the Swan Inn existed, but the town would most certainly have had an inn, therefore it seems likely that this would be a feature of the Largs community. As has been previously stated, as Stalker incorporated aspects of reality into other scenes it is not an unrealistic prospect that he did the same here.

In front of the inn Stalker incorporated, 'a draw-well of the medieval period'.⁷⁰³ Several thatched cottages were also noted as well as, 'a curtain wall'.⁷⁰⁴ In the immediate foreground a wooden fenced enclosure was inserted which was seen to be empty. A mounted figure on a dark horse overlooked the industrious scene from a hillside position to the rear of the painting. The figure is depicted riding towards the buildings and could signify a visitor and a journey.⁷⁰⁵ The figure's position in the background made it unlikely to represent anyone of particular significance as important figures that were the focus of the Renaissance paintings

⁷⁰³ Houston, HS Unpublished Report.

⁷⁰⁴ Houston, HS Unpublished Report.

⁷⁰⁵ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 224.

were always to the foreground or were large,⁷⁰⁶ neither of which applied to this figure. Autumn was the time of harvest, of reward for the months of growth, planting and nurturing, and Stalker personalised these scenes by incorporating local features and activities. The labours of the land were undertaken and representations of enjoyment, rest and time to relax are also incorporated. Again religious symbolism underpins the entire painting.

The final season of the year, *Hyems* demonstrated the distractions of the season and it was this painting in which the artist executed the image of the aisle attached to the church. It is noted that the right of the painting lacked the calm ambience of the left and could easily be viewed as two entirely different paintings juxtaposed. This painting contained a vast amount of symbolism, more than the other three seasonal scenes, and was arguably the most interesting painting of the four landscapes. The painting displayed natural phenomena associated with a winter weather system, with blowing winds and gales, ice, stormy seas and bare trees. The ground was noticeably firm with no sign of growth visible.

Winter scenes represented the final season of the year and a time when the year's work in the field was done. It was a time of reflection and of rest. It metaphorically symbolised death and decay and the anticipation of new birth in the spring.⁷⁰⁷ There were again clear religious connotations here, as God saw fit to end a cycle which would rejuvenate again when spring arrived once more. It was a cyclical representation of life and not the more linear structure that humans related to.⁷⁰⁸ The season displayed the human condition of frailty and impending death, which was symbolised by trees being stripped of life, without leaves or fruits. They present the

⁷⁰⁶ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 39.

⁷⁰⁷ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 39.

⁷⁰⁸ Drury, *Painting the Word*, 7.

idea that the season was, ‘nature’s annual rest’, which is associated with the subterranean principles of darkness and damp.⁷⁰⁹

The buildings were again rural, with the major focus of this painting being the representation of Skelmorlie Aisle attached to the parish church. The aisle in the painting was an exact replica of how the building looks today, therefore, at least that part of the panorama captured by Stalker displayed a true and authentic representation of the area during the period. Pont's claim that, ‘The original little burgh of barony of Largs, which was closely huddled around the ancient church’,⁷¹⁰ was likely to be the scene captured in Stalkers execution. This painting is of particular value as a contemporaneous document, as it is the earliest known depiction of Largs to have survived.

Any images of a church gave a painting a most emphatic religious dimension.⁷¹¹ The inclusion of it within the aisle decoration demonstrated the importance of both the institution and the building to Montgomerie. It was not only the representation of the building that created this ambience, but the actions that went on within it. Baptisms, weddings, funerals and the sacraments all took place within its walls. The building would have been the focal point of the community,⁷¹² just as it would be the focal point of the painting. Considering the importance to the patron, this was an unsurprising inclusion. Both the building and what went on within it were important to Montgomerie.

It was likely Montgomerie’s children would have been baptised there and from there his wife’s funeral would have taken place, unfortunately no parish records have survived from the period to support this proposition. The building had

⁷⁰⁹ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 39.

⁷¹⁰ Pont, *Topographical Account of the District of Cunningham*, 130.

⁷¹¹ Murray, *Christian Art and Architecture*, 107.

⁷¹² Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 286.

an intense personal connection to Montgomerie as the aisle was where his beloved wife lay and where he too would be laid to rest after his death. It was an extremely touching inclusion in this scene, and gave the painting a depth of tenderness, intimacy and solemnity, making it by far the most personal of the four seasonal paintings.

The Church provided a further focal point as its steeple stretched into the heavens and was the highest point beneath the sky and clouds which stretched into the realm of God. This was greatly symbolic, as God was the creator of both man and nature and, as such, the Church surveyed and protected its family as it towered over the buildings, land and people below. A figure was painted in the church doorway and another appeared to have dismounted his horse and was walking towards the building. This displayed the building as a place for people to congregate, but also demonstrated how small mankind was alongside the building and thus within God's world.⁷¹³

The inclusion of both the church and aisle emphasised the importance of the Church to both the community and, in particular, to Montgomerie. The aisle being attached to the church building again demonstrated a synthesis between the personal and public roles undertaken by Montgomerie. There was no separation of the two, they were intrinsically intertwined. Montgomerie was patron of the church in Largs at the time the painting was executed. As such, he was responsible for the upkeep of the building and also for payment of the minister.⁷¹⁴ His pride in this role and his status within the local community was captured by Stalker in an image that secured them as directly and inherently united.

⁷¹³ Audsley, *Handbook of Christian Symbolism*, 62.

⁷¹⁴ Groome, *Ordinance Gazetteer of Scotland: A Survey of Scottish Topography, Statistical, Bibliographical and Historical*, accessed 14 January 2012.

The cross on the apex of the aisle roof was the universally recognised symbol of Christ and surveyed all that was beneath it as well as asserting the importance of the Christian faith. The symbol itself was found throughout Christian art in a variety of images. It was symbolised by the wings of birds flying in the air, the masts and yards of ships sailing on the sea, the meeting of opposite roads in their journeys upon earth, the boughs of trees in the forest, the roofs and rafters of buildings.⁷¹⁵ There was a very clear and distinctive message portrayed in this painting and it was one which Stalker repeated throughout the entire ceiling: the importance of God in Montgomerie's life.

The ruin of another church is noted on a hill in the background of the painting but during the period there was only one church in the area. No information has been unearthed that suggested there had been another church in that vicinity and no map has indicated such. The inclusion of this broken and fragmented building may well represent the destruction of Catholicism in Scotland and the adoption of the new, strong and cohesive building which is the local Kirk in Largs, a building that housed the Protestant faithful. There seems no other logical explanation for the inclusion of these ruins and the fact they fade into insignificance to the rear of the painting seems noteworthy. Again Montgomerie would have known exactly what the symbolism here represented.

The bridge theme was again noted in this painting, as the structure stretched over a stream towards the stormy sea which came dangerously close to the buildings. One building has been swept away and another is seen to be in the throes of submergence. The symbolism here again focuses on instability and uncertainty, whilst the trees bend in the wind displaying turbulent weather and a reminder that it

⁷¹⁵ Audsley, *Handbook of Christian Symbolism*, 62.

is God and not humankind that is in control. The wildness of the sea was also reflected in the boats that struggle to survive its overpowering presence. One boat was under control whilst another battled the storm. A third has lost its fight and was dragged beneath the waves showing that not all are saved. This particular scene was copied from de Vos, as his seasonal engraving of the same name is almost identical.⁷¹⁶ De Vos' imagery reflected the specific time of year with associated attributes pertaining to each season.

Artists of the Early Modern period frequently captured the elements as weather systems were intriguing subjects, possessing both scientific and religious dimensions. Both could be captured by artists and engravers of the period and the subject did not offend the religious authorities. Theologians argued that, 'God controlled the weather and could use its forms for theological teaching'.⁷¹⁷ They focussed on texts such as, 'The lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet' thus incorporating God's teaching into their art. This is what de Vos succeeded in capturing within this painting, cosmological forces of nature that were reflective of God's guiding force.⁷¹⁸

As calm seas could symbolise stability and security, the theme of rough seas and ships struggling to stay afloat was also a popular theme during early Christianity when the Church was faced with many challenges.⁷¹⁹ This could also have been Montgomerie's intention in having this theme incorporated in such a fashion into the ceiling paintings. The Church in Scotland had experienced turmoil and challenges after the Reformation and which was still very much alive during Montgomerie's

⁷¹⁶ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 138.

⁷¹⁷ Maureen Warren, 'Mysterious in Form and Nature: Depicting the weather in Early Modern engravings'. www.Academia.edu/3541498. Accessed 15/5/2013.

⁷¹⁸ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 32.

⁷¹⁹ Hulme, *The History, Principles and Practice of Symbolism in Christian Art*, 30.

lifetime. The rigours of religious uncertainty and instability were traditionally associated with this theme. The symbolism here was quite overt and clearly demonstrated a lack of calm.

The metaphorical use of the rough sea could also have secular significance and be translated as alluding to the rigours, dangers and uncertainties of life. It emphasised that humankind required determination and reliability on the voyage through life. It could also indicate the turbulence of relationships.⁷²⁰ This, again, was a theme that Stalker captured from Dutch artists who, 'were familiar with the old tradition of using tempestuous seas and endangered ships or those keeping a steadfast course as metaphors for the way of the world and the vicissitudes of life'.⁷²¹

The frozen stream to the left of the scene offered a fun pastime for seven skaters, one of whom appears to have lost his footing. Another appears to be trying to burst the icy surface with a stick. Their activity was keenly watched by a male observer resting on a stone. To the rear of the skaters Stalker incorporated a boat which was frozen within the ice. Two women stand to the front of a thatched dwelling; their activity involved one holding a pan of ice and the other a red hot poker which she extended into the pan in an act of, perhaps, attempting to melt the ice. The inclusion of the frozen pond was indicative of the season, but it also symbolised the slipperiness of life, the uncertainty.⁷²² It was easy to lose one's footing, to slide into bad practices and this demonstrated how life could change very quickly if one fell, metaphorically, from grace. The slipperiness of the ice showed that there was not complete control and this related to the challenges in life and the

⁷²⁰ Mariet Westermann, 'Subject and value in seventeenth century Dutch painting' in Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 44.

⁷²¹ Slive, *Dutch Painting 1600-1800*, 127.

⁷²² Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 45.

limitations humans faced.⁷²³ Scraped areas on the ice could also signify the, 'complex maze of providence which is the path through human life'. Instability and unexpected change could also be symbolised by melting ice which was under the command of the weather and, therefore, of God, just as human life is also under his control.⁷²⁴

Ice could also symbolise solidarity, demonstrating how communities came together at a time of need. Metaphorically, if anyone fell, someone would be there to support and assist them:

The skates cry out reply and tie a thousand knots,
And bows, skating around the pond about the house.
And witness by their wavering thread of cutting steal
How random are the whirling courses of our life;
How crooked are the roads by which we reach our
goal,
Each by a different road.⁷²⁵

The scraping on the ice symbolised different pathways and routes that life took humankind, and how all were not the correct routes.

The scene displayed how young and old, rich and poor could all enjoy winter activities within one specific area. It reflected togetherness and community spirit, and was an activity in which everyone could share. It also highlighted how everyone was equal in the eyes of God, and uncertainty and instability could face everyone.⁷²⁶ Often images of winter scenes demonstrated class structure, as noted in Averkamp's *Winter Landscape with Figures Skating on a Frozen River* (c.1608). Here the artists asserts that affluent people do not fall, misfortune was reserved for the lower classes.

⁷²³ Michael Bath, 'Anglo-Dutch relations in the field of the emblem' in *Emblems in Glasgow: A Collection of Essays* (Glasgow: GUP, 2001)175.

⁷²⁴ Bath, 'Anglo-Dutch relations in the field of the emblem' in *Emblems in Glasgow: A Collection of Essays*, 175.

⁷²⁵ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 45.

⁷²⁶ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 45.

Thus, the distinction of the upper echelons of society was preserved.⁷²⁷ This was a theme also captured by Stalker, as the figures on the ice were clearly wearing simple clothes and appear to represent ordinary members of the community. Through the scene the viewer was encouraged to observe the, ‘human condition, its pleasures and potential slipperiness as they discover ways to improve the quality of life.’⁷²⁸

This chapter focussed on the religious iconography within the ceiling paintings which was explicitly displayed with Stalker’s inclusion of Old Testament biblical narratives, biblical quotations and his adoption of the in-vogue practice of incorporating seasonal paintings. The Dutch influence on the entire ceiling execution was unmistakable from the composition, colour and content perspective. This was most particularly seen in relation to the seasonal paintings. However, in view of the influence of Dutch artists on their Scottish counterparts, this was not unexpected, as Stalker, through his master John Sawers, would have been directly influenced by their practices.

The Old Testament representation of Adam and Eve was a popular motif utilised during the period and, displayed within a burial aisle, was an appropriate inclusion. Its symbolism incorporated characteristics that Montgomerie would deem fit for such a venue. Esau and Jacob had also special significance for Montgomerie as a variety of interpretations of the emblem could relate to him.

The biblical quotations were deliberately chosen to suit their location and also to emphasise Montgomerie’s inward feelings of repentance. Their connection to the theme of judgement also reinforced the notion that Montgomerie used the aisle as a private place of prayer. This was suggested in the Statistical Accounts, but no

⁷²⁷ Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 44.

⁷²⁸ Mariet Westermann, ‘Subject and value in seventeenth century Dutch painting’ in Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 44.

contemporary documents have survived to confirm this as fact. Much of what was known of Montgomerie was hearsay or folk narrative, therefore the content of the quotations may provide some degree of information that supported his use of the aisle for this practice. One quotation posed a conundrum as it differed from the others in that it was not biblical.

The seasonal paintings were a popular theme during the period and were frequently accompanied by signs of the zodiac, a coupling captured by Stalker. The symbolism was implicit and would have been understood during the period as a reflection of God's world. The paintings were not merely visual documentation, they had explicit metaphorical association. Naturalism enhanced the realism, as components that could be perfected were juxtaposed with elements which were executed from reality, for example, the inclusion of the aisle. Nature could be enhanced and it was the artist's role to do this.

In focusing on scenes that captured the community at work and play, plus the inclusion of community buildings, Montgomerie displayed his communal identity as well as his personal one. His inclusion of the aisle and church building had particular poignancy as churches represented not just the building, but the actions that went on within them. They were the venue for baptisms and funerals whereby life and death passed through their doors. They are the centre of spiritual life, but also of major rites of passage within the family. The aisle held the remains of his wife and as such was a particularly intimate inclusion. The building was represented exactly as it looks today indicating the importance of this particular painting. As much of the content was factual it may be the earliest surviving record of the area.

The merits of Stalker's technical execution of the seasons was not the focus of this research but it was interesting to note that Houston regarded them as being

simplistic in form and, ‘deficient in the three great components which go to make a high-class picture, viz: composition, perspective, and colouring’.⁷²⁹ He continued, ‘The workmanship of the four seasons pictures is amateurish and badly drawn, and apparently has not been executed by the same artist who carried out the other panels’.⁷³⁰ Despite this being Houston’s opinion, the paintings provided a wealth of information about Montgomerie. Their symmetrical design displays balance and harmony, created an ambience of quiet contemplation which, when read alongside the Old Testament scenes, create what Montgomerie wished, one overall landscape of faith. These components were chosen by Montgomerie for a very particular reason as they conveyed part of the narrative he wished to display. They relate to each other in accordance with their religious ideology and were not random choices, for purely aesthetic value.

⁷²⁹ Houston, HS Unpublished Report.

⁷³⁰ Houston, HS Unpublished Report.

CHAPTER SIX

A SURVEY OF THE TWO VERNACULAR PAINTINGS, HERALDIC REPRESENTATIONS AND CARDINAL VIRTUES.

Now you understand how stars and hearts are one with another
And how there can nowhere be an end, nowhere a hindrance;
How the boundless dwells perfect and undivided in the spirit,
How each part can be infinitely great and infinitely small,
How the utmost extension is but a point, and how
Light, harmony, movement, power
All identical, all separate, and all united are life.⁷³¹

William Johnstone's painting *A Point in Time* (Plate 47) was described by Douglas Hall as, 'drawing in the spectator; teasing them 'to float in zones of coloured light or probe deep cavernous spaces'.⁷³² The viewer was drawn into the drama that lay open before them as the indistinct shapes and colours merged to represent, 'a point in time' that Johnstone clearly made his own. Within the painting lay a concept that the viewer could not fully grasp as the content demonstrated a synthesis between Johnstone's use of colour and form and a meaning he designed especially for his own intentions. What the painting actually meant Johnstone never revealed publicly but he naturally fully understood it. In this respect, Montgomerie and Johnstone were comparable. Montgomerie, through Stalker, in seventeenth-century style, captured his 'point in time' as some elements of the painting were easily understood by the viewer and some were not. Stalker's paintings contained many images that could be traced to contemporary emblem books and printed sources, others were recognisable from the locality but in some cases identification of the motifs was difficult, and in some cases impossible, to determine.

⁷³¹ William Johnstone, *A Point in Time*, qtd in Hugh Macdairmid, *Poems to the Paintings of William Johnstone*, (Edinburgh: K. D. Duval, 1933) 9.

⁷³² Douglas Hall, *William Johnstone*, (Edinburgh: E.U.P., 1980) 38.

This chapter focused on the major components of the ceiling iconography which were not overtly religious and which did not have their genesis within established contemporary sources. The components, with the exception of the horse in the painting of the land, have either their genesis in either yet to be unearthed sources; have been composed by Stalker from existing tangible components; or from information that Montgomerie would have supplied. The chapter considered the role of the heraldic displays portrayed within the aisle and their significance to Montgomerie and his wife. It was also argued that the heraldic displays were the only major components executed by Stalker that did not have some degree of religious significance. Why Montgomerie specifically chose the symbols of Justice and Fortitude to be portrayed was also highlighted as was reasons why he may have excluded the other two Cardinal Virtues. The major focus of this chapter, however, was the analysis of the two individual paintings which contained images of a lady by the sea and the other, a lady on the land. For the sake of simplicity, the paintings will be referred to as *The Sea* and *The Land*. The chapter will re-construct the symbolism within these two paintings thus determining the paintings intrinsic meaning.

The 'Achievement' of Power and Pride

The heraldic representations incorporated by Stalker were particularly personal inclusions as they were indicative of ownership, personal identity and familial affiliation. The coats of arms were the only major ceiling executions that did not contain religious symbolism. Heraldry was a feature of many painted ceilings, including Earlshall, Delgaty Castle, and Rossend Castle. The practice of acquiring

and displaying coats of arms was not only in vogue during the period but was an inherent part of seventeenth-century noble society.⁷³³

Through heraldry social status was asserted and affiliations with other noble families established and confirmed. Its use was a common practice amongst the elite and distinguished the noble from the ignoble, as Zeune states, it served to, ‘impress and to indicate rank’.⁷³⁴ Furthermore, displaying personal coats of arms was regarded as proof of their noble status and, according to Nisbet, was, ‘the chiefest honour, for a gentleman to bear a coat of arms, without which none can be called gentle’.⁷³⁵

In terms of death, heraldic displays were important as they reflected continuity and a linking of the past with the present. According to Scottish expert on Heraldry, Charles Burnett, ‘possession of a coat of arms is the nearest thing to immortality to be sustained in this life as the arms are passed from one generation to another in the direct line of descent’.⁷³⁶ Family pride was encapsulated in the coats of arms as this was extremely important in Scotland, described by Mark Dennis as a country, ‘blessed with a sense of family and place, of clanship and a long armorial tradition’.⁷³⁷ Historian and expert on heraldry, Alexander Nisbet claimed that heraldry was:

not merely show and pageantry as some are apt to imagine but used to distinguish persons and families, to represent heroic achievements of our ancestors, to perpetuate their memory, to trace the origin of noble and ancient families and the various stops by which they arrive at greatness, to distinguish the many different branches descended from the same families, to show several relations which one family shows in to another.⁷³⁸

⁷³³ Mark Dennis, *Scottish Heraldry*, (Dunfermline: Panda, 1999)1.

⁷³⁴ Zeune, *The Last Scottish Castles*, 41.

⁷³⁵ Alexander Nisbet, *A System of Heraldry*, (Edinburgh: Constable, 1984) 4.

⁷³⁶ Burnett, *Scotland’s Heraldic Heritage: The Lion Rejoicing*, 89.

⁷³⁷ Dennis, *Scottish Heraldry*,1.

⁷³⁸ Nisbet, *A System of Heraldry*,1.

The emblems selected were a means of identification and association as no two family members are allowed the same arms at any one time. Differentiation was achieved by the use of labels of variation whereby, for example, a son would have the father's arms in the background, but would also have a device on top of this to indicate a difference. The first son's device took the form of the father with the exception that it had a label across the image which resembled an elongated letter 'm' which was removed when the father died. The second son had to follow a practice of 'differencing' which involved making a permanent change to their father's arms. The device issued to a second son was frequently a crescent moon,⁷³⁹ but Montgomerie did not display this on his coat of arms; this may be because he inherited directly from his father due to the death of his older brother.

The aisle displayed the arms of Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie and also his wife Margaret Douglas, represented by the arms of Drumlanrig as her father was Sir William Douglas of Drumlanrig. A representation of their joint arms was also noted whereby Montgomerie's arms were impaled with the arms of his wife, thus highlighting the joining of these two noble Scottish families. The house of Eglinton, main seat of the Montgomeries was also included. The house of Lochinvar was visible, referring to Margaret's mother, also Margaret, who was daughter of James Gordon of Lochinvar. The Semple family, representative of Montgomerie's mother, is also acknowledged.⁷⁴⁰ These heraldic displays were especially important to Montgomerie and, as such, were duly incorporated into the ceiling paintings.

Regarding artistic merit, the heraldic displays demonstrated that Stalker either had a firm grasp of this genre of art, having learned well from his master, or

⁷³⁹ Ian Moncrieffe *et al.*, *Simple Heraldry*, (London: Thomas Nelson, 1965) 20.

⁷⁴⁰ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 143.

his master had a hand in its execution.⁷⁴¹ Sawers, Stalker's master, was a heraldic painter of note, holding positions such as Carrick Pursuivant, and later Snowdown Herald.⁷⁴² He was the foremost artist in Scotland in the execution of heraldic art. It was evident on the ceiling paintings that the heraldic work was the most impressive. Considering the difference in the quality of the execution of the heraldic paintings compared to the landscapes, it was not improbable that Sawers played some part in their execution, though there is no evidence to indicate that he was involved.

A Virtuous Nature?

The figures of *Justice* and *Fortitude* were two of the four Cardinal Virtues, the other two being *Temperance* and *Prudence*. They were regarded as natural gifts, bestowed upon humankind for living a life of goodness. The classification was adopted by the chief Christian theologians, for example Saint Thomas Aquinas. Christian writers contrasted the Cardinal Virtues with the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.⁷⁴³ They were personified in female figures and derived from Socratic, Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy. Renaissance culture, 'revived ancient mythological personifications of the virtues giving special emphasis to the ethical and civic qualities of peace, abundance and concord and to the virtue of wisdom'.⁷⁴⁴ The seven virtues accumulatively had seven corresponding vices, the Seven Deadly Sins and were frequently displayed in illuminated manuscripts.⁷⁴⁵

The image of *Fortitude* on the aisle ceiling was displayed in traditional form with her arms bare and carrying a pillar. The accompanying motto, as well as the

⁷⁴¹ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 128.

⁷⁴² Apted, *Painters in Scotland*, 82.

⁷⁴³ Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 525.

⁷⁴⁴ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 294.

⁷⁴⁵ Murray, *The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture*, 561.

figure itself, have not been identified as being copies of other sources, thus the two figures are probably Stalker's own compositions loosely based on available sources. The Latin motto accompanying *Fortitude* stated, 'Strong in adversity and showing brave heart, with unbroken spirit I shoulder every burden'.⁷⁴⁶ The wording also did not come from any established source, thus it was likely these were Montgomerie's own choice of words. The meaning behind the statement reflected what Montgomerie saw as his own personal characteristics or those of his wife. The choice of wording clearly indicated that Montgomerie was speaking through the figure and making a statement about himself or Margaret. The words were certainly not chosen without reason, they were conveying exactly what Montgomerie wished to convey and highlighted the strengths of the patron.

The second figure, *Justice*, was symbolised by a blindfolded woman holding scales and a sword, again this was a traditional motif for the personification of Justice. The figure may also have represented *Sol Justitiae*, Christ's justice through faith.⁷⁴⁷ Montgomerie's choice may be explained by the figure's relationship to Christian justice, as shown by Christ after death. This would therefore make it an appropriate choice for the burial aisle, as well as emphasising Montgomerie's Christian beliefs. The accompanying motto, taken from an original Latin text⁷⁴⁸, stated, 'I render to each man what is his due, weighing it with true balance; I find favour with men and with gods'.⁷⁴⁹ The focus here was on justice and, it is argued, Montgomerie selected this motto as it related to both the figure, and to how he saw himself. The first part of the sentence was particularly significant as, through it, he

⁷⁴⁶ Translated from Latin original by Michael Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 132.

⁷⁴⁷ Murray, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 284.

⁷⁴⁸ James Allan Evans, *The Emperor Justinian and the Byzantine Empire*, (Westport Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 2005) 114.

⁷⁴⁹ Translated from Latin original by Michael Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 132.

emphasised and justified his own actions. 'Render to each man what is due' highlighted how he believed justice would, and had been, served. Through the wording he asserted his belief in Christian justice but the words could also apply to his belief in his own personal justice that he displayed during the feuding years. It made a statement about Montgomerie's personality that he deemed important enough to be incorporated into the iconography. Again this figure was not chosen at random, it was carefully selected and the wording chosen intentionally to suit his purpose.

An interesting and somewhat unusual point relating to the mottoes accompanying both of the figures was that the words were recorded as if spoken by the figures. This was an unusual feature, as in traditional emblematics the motto has a moralistic function, but was not voiced. Bath stated, 'this is uncharacteristic of the epigrams to Renaissance emblems, whose images are seldom given a voice, even though we may call them 'speaking pictures'.⁷⁵⁰ This feature made it clear that Montgomerie wished to speak through the imagery; he wished to relate a narrative and did so using this remarkable method. The two virtues had both religious and secular significance as they glorified the character of the patron by exhibiting personal ideology which, in this case, belonged to Montgomerie and his wife. It is argued that accompanied by those particular mottos, the figures had predominately secular significance.

Why Montgomerie chose to omit the remaining two Cardinal Virtues those of Prudence and Temperance, was unknown but some light was shed on this by examining the symbolism of the two figures. The figure of Prudence was traditionally signified by the image of a lady looking into a mirror. As Murray

⁷⁵⁰ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 133.

highlighted, 'The significance of the mirror is said to be 'know oneself' but the vice of Pride is also often represented as a woman gazing into a mirror'.⁷⁵¹ As pride was an unflattering characteristic it was likely that Montgomerie would not have wished the image to be interpreted in this manner. To avoid any mistaken interpretation, he chose to omit this figure.

The second of the omitted figures, Temperance, was traditionally represented by a female figure, 'holding a bridle, or pouring water into a goblet of wine'.⁷⁵² The latter of these two could be construed as having Catholic associations as it would link fluid with a goblet which would have corresponded symbolically to a chalice and therefore the Eucharist. As discussed in chapter three, Stalker was cautious not to put fluid into the chalice he painted and as the figure of Temperance in that act may well have been too Catholic in nature. Why he did not chose to portray her with a bridle is unknown although symmetrically it would have been neater to omit two of the Virtues than only one.

The Sea

The symbolism contained within *The Sea* (Plate 13) is, on first glance, obscured by the relative simplicity of the execution and its focus on what initially appeared to be a straightforward seaside scene. Technically, the painting looked amateurish and presented basic form, lacking the precision noted in the heraldic compositions. The scene displayed a representation of a woman kneeling on the sand beside the sea with a panorama of a town in the background. The sea displayed expected attributes such as fish, ships with sails, boats and waves. The painting, according to Finlay,

⁷⁵¹ Murray, *Christian Art and Architecture*, 408.

⁷⁵² Murray, *Christian Art and Architecture*, 515.

was more of this life than the, 'mysteries of a heavenly kingdom'⁷⁵³, but further analysis determined that it was not the case. The symbolism relayed a wealth of information not noticed, nor understood, at first blush, and much of this was spiritual in content.

The significance of the water in paintings of the period has already been touched upon but merits further scrutiny in relation to this chapter. The theme, in theological terms, has a particularly strong connection to the Christian faith. The inference that the sea was a symbol of chaos was an important metaphor in the Bible and, through dual symbolism, could also act as a metaphor for both secular and religious instability. The sea had a vast secular significance particularly when associated with towns or countries that were coastal. Paintings of seascapes, or images which included them, were a favourite theme of Dutch artists and this theme also received much attention in Scotland.⁷⁵⁴ Continental artists, particularly those from the Netherlands, understood the importance of the sea as it played a major local and national role as the country depended on it for trade and transport. Also, the Dutch vied with much larger neighbours for 'mastery of the globe's oceans'⁷⁵⁵ and this reinforced the importance of activity on the seas. Shipwrecks, tempests, battle scenes as well as calm harbour scenes were popular themes.⁷⁵⁶ This, coupled with a development of naturalism in art, meant that it played a large role in vernacular paintings they undertook both at home and abroad. Its importance affected both local, coastal areas and those on a national level emphasising both local and national

⁷⁵³ Finlay, *Art in Scotland*, 71.

⁷⁵⁴ More information on this found subject is found in Julia Lloyd Williams, *Dutch Art and Scotland: A Reflection of Taste*, (Edinburgh: NGS, 1992); Duncan Macmillan, *Scottish Art 1460-1990*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2003).

⁷⁵⁵ Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 2.

⁷⁵⁶ Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 2.

identity. It was a source of economic wealth in terms of food, transport and trade and demonstrated the maritime involvement of both the community and the nation.⁷⁵⁷

On close examination of *The Sea*, the painting revealed a female figure wearing long robes of red with a gold coloured overlay which was tasselled. A small flat crown was noted on her head which boasted a surmounted crescent moon; the head was also adorned by a headband. Underneath the head attire was long, flowing hair and a veil. The figure was in a kneeling position on the sand, by the edge of the sea, which was reflective of an action of prayer, although it was observed that the head was not demonstrating any attitude of piety. The figure immediately captured the viewers attention by staring ahead out of the picture connecting directly with the viewer. The right hand has been painted holding a vessel which resembled a chalice. Within the vessel a heart is displayed surrounded by leaping flames. Three large fish were visible in the vicinity of the figure and were monstrous in appearance. One was incorporated dead on the sand beside the kneeling figure, whilst another two, which were the same species, were observed swimming in the sea nearby. Several ships were detected on the choppy sea to the left of the picture. The largest ship, which was visible in the foreground, was noted to be anchored and two smaller ships were depicted by Stalker in full sail. A small rowing boat had been attached to the left side of the main ship which displayed four flags. One of the flags displayed a white cross on a blue background and another was the same design but was opposite in colour scheme. Two small flags displayed red backgrounds and white crosses. A harbour was clearly executed in which other ships were moored alongside. Stalker also included a wooden pier, beyond which in the distance, to the right of the

⁷⁵⁷ Williams, *Dutch Art and Scotland: A Reflection of Taste*, 32.

painting, was a town which appeared to be elevated on a hill. Several buildings were visible, as was a church spire which stretched into the clouds above.

The sea was executed with rolling, ferocious waves which the ships struggled to stay afloat on. As was previously discussed, this was a popular theme during the early Christian Church whereby, amongst many other uses of the symbol, water symbolised cleansing and regeneration. This metaphorical use of the rough sea could also be translated as alluding to the rigours, dangers and uncertainties of life.⁷⁵⁸ Boats without oars symbolised instability, further emphasis that humankind required determination and reliability on the voyage through life. Vessels on water signified the inner journey of the soul into the beyond, a journey into uncharted territory to reach the Promised Land as the soul embodied the search for happiness, truth and immortality.⁷⁵⁹ One poignant inclusion was observed by Bath who claimed that, 'One tiny detail amongst the various nautical activities in the background appears to show a small child lying in a boat'.⁷⁶⁰ Montgomerie certainly had a daughter who died before her parents. Her death having occurred was part of an inscription on Margaret's tomb:

My daughter an untimely doom
Consigned before me to the tomb.⁷⁶¹

Although the author of the inscription remains elusive, it was most likely to have been Sir Robert, as only he would have known such intimate details. Once again the words were portrayed as if spoken by the deceased, an unusual practice for this genre.⁷⁶² The inscription clearly stated that her daughter had died before her, but no further details were given. Further investigation concluded that no record of a birth

⁷⁵⁸ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 224.

⁷⁵⁹ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 224.

⁷⁶⁰ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 136.

⁷⁶¹ Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.

⁷⁶² Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 133.

or death certificate has survived. No marriage certificate containing a female of the family that may have been her has been unearthed. Furthermore, her remains are not with her parents in the vault of Skelmorlie Aisle. This lack of information posed a conundrum and one explanation may be that the daughter died in infancy or as a very young child and her remains buried somewhere yet to be discovered. If she had lived to maturity, she would almost certainly have been mentioned within the family papers, or genealogical records. Other than the mention of her in relation to a family legend, that will be discussed later in this chapter, the inscription was the only reference to the Montgomerie's having had a daughter at all.

Again Dutch influence was noted as Dutch artists, 'were familiar with the old tradition of using tempestuous seas and endangered ships or those keeping a steadfast course as metaphors for the way of the world and the vicissitudes of life'.⁷⁶³ Ships also had secular meaning as ships of fortune. In this interpretation, unfurled sails indicated that luck changed with the wind. As Apostles were 'fishers of men', the fish itself symbolised the Christian soul living in the waters of baptism as the fish lived and thrived in the water. The 'Great Fish' symbolises Jonah and the Resurrection and this theme was readily included in emblem books of the period.⁷⁶⁴ Eventually the vessel was adopted as the symbol emphasising the saving role of the Church as the vessel protects life on the sea.

Boats, in particular, symbolised bringing the deceased to the underworld. This was a theme that was also utilised in both Greek and Egyptian mythology and eventually in Christian terms it came to symbolise the Resurrection.⁷⁶⁵ The vessel indicated a journey and expressed an, 'impulse to search, discover and seek

⁷⁶³ Slive, *Dutch Painting 1600-1800*, 127.

⁷⁶⁴ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 224.

⁷⁶⁵ de Capoa, *Old Testament Figures in Art*, 56.

change'.⁷⁶⁶ A journey could represent discovery and initiation and it was representational of imaginary voyages into the, 'realms of the beyond or into uncharted regions'.⁷⁶⁷ This could mean the inner journey of the soul after death, the search for the Promised Land and the happiness, truth and immortality that Christian's believed would accompany it.⁷⁶⁸ Eternal life was assured by faith and hope and was regarded, not as, 'a perpetuation of the concrete personality, but as ascension of the immortal soul'.⁷⁶⁹

The fish in the painting were executed in grotesque fashion and were noted to be over-sized. In their natural form they had a direct role within Christian symbolism and were associated with the proclamation of Christian belief. They could also symbolise birth, as Tertullian stipulated, 'we are born in water like a fish'.⁷⁷⁰ In their grotesque form they do, however, adopt a different meaning. The use of the grotesque was not unusual during the period and was a feature incorporated into emblem books. Geoffrey Whitney presented one example accompanied by the subscripto:

The mightie fishe, devours the little fishe,
If in the deepe, they venture for to staie,
If up they swimme, new foes with watchings flie⁷⁷¹

Andrea Alciati had several images of this nature in his emblem text *Vircla* (c.1531). In this text he included, amongst others, one version which displayed a grotesque fish with a cherub on its back playing a harp and another which demonstrates the beast pulling an anchor, thus the image was not uncommon.⁷⁷² The symbol was also

⁷⁶⁶ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 224.

⁷⁶⁷ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 224.

⁷⁶⁸ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 224.

⁷⁶⁹ Panofsky, *Studies in Iconography*, 184.

⁷⁷⁰ Hulme, *The History, Principals and Practice of Symbolism in Christian Art*, 204.

⁷⁷¹ Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes*, 52.

⁷⁷² Alciati, *Vircla*, no page numbers.

utilised in paintings of the period, as is noted in Jacopo Tintoretto's *The Creation of the Animals* (c.1550).⁷⁷³

The use of this particular style of imagery whereby normality was distorted may reflect that Christianity was not always perfect, but could be unpleasant and troublesome.⁷⁷⁴ It was an image of great religious significance and would have been chosen by Montgomerie for a very precise reason. In consideration of the country's religious instability during Montgomerie's lifetime and, in particular, during the year the ceiling was painted (c.1638) he may have intended for this to be metaphorically presented by the inclusion of that particular theme. The grotesque fish could highlight that, although Christianity was the pathway to forgiveness and salvation, it was not always a trouble-free process.⁷⁷⁵ Even Christianity had an ugly side, and this was reflected in the distortion of the fish into something aesthetically unpleasant. It also had a direct relationship to the Leviathan.

The Leviathan, or sea monster, in all fashions, whether seven-headed monster or simply demonised fish, was referred to in the book of Job verses 3 and 41 and Psalms 14 and 74. It was a sea creature which in mythological terms represented the devil. Thomas Hobbes, in his treatise of 1651, referred to the commonwealth as, 'that great Leviathan, or rather, to speak more reverently...that mortal God, to which we owe under the immortal God, our peace and defence'.⁷⁷⁶ God's antagonist was projected into the idea of his battle with the monster. Its reference originated prior to the creation of mankind. Job 3:8 states, 'Leviathan continues to lurk in the cosmic ocean, seeking occasion to destroy the created

⁷⁷³ de Capoa, *Old Testament Figures in Art*, 19.

⁷⁷⁴ Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 819.

⁷⁷⁵ de Capoa, *Old Testament Figures in Art*, 19.

⁷⁷⁶ Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 819.

order'.⁷⁷⁷ By the victory over the monster, as recorded in Job 41: 1-34, 'God sustains creation and preserves the structures of life against the threat of destruction'.⁷⁷⁸ In eschatological terms, God's final defeat of Leviathan took place at the end of time. The idea of God battling the chaos monster could also allude to, 'the struggle between the people of God and their historical enemies'⁷⁷⁹ and this point may have had particular significance for Montgomerie.

The idea of the large fish devouring the small ones could also relate to the Union of the Crowns. England metaphorically represented as the 'large fish' and Scotland the small. With the removal of the royal court from Edinburgh to London, there was resentment amongst the many of the Scottish nobility. The king's focus was now firmly centred on London and Scotland suffered as a result of this move.⁷⁸⁰ It may be that Montgomerie saw England, due to its size and might, as a threat to Scotland and, as such, represented this within the painting. However improvable this may be, the interpretation may have metaphorical significance.

The main focus of the painting was undoubtedly the figure of the lady kneeling by the sea. As previously discussed, no identifiable source has been unearthed that corresponds exactly to Stalkers female figure. The paintings of the seasons, and also the one of *The Land*, contain components that were executed by Stalker and represented buildings and structures that existed during the time, therefore, it is not unfathomable that the female figures may also have represented someone who was a real person. Since the aisle was a personal resting place designed to commemorate Montgomerie's wife, it is argued that it is not unreasonable to suggest that the figure may well be a representation of her.

⁷⁷⁷ Holy Bible, Job 3:8.

⁷⁷⁸ Mills ed., *The Lutterworth Dictionary of the Bible*, 511.

⁷⁷⁹ Mills ed., *The Lutterworth Dictionary of the Bible*, 511.

⁷⁸⁰ Houston, *History of Scotland*, 235.

This raises the question regarding the use of two female figures to relay the narrative. Catholic worship frequently used images of women in their devotional images, the pinnacle of which was the Virgin Mary.⁷⁸¹ Mary was a focus of devotional worship and a major means of conveying Catholic liturgy. She was a constant inclusion in pre-Reformation religious art and, although representations of her altered at the Counter-Reformation, her role as a major figure in the Church did not change.⁷⁸² At the Council of Trent (1545-1563) she was no longer to be portrayed displaying frailty and outward signs of intolerable grief, as witnessed on many images of her in association with the Crucifixion in particular, which had been the typical mode of Marian representations of her throughout the previous centuries.⁷⁸³ Counter-Reformation religious art displayed her as a stalwart of Catholicism, possessing both the power and the holiness which, in allegorical terms, symbolised the might of the Catholic Church.⁷⁸⁴ Mary was usually associated with the colour blue and the majority of Catholic images of her display this colour.⁷⁸⁵ Other images of women were also incorporated into art associated with orthodox Catholicism and these included Mary Magdalene and other female figures associated with the life of Christ.⁷⁸⁶ At the Protestant Reformation women were not the focus of religious instruction thus neither Mary, nor any other female biblical figures, had any role to play.⁷⁸⁷

⁷⁸¹ There is a plethora of texts on this subject, including: Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism*, (London: Macmillan, 1999); John Drury, *Painting the Word*, (Yale, Y.U.P., 2002); Gabriele Finaldi, *The Image of Christ*, (London: National Gallery Publications, 2000); John Olin, *Catholic Reform*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990).

⁷⁸² A.G. Dickens, *The Counter Reformation*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992) 130.

⁷⁸³ Thomas Glen, *Rubens*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977) 130.

⁷⁸⁴ Dickens, *The Counter Reformation*, 130.

⁷⁸⁵ Dickens, *The Counter Reformation*, 126.

⁷⁸⁶ Glen, *Rubens*, 130.

⁷⁸⁷ Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism*, (London: Macmillan, 1999)17.

Considering the Reformed attitude towards the role of women in the Church and the fact the images were portrayed in a burial aisle that was dedicated to his wife, it is argued that the images had secular rather than religious significance. Sources for biblical figures are plentiful and if the figure had represented a biblical figure it is likely that this would have been unearthed.⁷⁸⁸ Montgomerie was careful not to include any other images that could be interpreted as Catholic in nature thus it begs the question why he would chose to do so with this particular image. As has been previously discussed, the two female figures displayed in *The Land* and *The Sea* have no identifiable source, despite this, however, the image of the lady by the sea cannot be separated from the conclusion that it could easily have Catholic significance due to the figures penitent position and her action of holding a vessel resembling a chalice.

The figure was portrayed wearing a bodice, long flowing robes and frilled sleeves but the most interesting and significant garment worn by the figure, was by far the headdress. The head was adorned with a veil and headband which displayed a crescent moon. This symbol was traditionally worn by the Goddess Diana, who was the Goddess of hunting and wild nature. She was also associated with childbirth and was the Goddess of the moon.⁷⁸⁹ The wearing of the crescent moon could also have represented Margaret's love of hunting, as this would adhere closely to Diana. As discussed in chapter one, hunting was a sport readily enjoyed by the Scottish nobility of the period, it is probable that Margaret took part in the activity. The second of the personal landscape paintings, *The Land*, included a figure beside a horse, suggesting

⁷⁸⁸ Extensive research into female biblical figures was undertaken at the Vatican Library in Rome. 12-19 June, 2009.

⁷⁸⁹ Sophie Page, *Astrology in Medieval Manuscripts*, (London: British Library Publications, 2002) 49.

that the symbol can be related directly to Margaret. This will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

The crescent symbol could also represent pilgrimage. As the pinnacle of Christian pilgrimage was always to the east, towards the Holy Land, the crescent could have symbolised this action as the shape was associated with the east.⁷⁹⁰ The ceiling paintings endorsed Christianity, so the symbol as a journey would also have relevance to a burial aisle. Since through faith the dead travel to eternity, the crescent could easily signify this holy journey. A further interpretation was also possible. George Wither claimed that, ‘the moon prefigures the Church almost in all its changes’⁷⁹¹, and this could have significance to the religious instability in Scotland. This symbol of faith would highlight the religious attributes and personality of its wearer. As Montgomerie’s life, and no doubt that of his wife, followed a religious pathway, a symbol of pilgrimage would be an appropriate inclusion within the iconography.

There was also, however, a more secular explanation for the inclusion of the crescent on the headdress. As previously mentioned, the symbol could be making reference to Montgomerie’s position as a second son. In heraldic terms, a second son was often given the crescent to signify his position within the family. As Montgomerie was a second son, this may also explain why his wife was wearing this symbol. The fact Montgomerie did not incorporate the image into his coat of arms may be explained by the fact he inherited directly from his father due to his brother’s death.⁷⁹² Since, at the time Robert’s arms were being composed, his brother would have been deceased, he was not legally a second son and so did not meet the criteria

⁷⁹⁰ Ian Moncreiffe *et-a.*, *Simple Heraldry*, (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1965) 32.

⁷⁹¹ George Wither, *A Collection of Emblemes*, (London, 1635) no. 78.

⁷⁹² Moncreiffe, *Simple Heraldry*, 20.

for being presented by the crescent symbol from Lyon Court.⁷⁹³ The symbol thus has more than one meaning, each of which would fit well with both Margaret and her husband.

The figure in its penitent position holding a chalice could easily relate to Catholic imagery and there is no doubt that the inclusion of these components in the painting is somewhat problematic as there was little room for ambiguity during the period the paintings were executed. Although the stance was clearly associated with Catholicism, it was not outlawed after the Reformation as was witnessed in the Five Articles of Perth.⁷⁹⁴ It was the absolute position of piety and indicated both the character and the religious nature of the figure. There was no doubt that Montgomerie would have wished to portray his wife as a pious and penitent individual ready to be received by God, and in this pose his message was loud and clear. Her depth of faith was clearly visible and as Margaret, along with her husband, was also patron of the old parish church, her religious affiliations were well established.⁷⁹⁵

The vessel held by the figure was traditionally used by the Christian Church during Holy Communion when it would have contained wine or a fluid which was representative of Christ's blood and the Last Supper. Stalker's image does not contain fluid, which would have related it directly to the Eucharist and therefore Catholic iconography.⁷⁹⁶ The vessel contained a burning heart from which flames leapt. Other Christian figures were also associated with hearts but again none match Stalker's figure. Saint Francis of Sales and Saint Catherine of Siena were often

⁷⁹³ Moncreiffe, *Simple Heraldry*, 20.

⁷⁹⁴ Houston, *History of Scotland*, 240.

⁷⁹⁵ Sinclair, *Statistical Account of Scotland* (Cumbrae) 1794.

⁷⁹⁶ Murray, *Christian Art and Architecture*, 279.

represented as bearing their hearts in their hands, but the figure by the sea had no resemblance to either of these.

The chalice also represented the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and was thus an assertion of faith, a universally recognised symbol of the Christian Church.⁷⁹⁷ In this form it was not specifically Catholic in nature. During the period, iconography containing fire and hearts together was symbolic of religious fervour so the figure had a deeply religious significance.⁷⁹⁸ An implication of truth and righteousness was displayed as well as illumination of the Holy Spirit, 'let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father which is in Heaven'.⁷⁹⁹

The chalice was readily displayed in emblem books and was demonstrated by Claude Paradin containing liquid from which flames appeared to burn.⁸⁰⁰ The inclusion of the fluid made this imagery more Catholic in nature as it directly represented the sacraments. Paradin's chalice also included a cross, leaving no room for ambiguity.⁸⁰¹ Chalices were easy to construct artistically, and although no exact source matches Stalker's chalice, the image is simplistic enough not to require a source leading to Stalker's composition being his own. Stalker was careful not to stray too far into imagery that reflected orthodox Catholicism. The inclusion of the heart within the chalice, rather than any fluid that could be construed as representative of the blood of Christ, removed the aura of Catholicism from the image. Catholic imagery that incorporated a chalice had much more Eucharistic

⁷⁹⁷ Hulme, *The History, Principals and Practice of Symbolism in Christian Art*, 99.

⁷⁹⁸ Hulme, *The History, Principals and Practice of Symbolism in Christian Art*, 99.

⁷⁹⁹ Hulme, *The History, Principals and Practice of Symbolism in Christian Art*, 143.

⁸⁰⁰ Claude Paradin, *Symbola Heroica*, (Antwerp: Gabriels Symeonis, 1583) 209.

⁸⁰¹ Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, 49.

qualities and fluid within the vessel would have left this interpretation without doubt.

The symbol of the heart contained within the chalice held by the female figure had several interpretations and was a popular theme in the emblem books of the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries. The symbolic meaning of the heart included understanding, love, courage, devotion, sorrow and joy. Saint Augustine was associated with a burning heart and, in this instance, the symbol indicated God's guidance.⁸⁰² Again, although Catholic in origin, it was an accepted image in Protestantism due to its secular and didactic associations. Images of the heart were acceptable, as they could be used, 'in devotional introspection that both Puritanism and Counter Reformation spirituality stimulated'.⁸⁰³ John Calvin used an image of a flaming heart in his own personal motto. The image (Plate 35) included a hand which represented God's Hand. Marie-Claire Tucker stated that, 'God's hand is a representation of the permanent intervention of the Divinity, and is a clear expression of Calvinist thought'.⁸⁰⁴ Calvin's own motto was, 'an emblem with a picture of a flaming heart held up in a hand' accompanied by the words, 'My heart I offer to you, Oh Lord, promptly and sincerely'.⁸⁰⁵ The heart signified, 'a vessel for heaven' as God ruled, 'in the temple of the heart',⁸⁰⁶ and this applied to the Christian faith in general. As Calvin utilised the motto of the heart, there was no reason why it should be regarded as a Catholic symbol and not be included within the aisle iconography.

⁸⁰² Ferguson, *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art*, 49.

⁸⁰³ Moseley, *A Century of Emblemes*, 21.

⁸⁰⁴ Marie- Claude Tucker, 'From Georgette de Montenay's *Emblemes ou Devises Chretiennes* (1571,1619) to Esther Inglis's *Emblemes Chrétiens* (1624)', in A. MacDonald et.al eds., *Rhetoric, Royalty, and Reality: Essays on the Literary Culture of Medieval and Early Modern Scotland*, (Lueven, Belgium: Peeters, 2005) 178.

⁸⁰⁵ www.info@banneroftruth.co.uk Accessed 11 February 2013.

⁸⁰⁶ Moseley, *A Century of Emblemes*, 186.

Christian love was greatly associated with human love and these factors were readily intertwined. Thus Stalker and the other artists and authors of emblematics demonstrated how the use of secular imagery could be used in the service of spiritual devotion. The main use of secular imagery, to express devotional love, was demonstrated in the text by Stephani Ludvic who included an abundance of hearts within his emblem book. Ludvic shaped them to act as vessels from which flames leapt.⁸⁰⁷

The relevance of the chalice containing flames and its position by the sea was again not unusual, and could be related to the ideology and literature of the period. Hermannus Hugo incorporated in his devotional literature, ‘unlike the fires which shine out to guide the fearful ships, you do not offer help for me like a trustworthy light; the flame guides the sailors, as long as the pine torch fuels the flame, or until the hands which lit it extinguish the flame’.⁸⁰⁸ Therefore, a secular inference was also a possibility.

The image in the ceiling paintings had both secular and religious significance as the heart was the heraldic emblem of the Douglas family. As Margaret was a Douglas, it had particular significance for her. The heraldic displays within the aisle emphasised the use of the heart in both the Drumlanrig and Douglas coats of arms. This was a feature Alexander Montgomerie incorporated into two sonnets he wrote for Margaret. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, Alexander Montgomerie, court poet to James VI was a cousin of Montgomerie of Skelmorlie. Montgomerie's sonnets pre-dated the Montgomerie-Douglas marriage and, according to Lyall, the poet may have one of two intentions in penning them; firstly, he may have been trying to win Margaret's heart for his cousin or, secondly, he may have

⁸⁰⁷ Luzvic, *Coer Devot*, 18.

⁸⁰⁸ Moseley, *A Century of Emblemes*, 186.

been expressing his own lack of success in capturing her affections from himself.

Lyll maintained that the tone of the poem was more likely to support the former.⁸⁰⁹

The first sonnet read:

Sweet Philomene with cheeping chyrris and charris
In hauthornes vher thou hydys they self and hants
Beuailing thy Virginitie though wants,
My harte to groneing chivring nots thou chants.
Thy mirthless mone my melody so marris
Vhill as thy changing chivring nots thou chants.
The piercing pyks grouse at thy gorge thou grants.
So near is skaith suppose thou scantily skarris.
For murning I may be thy mirthless match,
As though art banishd so am I exyld,
As thou art trumped so am I begyled,
Thou art vnweirdit, I a woful wrech,
Thou art asham'd to shau thy secreit smart,
My Ladyis bagie beirs my bluidy hart.⁸¹⁰

The poems came from a tradition of Nightingale poems. David Parkinson claimed that, 'this pair of sonnets reads as a *propyne*, a gift of courtship'.⁸¹¹ Here Lyll suggested Montgomerie was, 'playing the Mannerist, turning the Douglas arms into a Petrarchist conceit'⁸¹² by making a pun using the ladies name. Line fourteen of the first sonnet states, 'My Ladyis bagie beirs my bluidy hart'⁸¹³ which was clearly making reference to the fact that the Douglas arms incorporated a heart symbol.⁸¹⁴ It was possible the inclusion of the heart image into the aisle paintings had, amongst other interpretations, the same metaphorical significance.

The second of the sonnets included the metaphorical use of the word 'margareta' and Montgomerie also touchingly included the dove:⁸¹⁵

⁸⁰⁹ Roderick Lyll, *Alexander Montgomerie: Poetry, Politics and Cultural Change in Jacobean Scotland*, (Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005) 160.

⁸¹⁰ Parkinson, *Alexander Montgomerie, Poems, Volume 2: Notes*, 111.

⁸¹¹ Parkinson, *Alexander Montgomerie, Poems, Volume 2: Notes*, 111.

⁸¹² Lyll, *Alexander Montgomerie: Poetry, Politics and Cultural Change in Jacobean Scotland*, 160.

⁸¹³ Parkinson, *Alexander Montgomerie, Poems, Volume 1: Text*, 124.

⁸¹⁴ Parkinson, *Alexander Montgomerie, Poems, Volume 2: Notes*, 111.

⁸¹⁵ Lyll, *Alexander Montgomerie: Poetry, Politics and Cultural Change in Jacobean Scotland*, 160.

Thought peirlis give pryce and Diamonds be deir
Or royall rubies ncountit rich and rare
The Margarit does merit mekle mare
As Jem of Jewels, paragon but peir.

Wald god if it wer gettable for geir,
Culd it be coft for cost I wald not care.
Both lyfe and goods to win it wold wae
Provyding I was worthy it to weir.

Nixt wald I wish, my purpose broght to pas,
That I micht tak and tame the turtle Dov
And set hir syne vhare that I micht sie throu
Ane costly Cage of cleirist cristall Glas
Vhilks with my Jewell micht I joyne, I grant,
I culd not wish in world that I want.

Parkinson maintained that in lines three and four the 'margarit' could refer to the daisy and 'the pearl, the paragon of the precious'.⁸¹⁶ It could easily have represented Margaret's name. Montgomerie's inclusion of the dove, 'the constant turtledove; caged, emblem of a Douglas marriage (wordplay on the word *DOW* ['dove']).⁸¹⁷ This practice of dual symbolism and the use of metaphor was one that was also utilised in Renaissance art.⁸¹⁸

Stalker executed his painting of the lady looking straight out from the painting, directly at the viewer. She was displayed, in a manner that conveyed a confident countenance with an unfaltering gaze, convincing the viewer that she was inseparable from the symbolism held firmly in her hands. Her firm stare from a position of piety conveyed a statement that was undoubtedly a reflection of her personal ideology. She was portrayed almost inviting the spectator to share her viewpoint, and succeeded in making spiritualism tangible. She is touching the holiest of vessels, thus secularising the transcendental.

⁸¹⁶ Parkinson, *Alexander Montgomerie, Poems, Volume 2: Notes*, 112.

⁸¹⁷ Parkinson, *Alexander Montgomerie, Poems, Volume 2: Notes*, 112.

⁸¹⁸ Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* 8.

Figures in paintings that appeared to communicate with observers was a topic studied in depth by Tara Hamling. Hamling brought under scrutiny the notion that it was the ceiling that was actually doing the viewing. In discussing biblical figures, Hamling argued that as it was unacceptable that God should be depicted artistically thus biblical characters came to indirectly represent God.⁸¹⁹ The figures watchful observance over what was being surveyed moved the importance of the viewer observing the ceiling iconography to the actual ceiling iconography observing the viewer, or indeed all that was beneath the imagery.⁸²⁰ This concept was achieved by what was a frequent feature incorporated into decorated ceilings, the inclusion of faces. The eyes engaged with the viewer as he or she looked up and succeeded in giving the impression that the viewer was being observed. Hamling referred to this as the 'Gaze Theory'.⁸²¹ This sense of being observed, particularly by religious figures, reinforced God's message that he was the supreme observer from whom nothing was hidden.⁸²² On the aisle ceiling, the biblical figures did not engage with the viewer nor did any of the other human representations, other than the figure of the woman by the sea, therefore it was possible that Stalker's intention was that the lady was looking down at those within the aisle with the intension of both observing and being observed

Secular interpretations relating to aspects of *The Sea* are included within the iconography relating to maritime activity. The sea had particular significance for Montgomerie as it was a means of transport to and from the islands of Arran and Bute, where he owned land and where he attended a variety of meetings relating to his position of both landowner and his roles in public service. Largs was a small port

⁸¹⁹ Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 227.

⁸²⁰ Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 227.

⁸²¹ Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 227.

⁸²² Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 227.

in comparison to Greenock and Irvine and, although much of its trade centred on fishing, it became an approved port for trading with Ireland in 1627.⁸²³ The relationship between the two countries was recorded by Stalker as was indicated by the colour and designs portrayed on the ship's flags. As expected, some of the flags were saltires, a sign of patriotism, others were painted white bearing red crosses and these are Irish flags, specifically the flag of Saint Patrick. Here the location of the white cross mirrors the position of the white cross on the saltire.⁸²⁴ Its inclusion, alongside that of the saltire, indicated trade between the two countries and, in particular for this scene, highlighted Largs' port therein. The town contributed to the economy of both Scotland and Ireland.⁸²⁵ Stalker would undoubtedly take his sources for these images from what was visible on the sea and thus recorded in photographic fashion what was visible at the time. He would naturally alter aspects of the flags on view in accordance with his patron's wishes.

Documentation providing any in-depth discussion of trading practices from Largs has not survived from the period, Eric Graham stated, 'the customs records for the Ayrshire ports, as with all other Scottish ports, do not appear to have survived in any coherent form. Nationally collated shipping statistics do not become available until 1759'.⁸²⁶ Although the local towns of Stevenston, Kilwinning and Irvine traded in coal, trade was not extensive during the period. William Aiton stressed that, 'exports and imports for the harbours of Ayr, Irvine and Saltcoats were on a very small scale indeed'.⁸²⁷ Largs had no coal seams and, although it did have limestone, the location of the mineral was inaccessible. This meant that trade was in lighter

⁸²³ J. Campbell, *Largs through the Centuries*, (Largs: Largs Printing, 1995) 1.

⁸²⁴ Moncreiffe, *Simple Heraldry*, 31.

⁸²⁵ Graham, *The Shipping Trade of Ayrshire*, 4.

⁸²⁶ Eric Graham, *The Shipping Trade of Ayrshire*, (Darvel: Walker and Connell, 1991) 4.

⁸²⁷ William Aiton, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Ayr*, (Glasgow, 1811) 73.

goods and mainly fish. Cod, haddock, trout, salmon, whiting, skate, thornback, herring and salmon were all in abundance, providing both employment and economic opportunities to the area.⁸²⁸ Despite this, it was the exportation of herring that was particularly lucrative, ‘This so profitable product of this country may be in good esteem in foreign markets’.⁸²⁹ This made curers necessary, and brought employment and economy to the area.

The area also had a healthy workforce of weavers who were supplied with cloth by manufacturers in Paisley. Muslin and silk was created into goods that were sold locally, but could also be exported. Again, these were lighter goods that required smaller vessels to transport them. This was particularly important in an area where it was notoriously difficult for ships to reach the shoreline. Smaller crafts could navigate the stretch of sea that was inaccessible to heavier vessels.⁸³⁰

The geographical area was renowned for torrid weather which impacted upon maritime activity, and this had an adverse affect on the amount of trade that could use the port. The area was not an easy one to navigate as the sea was notoriously treacherous:

Such were the dangers of the Ayrshire coast that a skipper not intending to commit his vessel to navigate the Firth or with a forewarning of adverse weather, would normally anchor in either Lochryan, Cambleton or the Bay of Lamlash as his choice of sanctuary. Once committed to a run of the Clyde the next area of relative safety was behind the islands of the upper Firth, beyond the bays of Ayr and Irvine, which offered a weather shore and the land mass to shelter the fleets riding out westerly storms. The most regularly used storm anchorages were Rothesay Bay and Fairlie Roads.⁸³¹

⁸²⁸ Robertson, *Topographical Description of Ayrshire: Cunninghame*, 21,23.

⁸²⁹ Crawford, *The History of the Shire of Renfrew*, Section i,4.

⁸³⁰ Pont, *Cunninghame Topographized*, 4.

⁸³¹ Graham, *The Shipping Trade of Ayrshire*, 4.

Stalker captured the essence of the geographical area, and the weather systems that prevailed there, by executing a choppy sea where boats struggle to stay afloat. Here the symbolism has a dual role by incorporating both spiritual and secular significance. The dominant position of the saltire in the centre of the painting had special significance as it emphasised national pride. There was a fusion of local and national pride demonstrated here as well as a synthesis of Montgomerie's public and personal persona. Stalker cleverly executed paintings that were intentionally ambiguous so that both aspects of Montgomerie's personality could be demonstrated.

There was also a link between lovers and the sea, and this theme was frequently the focus of literature in seventeenth-century verse:

Love may rightly be compared with the sea
From the viewpoint of their changes
Which one hour cause hope
The next fear.
So it goes with a lover
Who like the sea
One day encounters good weather
The next storms and roaring wind.⁸³²

Again, it was demonstrated that the sea had a multiplicity of symbolic interpretations. Montgomerie utilised the iconography to express a variety of characteristics relating to himself, his wife, his locality and his country. He chose what he required to construct the narrative and left the interpretation in the hands of the viewer who, in accordance with their own personal experiences and influences, would interpret the scene accordingly. For Montgomerie, there was no doubt that the iconography relayed an abundance of information that reflected his own character and that of his wife.

⁸³² Slive, *Dutch Painting 1600-1800*, 127.

The prospect of the town in the background of *The Sea* painting almost certainly denoted Largs, taken from a south-easterly position. The sea and shoreline extended south towards the town of Fairley, which would have allowed a Largs landscape equivalent to that in the painting to become visible. The Sempill family, closely related to the Montgomeries as Robert's mother was a Sempill, had their main home in Fairlie. The Sempill coat of arms amongst the heraldic displays in the aisle confirms their relationship. Their villa, named 'Underbank', was located at Southannan in Fairley.⁸³³ It may be that the prospect of *The Sea* was taken from this location, but no documentation has been unearthed that can support this claim. It would, however, present the same background if the painting was constructed from this location. As previously discussed, artists intermingled reality with their own creativity; the execution may have components that were true to life but were constructed and placed in a composition to create an overall image that did not mirror reality. The buildings noted in the seasonal painting would support the town on the horizon being Largs. This point was, however, dismissed by Dobie, who claimed it was not Largs, but he gave no explanation for his statement.⁸³⁴

The position of the town was executed by Stalker in an elevated position and this was not the correct geographical position of the town. Pont records, 'Largs itself is fairly seated on an open, dry and sunny plat of ground, close along the clean sandy pebbly sea- beach, above which it is but slightly elevated'.⁸³⁵ The positioning was incorrect, but the design and composition of the buildings was realistic. Since the town was important to Montgomerie, it would be expected that he would wish to include it in the painting but, to incorporate everything he wished to relay, the

⁸³³ Pont, *Topographical Account of the District of Cunninghame*, 169.

⁸³⁴ Dobie, *The Parish Churches and Burying Grounds of Ayrshire*, 6.

⁸³⁵ Pont, *Topographical Account of the District of Cunninghame*, 130.

position of the town would have been obscured. Stalker therefore altered its position to make it clearly seen. This was perfectly acceptable, and was a common practice during the period.⁸³⁶ As has been previously stated, artists were not specifically recording photographic images; they used their own creative licence to execute an image that was a combination of reality and artistic licence. They frequently adopted a policy of enhancement, so if reality required to be altered to satisfy the artist's intentions, he would freely adapt what he could see to make it fit the overall image better.⁸³⁷ This does not mean that the image was unrealistic, as a policy of minimalism would have been applied. In this painting, features such as the Church spire matched that in the *Hyems* painting, thus aspects of the town are deemed realistic. If aspects of the other paintings were found to be realistic, it was not unfathomable that components within this painting were also taken from reality.

The only suggestion that the narrative contained within *The Sea* originated from a literary source was offered by Theresa Grant. Grant suggested that the painting's narrative had its genesis with the classical story of Ghismonda from Boccaccio's the *Decameron*.⁸³⁸ She maintained that:

By the sixteenth century, Ghismonda seems to have become a type of faithfulness in love. The appearance of this story on the ceiling of the aisle is clearly an attempt on Stalker's part to commend the great love between the couple whose last resting place it would be and to praise Lady Margaret's faithfulness.⁸³⁹

It is argued that the tale involving Tancred, Prince of Salerno, Ghismonda's father, murdering her lover Guiscardo and sending her his heart in a golden cup had little relevance to this painting. The heart, as previously discussed, had multiple

⁸³⁶ Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 14.

⁸³⁷ Sutton, *A Moral Compass*, 14.

⁸³⁸ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation' in *Church Monuments*, *Journal of the Church Monument Society*, vol., xvii, 2002, 79.

⁸³⁹ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation' in *Church Monuments*, *Journal of the Church Monument Society*, vol., xvii, 2002, 79.

interpretations but one relating to it representing an actual bodily organ belonging to a specific individual that had been murdered is deemed farfetched for this particular painting. Furthermore, artistic representations of Ghismonda do not resemble Stalker's figure so there is no direct link here. Ghismonda was traditionally painted in a sensual pose with a breast revealed⁸⁴⁰ and this too would have been inappropriate for a burial aisle. As there were so many elements working together within the iconography of the painting it was difficult to relate Ghismonda's story to that image. Considering the interpretations of the motifs and general subject matter relating to the town, fish, boats, the sea and the religious iconography, the classic story seemed to be overwhelmed by evidence that was reflective of other interpretations.

The Land

The second personal landscape painting, *The Land* (Plate 12), clearly demonstrated a large castellated dwelling house, that closely resembled Skelmorlie Castle (Plate 28), in the background. In the foreground, a lady observing the actions of an unbridled horse was portrayed. No known printed sources have been found which relate to any of the rest of the iconography, with one exception, Stalker's execution of the horse. The closest comparison to the lady, who was the main focus of the painting, was by Geoffrey Whitney. Whitney also executed an image of a well dressed lady walking in the grounds of an estate with a large house in the background but this was not Stalker's source. There was no horse in the vicinity, but a dog was present, a feature also found in Stalker's composition.⁸⁴¹ Stalker's female figure was painted wearing

⁸⁴⁰ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation' in *Church Monuments*, *Journal of the Church Monument Society*, vol., xvii, 2002, 79.

⁸⁴¹ Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes*, 79.

long, flowing skirts with her cape depicted in a carefree fashion, having fallen off her shoulders and portrayed tumbling down her back. An assortment of fruit and vegetables was portrayed on the ground in front of her. A fence encompassing an orchard was noted on the left side, towards the rear of the castle. To the left of the painting two figures frolic with a dog in front of a tree. In this painting, beneath the two front hoofs of the horse, the artist has signed his work, *J. Stalker fecit 1638*.

Skelmorlie Castle complete with turrets and surrounding landscape, looks almost the same in Stalker's execution as it does today. Its castellated construction overlooked the sea to the isles of Arran and Bute, its location perfectly positioned for Montgomerie to view his own lands. Pont records:

The castle of Skelmorlie is romantically situated on the brow of a steep bank overlooking the sea at the corner of an intersecting ravine, beautifully masked in feathery woods. The estate borders the sea beach for about two miles, along which there is a narrow strip of level land all the way under the steep bank on which the castle stands...The house itself (similar to ancient fabrics) notwithstanding of its narrow winding stairs and rooms passing from one to another up steps and down steps in the same storey, is possessed of considerable accommodation. The view from it over the Firth of Clyde to the opposite islands of Bute, Arran and Cumbraes is not to be surpassed in picturesque scenery by any prospect in Britain.⁸⁴²

Robertson captured the essence of the idyllic location which Stalker exemplified in his painting. Robertson states:

the house or old castle of Skelmorley is set down on the brink of the steep banks where it terminates at the southern extremity of the estate and is half hid with its turrets, amid the plantations with which it is surrounded...it is certainly, in point of situation, a very pleasant and most delightful place with its old -fashioned gardens, terraces and shrubbery....⁸⁴³

⁸⁴² Robertson, *Topographical Description of Ayrshire: Cunninghame*, 30.

⁸⁴³ Robertson, *Topographical Description of Ayrshire: Cunninghame*, 77.

The building had the typical appearance of a home of a member of the Scottish nobility of the period, and acted not merely as a dwelling place, but also as a status symbol. Charles McKean wrote, ‘the magnificent early seventeenth century skylines celebrated ancient lineage, the nobility of warfare, and also modernity’.⁸⁴⁴ Despite possessing all the attributes of the typical country seat, the size of the property put into perspective the social position of the man who occupied it. When compared to Eglinton Castle (Plate 48), home of the head of the Montgomerie family, which was an extensive property situated in thousands of acres of land, Skelmorlie Castle was a modest abode. Montgomerie's increased income in the early part of the seventeenth-century, discussed in chapter one, allowed renovations to be undertaken at the castle as well as the building and the decoration of the aisle. Pont recorded how, ‘the original castellated mansion, with some additions of the time of the early part of the seventeenth century...is a fair specimen of the domestic accommodation of the Scottish gentry during the medieval ages’.⁸⁴⁵

Stalker captured the design of the building, complete with surrounding grounds, in its specific location. The rear of the building opened onto acres of countryside and the stables, part of the original building, are still visible today.⁸⁴⁶ As previously mentioned, fire destroyed a portion of the original structure in the twentieth-century,⁸⁴⁷ but the bulk of it still remains, including the castellated portion seen in the painting.

The family home was a reflection of its owner, and here, by the castle's inclusion in the painting, Montgomerie displayed prestige alongside family pride. The painting was an component of extremely personal significance as, by including

⁸⁴⁴ McKean, *The Scottish Chateau*, 10.

⁸⁴⁵ Pont, *Topographical Account of the District of Cunninghame*, 130.

⁸⁴⁶ Skelmorlie Castle, Skelmorlie, Ayrshire.

⁸⁴⁷ Michael Davis, *The Castles and Mansions of Ayrshire*, (Argyle: Spindrift, 1991) 372.

it, Montgomerie emphasised the importance the family home played in his life and the lives of those who lived within it. It meant something special and was obviously important to him. The painting was intimate as it captured not only the environment where he lived, but the happiness that was within it as it. It was a symbol of his past, his present and also the future. Heritage was important as other members of his family had lived there,⁸⁴⁸ and after his death, it would presumably be occupied by other generations of his family as was the usual practice at the time. The entire painting was executed with a happy and jovial countenance, a factor further enhanced by the obviously pleasant weather. From the windows of the building's elevated position, Montgomerie and his family would have surveyed across the sea his lands of Arran and Bute as well as being able to observe the activities within their grounds.

Within the painting two figures are seen playing happily with a dog and, once again, as discussed in chapter five, the importance of pairing was incorporated. The dog, a symbol of loyalty and fidelity, was portrayed enjoying the activity.⁸⁴⁹ Stalker executed the painting capturing a relaxed and casual atmosphere and, although there was no obvious religious symbolism within this painting, the general landscape; the an assortment of vegetables; sky; and human figures remind the viewer of God's world. Even within this painting with its almost exclusively secular content, a religious ambience was still present.⁸⁵⁰ The fruits of the land, and aspects of nature, had a clear and precise relationship to biblical scripture. Through God, nature performed its tasks, trees grow and fruit and vegetables can be harvested.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁸ Robertson, *Ayrshire: Its History and Historic Families*, 128.

⁸⁴⁹ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 178.

⁸⁵⁰ Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Paintings*, 21.

⁸⁵¹ Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Paintings*, 21.

Although this message was subtle, it was still present. At first glance and without in-depth scrutiny, the painting was, however, predominantly secular in content.

The presence of the fruit and vegetables in the foreground represented typical examples of what would be Montgomerie's own produce cultivated within his own grounds and lands. As Crawford stated:

the noblemen and gentlemen of the county and even some of the merchants, manufacturers and principal men of belief have orchards and gardens abounding with plenty of most excellent fruit, such as apples, pears, plums, cherries, peaches, apricots, nectarines, currants, gooseberries, raspberries and other productions.⁸⁵²

The paintings position on the wall alongside images representative of the second half of the year, and their associated signs of the zodiac, would make the collection of fruit and vegetables correspond to harvest, references to which were plentiful in the Bible.⁸⁵³ One example of this was when Moses, addressing the people, said:

When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name.⁸⁵⁴

The fact that Stalker painted them in such a prominent position was certainly intentional and therefore they had to hold some very important meaning for him.

The main focus, signified by its position in the foreground of the painting, was the female figure wearing a similar style of attire to the figure by the sea. Long

⁸⁵² Crawford, *The History of the Shire of Renfrew*, Section ii,10.

⁸⁵³ Various references to biblical quotations referring to Harvest are found in James Strong ed., *New Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (Madison, USA :World Bible Publishers, 1994) 591.

⁸⁵⁴ Deuteronomy 26.1-11 as cited in *Revised Common Lectionary: Sundays and Festivals*, (London: Continuum, 2009) 1043.

flowing robes, a coloured blouse and a rear sweeping cape, giving the impression that the figure was not static, she was depicted alive and vibrant. The execution of the image clearly showed her in a moving position, running, knees bent and cape blowing in the wind. The horse she is pictured beside was denoted clearly galloping. The image encapsulated the activity of movement and the vitality of life. The woman's gaze, unlike that in the image by the sea, was fixed on the horse, just as the viewer's gaze was fixed on the activity within the painting. The scene's position of central stage made this action the entire focus of the image.

No identifiable source has been unearthed which matches this figure but, in a similar fashion to the image by the sea; the personal qualities of the painting; and its positioning within the aisle, there is every reason to suggest that this painting may also represent Margaret Douglas. Again such a personal image was unlikely to be a random figure when considering its prominent position and the other subject matter within the painting. Furthermore, its location within a place that commemorated his wife; where Montgomerie retreated for private prayer and contemplation and where he too would be laid to rest after his death, meant it had to have special significance. The figure conveyed what Montgomerie wished it to convey and, it is suggested, acted as an *aide memoire*.⁸⁵⁵ Montgomerie wished to be reminded of someone alive and full of vitality and the painting recorded this. As MacDairmid claims:

Even as a man, loyal to a man's code and outlook,
Discovers within himself woman alive and eloquent,
Pulsing with her own emotion,
Looking out on the world with her own vision.⁸⁵⁶

The figure captured the essence of the woman within it, active and smiling. The focus of her beside the horse, and the position of the two images as being the

⁸⁵⁵ Llewellyn, *The Art of Death*, 28.

⁸⁵⁶ MacDairmid, *Conception* cited in *Poems to the Paintings of William Johnstone*, (Edinburgh: K. D. Duval, 1933)10.

ultimate viewing point of the painting, required further consideration and could have had a direct relationship to a local tale involving Montgomerie's wife.

Dobie, surveying the painting in 1847, recorded that it contained an image in which, 'a female and a furious horse are the principal figures'.⁸⁵⁷ Its inclusion may be explained by a local legend which told of how Montgomerie's wife supposedly met her death. Several accounts of the tragedy still exist but all tell a similar tale:

About the beginning of the last century, according to the tradition of the island [Arran], there was a family of the name Montgomerie...Among the last of that family, was Dame Margaret Montgomerie, joint patroness of the Kirk, who being on horseback at the green of Largs is said to have been thrown off amidst a crowd of people, but being a woman of high spirit, she pursued the horse and received a stroke of his foot, which proved instantly fatal.⁸⁵⁸

Another version from a local newspaper offered a similar account:

One of the pictures on the ceiling depicts a painful and deadly accident that befell one of the ladies of that old family of the Montgomeries. She was riding through Largs Fair, the still famous 'Colms-Day' when her horse, shying at something threw her. Some of the boorish bystanders, so runs the story, laughed at the unfortunate lady. Naturally annoyed at such treatment, she followed the horse, which had moved on and tried to remount but in doing so she received a kick from the fractious animal from which she never recovered.⁸⁵⁹

It seemed rather coincidental that the ceiling paintings of the burial aisle contained a scene incorporating a lady running behind a horse and these had no relevance to Montgomerie's wife. Although the image of the lady, complete with startled expression, and the horse with its angry countenance, would fit perfectly into the legend, the fact she is not dressed in riding clothes nor is the horse saddled, makes this interpretation problematic. The symbolism here would naturally have been known

⁸⁵⁷ Dobie, *The Parish Churches and Burying Grounds of Ayrshire*, 7.

⁸⁵⁸ Sinclair, *Statistical Account of Scotland* (Cumbrae) 1794.

⁸⁵⁹ *Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald* (Friday 2nd March 1900).

to Montgomerie, but its interpretation remains inconclusive four centuries later. Grant's suggestion, as discussed in chapter three, that the figure may well have its genesis in a lost ballad may be a possibility.⁸⁶⁰ Nevertheless, both the horse and the female figure would not have been placed at the absolute forefront of this painting without special relevance as that was not the practice of Renaissance artists.⁸⁶¹

The tale did, however, have its variations, for example, one refuted the claim that it was Margaret, wife of Sir Robert, who was fatally injured in the accident and claimed that the lady killed was in fact Montgomerie's daughter.⁸⁶² As the image of the lady portrayed in the painting was a mature figure, and since it was likely, as previously discussed, that the daughter died in infancy, the figure was unlikely to represent the daughter.

No factual evidence has been unearthed to support the tales, and academic opinion tended to dismiss the idea that the painting did record the accident. Dobie, maintained, 'the tradition of such an event probably arose from a mistaken interpretation of the picture'.⁸⁶³ This statement was endorsed by Bath who stated: 'a local tradition claiming that this panel refers to Sir Robert Montgomery's wife, alleged to have been killed when she fell off her horse, can certainly be dismissed as nonsense'.⁸⁶⁴ He does not, however, qualify why he believed this to be the case.⁸⁶⁵

Even if the images of the lady and the horse cannot be directly linked through contemporary evidence to the legend, they still have significance to Montgomerie's wife. Equestrian activity was a customary pastime for someone of

⁸⁶⁰ Grant, 'Devotional Meditation: The Painted Ceiling at Skelmorlie Aisle', in *Church Monuments*, *Journal of the Church Monuments Society*, Vol., xvii, 2002, 78.

⁸⁶¹ Honour, *A World History of Art*, 427.

⁸⁶² Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald, (2 March, 1900).

⁸⁶³ Robert Dobie Wilson, *Skelmorlie Aisle* (Edinburgh, 1889) 6.

⁸⁶⁴ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Art in Scotland*, 137.

⁸⁶⁵ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Art in Scotland*, 137.

her social status. She would regularly hunt and ride for pleasure, as well as use her horse for transport therefore the inclusion of an animal of this kind would be in keeping with her social status. As Brown explained, 'Hunting was more than a sport, being a means of defining nobility , its complex rituals reinforcing hierarchy and rank...'.⁸⁶⁶ This would have significance for Montgomerie as it relayed social status.

A point that required further investigation, was why Stalker chose to use an emblem as the design for the horse, rather than one from Montgomerie's stable. As the other components of the painting can be related directly to the artist, his choice of image for the horse seemed out of place. The animal chosen by Stalker had its source in an engraving by Hendrick Golzius, dating from 1578 (Plate 38).⁸⁶⁷ It was taken from a series of forty prints, published by Philips Galle in Antwerp, illustrating *The Royal Stable of Don John of Austria*. Bath claimed, 'the series illustrating horses from the famous stable of Don Juan was begun by Hieronymus Wierix and continued after 1578 by Golzius'.⁸⁶⁸ The print has the title *Equus Liber et Incompositus*, meaning 'Wild and Untamed Horse'.⁸⁶⁹ The title could, as Bath suggested, relate to the taming of 'wild military impulses' that woman has to tame.⁸⁷⁰ This could, and may indeed, reflect Montgomerie's personality, but in this setting it would read more as a criticism, and this was not the theme of the paintings. 'Wild and untamed' was not a complimentary observation, or characteristic, and, since the paintings were designed to create a narrative that portrayed positive aspects of the people involved, negative qualities would be unflattering and, thus, undesirable. The horse's expression, however, when considered alongside the

⁸⁶⁶ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 213.

⁸⁶⁷ Hendrick Golzius, *Equus Liber et Incompositus*, c.1578, Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge.

⁸⁶⁸ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 137.

⁸⁶⁹ Translation by Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 2003.

⁸⁷⁰ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 137.

legend, explained perfectly why this image was chosen. If the animal was selected to represent the horse involved in the family tragedy, then its title of 'wild and untamed' fitted exactly. The animal was demonstrated in the action of galloping, and the forefront and legs were raised. Close scrutiny of its facial expression demonstrated that it was engrossed in its activity, and had an extremely irate expression. This would make the suggestion that the image could relate to the family legend all the more convincing. The woman's startled expression also provided supportive evidence that the image may indeed have some relationship to the tale but with the absence of riding apparel the full interpretation of this painting remains elusive.

The horse held a position of prestige as, 'The horse was a potent symbol of royal and noble authority riding being praised as a noble art by antiquity.'⁸⁷¹ Since, in generic terms, the horse signified dynamism and elegance, and was a symbol of the swiftness of life, its position within a burial aisle had further significance.⁸⁷² The animal had a solar, celestial, interpretation, associated with vital energy and the heavens. It also had a subterranean deathly aspect, related to the moon and dampness.⁸⁷³ These factors also indicated the creature's suitability to its location. The inclusion of the horse, therefore, offered several reasons why it was included in the painting. Each factor had some bearing on Montgomerie and his wife, and the creature's presence contributed perfectly to the narrative displayed. These were speaking pictures and, as such, each execution had some direct relevance to the overall narrative. The image of the horse was not selected without purpose or reason,

⁸⁷¹ Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland*, 214.

⁸⁷² Hulme, *The History, Principles and Practice of Symbolism in Christian Art*, 178.

⁸⁷³ Battistini, *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, 82.

it was chosen for a very particular reason; it had something to add to the narrative within *The Land* painting.

In the words of A.N. Whitehead, ‘a point in time is...the fringe of memory tinged with anticipation’.⁸⁷⁴ For Montgomerie, his ‘point in time’ was captured in the ceiling paintings of Skelmorlie Aisle. Here, time stopped long enough to allow him to look back and remember. Stalker’s paintings acted as an *aide memoire* capturing the essence of both the time and the moment. Within the two personal landscape paintings, aspects of his life, and that of his wife, were preserved in paint, he hoped, for eternity.

Montgomerie’s personal and religious ideologies were clearly displayed throughout the iconography discussed in this chapter, all of which, with the exception of the horse in *The Land* painting, were Stalker’s own creations. His sources were either taken from what was readily available or through information provided by Montgomerie. The heraldic displays were the only images that did not portray some degree of religious symbolism and their importance was emphasised by their position throughout the length of the ceiling at its highest point. These coats of arms displayed Montgomerie’s social position, his lineage and his associations with other Scottish noble families; they were a symbol of prestige and identity, effectively a fingerprint of the man they represented. Their inclusion was of major importance, in an age where heraldry was vital to the social position.

Montgomerie’s ideology was again evident within his choice of Justice and Fortitude, two of the Cardinal Virtues, but, it is argued, his choice of these figures related more to their secular interpretations than to those that were spiritual. The figures, complete with subscriptos that he would have personally composed, clearly

⁸⁷⁴ Hall, *William Johnstone*, 38.

stated Montgomerie's personal characteristics as a man, or at least the characteristics he wished to display. The painting's overall narrative made the inclusion of these allegorical personifications imperative to his intentions.

The painting of *The Sea*, again, conveyed a vast amount of Christian symbolism. The importance of water within a painting during this period had a long-standing and deeply religious significance. Ships and boats signified a journey and the rigours of the Christian Church were frequently symbolised by water and biblical narratives were concealed within images of fish and vessels. These components possessed ambiguity as they had a secular as well as religious significance. The sea was important, not just to Largs but also to Scotland as a means of economy and transport. Montgomerie, in his national and local pride, flew the saltire proudly from the crafts. An acknowledgement of trade both nationally and locally was also depicted by the inclusion of the flag of Saint Patrick. The image also had a clear view of the town of Largs. The town, complete with church and spire, was extremely important to Montgomerie and could not go unrecorded.

As no source was discovered to identify the image of the lady in the *The Sea*, it was suggested that she may have represented Margaret Douglas. A painting of a female figure within a personal burial aisle was unlikely to be an unknown figure or a figure created from Stalker's imagination. Her penitent position, holding a chalice containing a burning heart in the absolute forefront of the painting made this image of utmost importance and the focal point of the entire painting. The inclusion of the chalice was somewhat problematic as it could have been reflective of Catholicism. However, its execution free from any liquid content made this interpretation less convincing.

The lady's engagement with the viewer by staring out from the painting, clearly asserted her religious nature and brought into consideration the fact that she may have been the viewer as well as being the one viewed. Her headdress, displaying the crescent moon, provided further indications of her character, and also the possibility of her allegiance to the second son of Montgomerie, sixth of Skelmorlie. The burning heart, again a reflection of religious fervour, also represented her family crest of Douglas, which was symbolised by a heart. This painting contained a plethora of meanings, both spiritual and secular, but all could be related directly to Montgomerie and his wife, and were chosen quite specifically.

This was a personal painting which was further highlighted by the positioning of a motionless child within one of the small boats. Here, religious symbolism came to the fore, as the boat was on a journey to eternity, its occupant, perhaps, the deceased daughter Margaret so tenderly remembered in the inscription above her coffin. *The Sea* painting was an original painting by Stalker, each component designed and executed by him. It was completely personal to Montgomerie and, despite the true meaning of some aspects of the iconography not being clear to the viewer today, he would have understood each and every miniscule stroke that Stalker applied.

Like *The Sea*, the painting of *The Land*, was once again a purely personal painting. Montgomerie captured his family home of Skelmorlie Castle, alongside a female figure with a horse. Again no source was detected for the figure and it may be suggested this too could also represent Margaret Douglas. The figure is seen running across the land accompanied by a fiercely galloping horse. Local legend recorded a tale of Margaret's demise after an accident with a horse, and this may be an interpretation of this particular painting. The fact that the lady was not painted

wearing riding apparel does, however, make this interpretation somewhat questionable.

Within the painting, the figure's body sways with movement, she was not static but was bursting with life as she cantered with the horse. Margaret's home, ever present in the background, displayed the windows from which she had viewed the sea, with their tussling waves and the boats swaying from side to side. These images were not morbidly still, but jostling with spirit as if alive. Montgomerie knew her story, he knew who she was, and through the imagery, the viewer could know her too. Despite her mortal remains resting within the aisle, there was no recumbent figure, deathly pale, with the hand of death throwing a shadow across her face. She was still alive in this painting, and this was how Montgomerie wished her to remain. Little was known of Margaret, but through these paintings, the viewer was given a glimpse into the identity of the woman Montgomerie loved. As discussed in the introductory chapter, apart from the sonnets written for her by Alexander Montgomerie, these paintings were the only other known source shedding any light on the life of the lady within them, and were of immense importance as contemporary documents.

Hall, understanding Johnstone's *A Point in Time*, suggested that within the painting was, 'where his whole life and emotions can be read if only we can lose ourselves in it'.⁸⁷⁵ This was also the case with the ceiling paintings Stalker created for Montgomerie. Stalker captured that point in time which Montgomerie wished to preserve, so that centuries later we could extract from it the narrative he presented before us, 'if only we can lose ourselves in it'.

⁸⁷⁵ Hall, *William Johnstone*, 44.

CONCLUSION

The principal objective of this thesis was to demonstrate that by in-depth analysis of the ceiling paintings within Skelmorlie Aisle an intentionally constructed narrative could be unearthed. To achieve this the thesis challenged two principal points, firstly, that the iconography was not selected at random and had particular relevance to Montgomerie and, secondly, in ascertaining Montgomerie's religious identity, that the extent to which the suggestion, presented by Michal Bath, that the aisle paintings reflected, 'it's patron's Catholic spirituality'⁸⁷⁶ by his inclusion of imagery relating to covert Catholicism was true.

Research demonstrated that simple observation alone provided little information regarding the intrinsic meaning of the paintings or the intentions of the patron and/or artist in choosing the iconography on display. A recognition of shapes and forms did not explain why they were chosen or what they meant. By applying Panofsky's theory for the interpretation of Renaissance art it was demonstrated that a narrative could be unearthed. By systematically interpreting each of the forty-one compartments and principal components on the ceiling, a profile of Montgomerie's mentalité was re-constructed and the reasons why specific imagery was selected was revealed.

The Scottish nobility of the Early Modern period took pride in their private residences and used them as a means of conveying their affluence and social position. This included the practice of commissioning painted ceilings. Although the painted ceiling was popular throughout Scotland few examples most of these were in private residences, few have survived within burial aisles. The aisles themselves were commonplace but of those that have survived only a few indicate the presence

⁸⁷⁶ Bath, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*, 145.

of a painted ceiling. Many burial aisles included laird's lofts which allowed the local nobility a private area in which to sit, separating them from the rest of the congregation. This was also a feature within Skelmorlie aisle which contained an exquisitely carved stone laird's loft. The construction was built above the crypt and was encompassed by the painted ceiling.

In compiling the narrative it was important to understand the genre of art executed as this provided vital information regarding Montgomerie's intentions in having the aisle decorated in the specific manner he did. Research revealed that the genre was mainly commemorative and did not directly encompass a graphic discourse of death. Although much of the imagery could be indirectly related to the building being a place of burial, for example, the seasons and signs of the zodiac, it was determined that there were no graphic or alarming depictions of death despite this type of iconography being popular during the period.

The genre of paintings, void of any frightening images and incorporating familiar components such as the Montgomerie family home and images of the church and aisle, alongside the choice of biblical quotations, provided a suitable environment for Montgomerie to use the building for private prayer. The biblical quotations in most instances related to death and the theme of penitence and judgement, again conducive to the aisle acting both as a place of burial and as a venue for prayer. This established the narrative in the first hand as one which reflected Montgomerie's religious mentalité.

Investigation determined that throughout the ceiling paintings subject matter which reflected Protestant ideology was a major component. The paintings contained moral teaching and this was reflected throughout. With the exception of the heraldic displays, signs of the zodiac and general iconography of garlands of

flowers and fruit, the majority of the rest of the paintings had a religious significance. The seasons in particular revealed God's world and the majority of the detail within the paintings, including weather systems; working the land; and representations of nature, highlighted Montgomerie's Christian faith and the importance of God in his life. The Cardinal Virtues, Justice and Fortitude, reflected qualities Montgomerie wished to be associated with and the two which were omitted, Prudence and Temperance, were avoided as their symbolism did not relay the correct message.

The narrative began at the south-west corner of the aisle and moved in a cyclical motion around the ceiling coming to rest at the south-east corner. The intentionally constructed dialogue began with spring, the season of birth and ended with winter, the season which was related to the end of life. The associated zodiac signs accompanied the appropriate seasons. This choice of iconography was fitting for the location but Stalker also incorporated personal images within the seasonal paintings making the paintings totally individual and personal to Montgomerie. Images of the church and aisle specifically highlighted this. The intention was that the images be read in that specific order, although the badges of the Tribes of Israel did not follow this pattern. Why two of the twelve badges was omitted has not been clarified as no evidence was unearthed that shed any light on this.

The inclusion of Adam and Eve was in keeping with the theme of life and death and reflective of the special relationship between a man and a woman. Its inclusion had both religious and secular significance. The emblem of Esau and Jacob had more personal significance as the story had a direct link to Montgomerie. Through this emblem Montgomerie covertly portrayed his years of feuding that were signified by the content of the biblical narrative associated with the brothers. The

fact that Montgomerie's brother and father were both killed as a result of feuding had direct relevance here. The fact the feuding era eventually came to an end during his lifetime is also highlighted in this narrative as the feud between the brothers ended amicably. Montgomerie also inherited his brother's birthright after William's death, through feuding, therefore yet another link to this narrative was demonstrated. Its relationship to lineage and patriotism made this emblem a perfect inclusion to convey Montgomerie's narrative.

Of the entire ceiling iconography the two most striking paintings were the ones that incorporated an image of a lady. Named *The Land* and *The Sea*, these two paintings contributed greatly to the narrative. Here his personal and public roles converged demonstrating a man who held both in high esteem. *The Land*, totally personal and reflecting the importance of his family and home and *The Sea*, representative of the community he served and to which he was laird and church patron.

In analysing *The Land* its position between the autumn and winter seasonal paintings demonstrated its relationship to those seasons and it was intentionally situated in that position. The painting's association with the seasons was emphasised by the inclusion of the fruit and vegetables in the foreground of the painting, a representation of harvest and the produce Montgomerie would have grown on his lands. The identity of the lady beside the horse remains a conundrum as no source was found that match her image. Her position within the painting and also the fact the painting was in a burial aisle dedicated to Montgomerie's wife made it possible to suggest she may have represented Margaret Douglas. Local tales of how she met her death by the kick of a horse may have further relevance here.

The painting of *The Sea* reflects Montgomerie's public role, his patriotism and his involvement with the local economy and community. Again, the seaside scene was positioned between the two seasons, spring and summer due to its greater significance to that time of year. The ships, displaying saltires and also Irish flags signified both the country and the area's involvement in trade. Images of the town of Largs were in the background of the painting, again reflecting the importance of the area to the patron of the painting. Religious symbolism engulfed this painting in the form of the sea, boats and ships, monstrous fish and the image of the lady. Again the woman is the focal point of this painting and although no source has been located for her, the interpretation of much of the iconography associated with her supported the suggestion that the figure was intended to represent Margaret Douglas. The holding of the heart in a chalice, her personal motif, the wearing of a crescent headdress and her engaging stare at the observer convey a personal message. Her position of penitence reflected her religious nature, an attribute and declaration that would have been expected.

The figure's act of holding a chalice, a vessel closely related to Orthodox Catholicism as it represented the Eucharist, could be regarded as problematic in terms of Protestant ideology. The possibility that covert Catholicism was incorporated into the ceiling paintings was also investigated in this research. Although the chalice could be regarded as Catholic imagery, without it containing fluid and containing a heart instead altered its orthodox interpretation. The chalice was an intensely Christian symbol and in the form painted by Stalker had no direct association with Catholicism. It was established, however, that the vessel itself was not a particularly popular inclusion in Protestant iconography and was predominately a Catholic symbol. The absence of iconography associated with

Catholicism, for example, the Deity, the Virgin and Saints were all absent from the ceiling paintings. Recording the mysteries, attributes that were intangible and directly associated with Catholicism were omitted.

Research revealed, by the examination of contemporary documents, that Montgomerie was not recorded as being a supporter of Catholicism, nor was there any suggestion within local legends of him having this affiliation. His family supported both the Reformed faith and also the Covenanting movement although there was no evidence unearthed that stipulated Montgomerie was himself a practicing Covenanter. The evidence of his involvement was purely circumstantial due to his family, and particularly his son's, relationships with Covenanters. The fact he signed the National Covenant was again no sound evidence that he supported the Covenanting cause.

It was acknowledged that the Early Modern period was a time when the Scottish nobility did not always display their personal ideology as was demonstrated by a study of Alexander Seton whose public and private religious ideology were in conflict. The evidence did not, however, support the suggestion that covert Catholicism was incorporated within the ceiling paintings. Considering their position above the head and their distance from the viewer combined with the awkwardness and time required to interpret them, there was no reason why Montgomerie could not have included some Catholic iconography discretely, but he did not. The imagery was reflective of Protestant ideology by incorporating scenes of nature, God's world and Old Testament narratives, all of which were popular themes used in Protestant teaching.

The paintings within the aisle were not merely decoration, their iconography was chosen for a very specific reason. Each component contributed in some way to

revealing the mentalité of the patron and the message he wished to relay. The overall narrative conveyed the religious and personal identity of Robert Montgomerie, seventh of Skelmorlie and his wife, Dame Margaret Douglas. It was a carefully and intentionally constructed narrative incorporating iconography that expressed a precise dialogue. The narrative asserted Montgomerie as a man of great faith who loved his God, his wife and the community in which he lived and through the ceiling paintings of Skelmorlie Aisle, he articulated this narrative in paint.

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PLATES

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Plate 1

James Stalker, Painted Ceiling, (c.1638) Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.



Plate 2
Skelmorlie Aisle (c.1636-39), Largs, Ayrshire.



Plate 3
Monument (c.1639) Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.

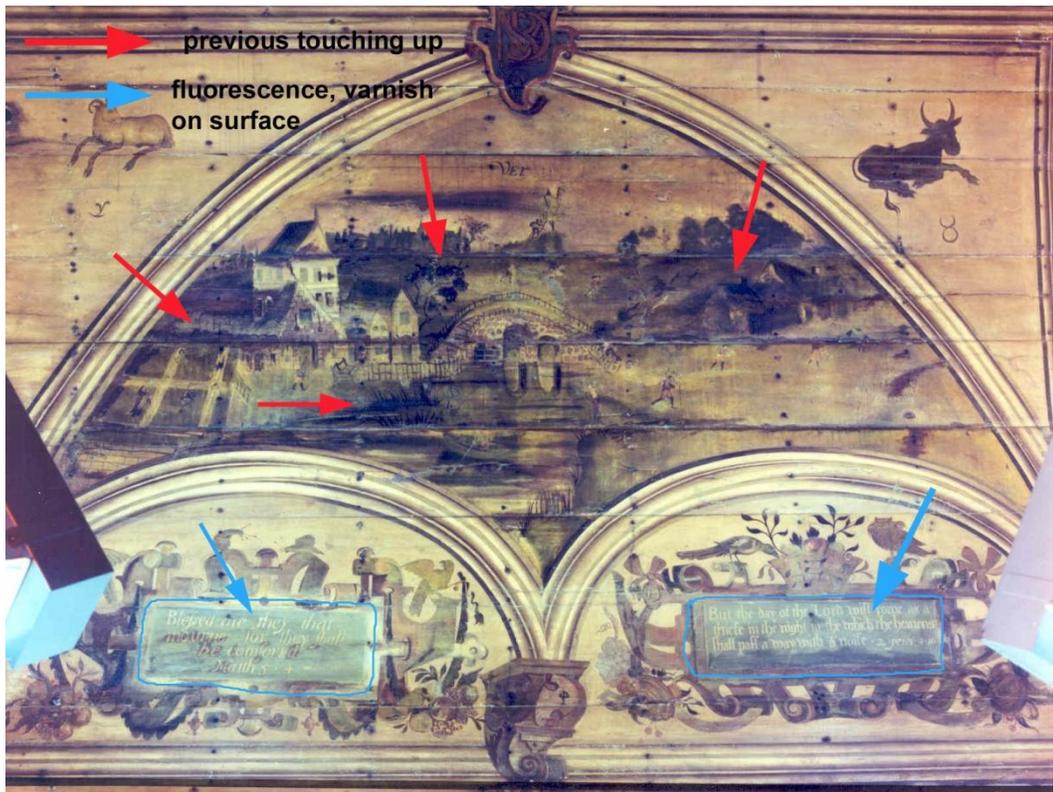


Plate 4

HS, Ultra-Violet Light Photography, *Ver*, Skelmorlie Aisle HS. UV. SA/2.



Plate 5

HS, Ultra-Violet Light Photography, *Aestas*, Skelmorlie Aisle HS. UV. SA/3.



Plate 6

HS, Ultra-Violet Light Photography, *Autumnus*, Skelmorlie Aisle HS. UV. SA/ 1.



Plate 7

HS, Ultra-Violet Light Photography, *Hyems*, Skelmorlie Aisle HS. UV. SA/4.



Plate 8

HS, Ultra-Violet Light Photography, *The Land*, Skelmorlie Aisle HS. UV. SA/6.



Plate 9

HS, Ultra-Violet Light Photography, *The Sea*, Skelmorlie Aisle HS. UV. SA/5.

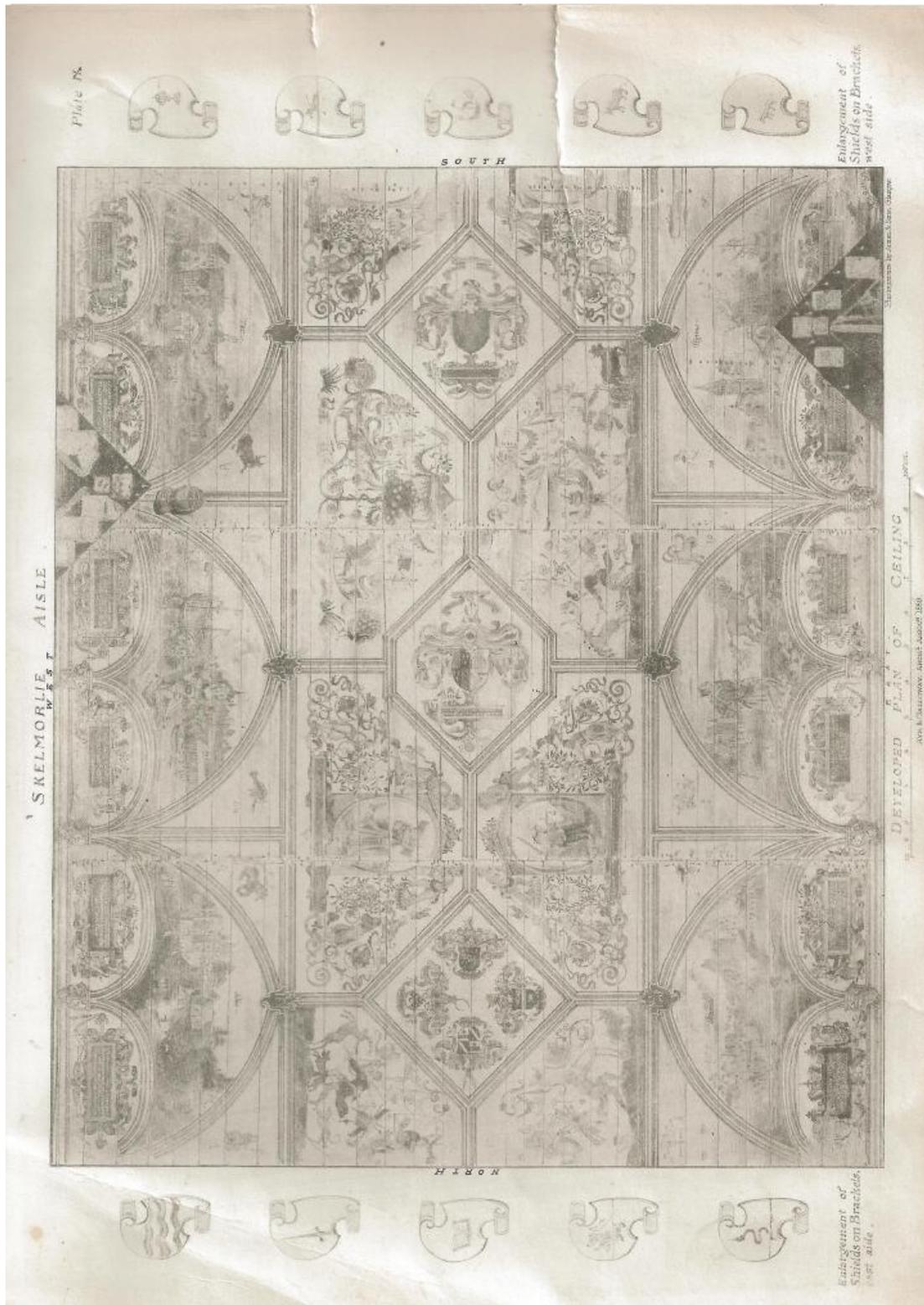


Plate 10

W.H. Ross, Painted Ceiling, Skelmorlie Aisle (c.1819), included in Robert Dobie Wilson, *The Skelmorlie Aisle and Monuments at Largs*, (Edinburgh, 1889).

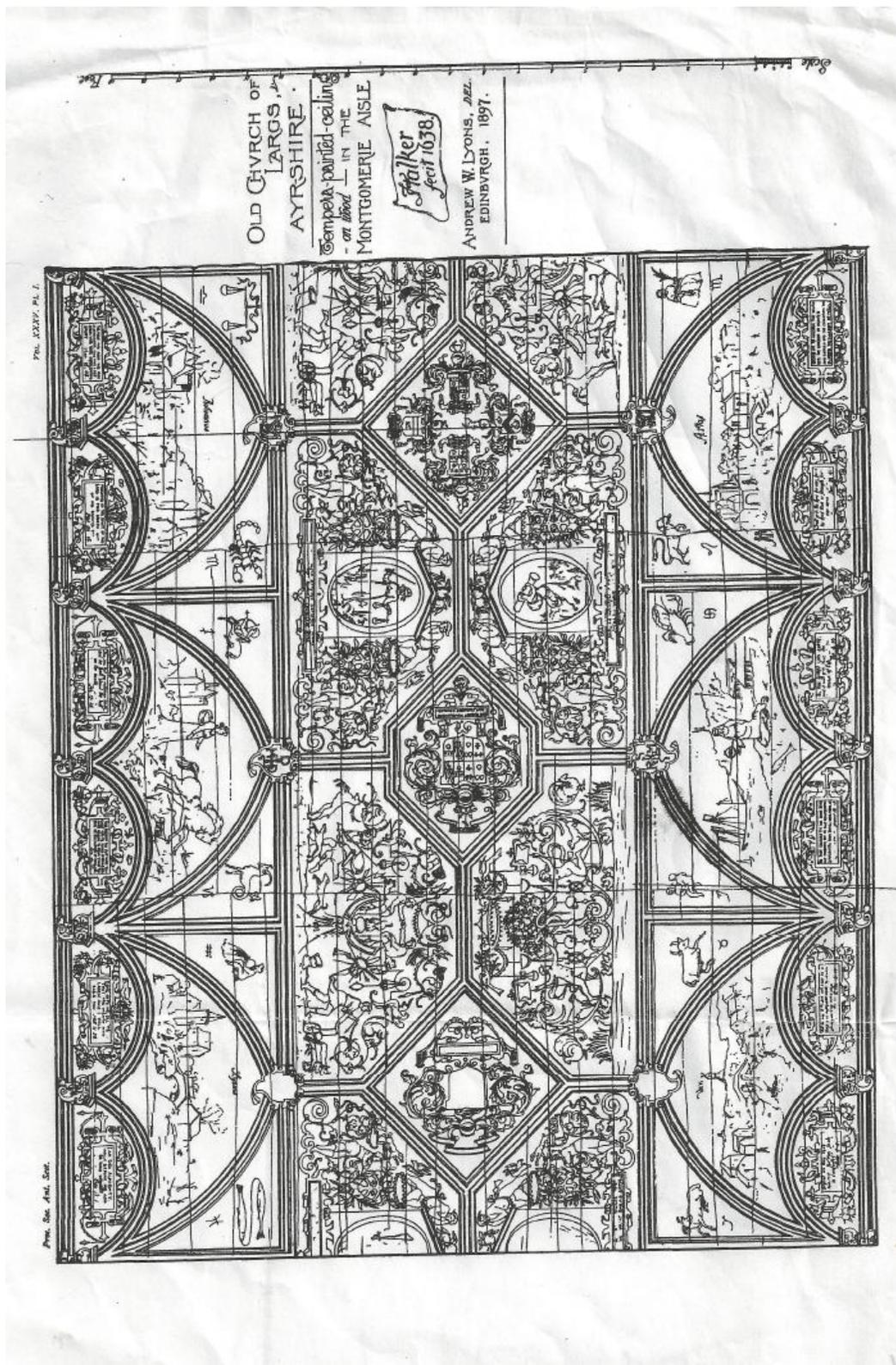


Plate 11

Andrew Lyons, 'The painted ceiling in the old church at Largs', *Proceedings of the Antiquities Society of Scotland* vol. xxxv, 1904.

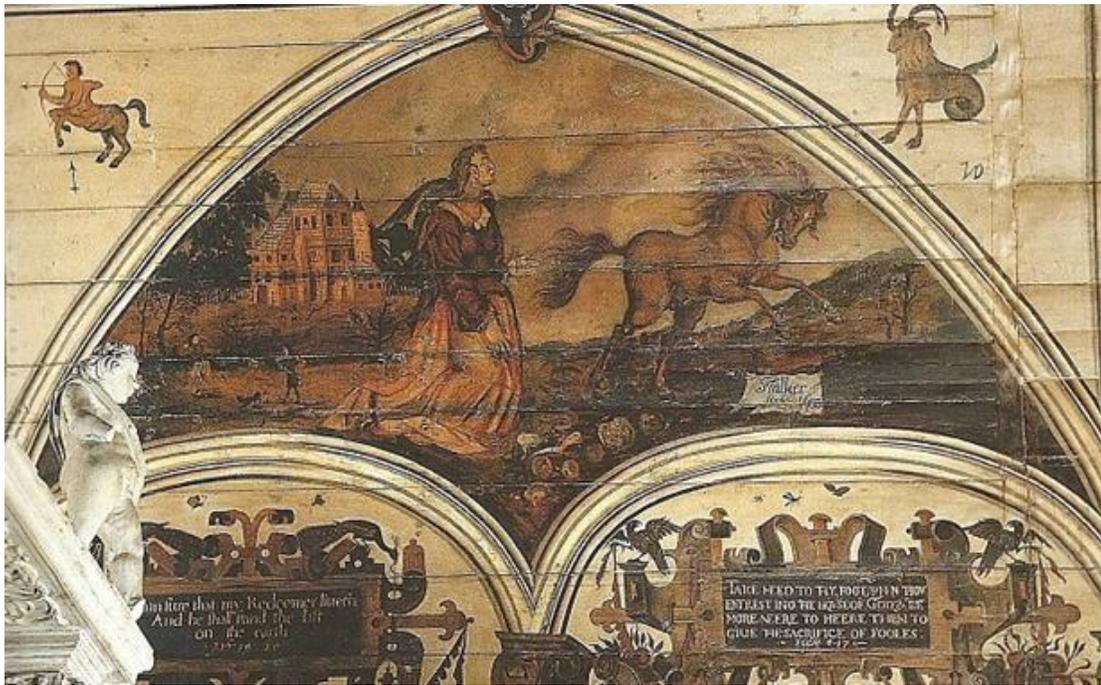


Plate 12

James Stalker, *The Land* (c.1638), Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.



Plate 13

James Stalker, *The Sea* (c.1638), Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.

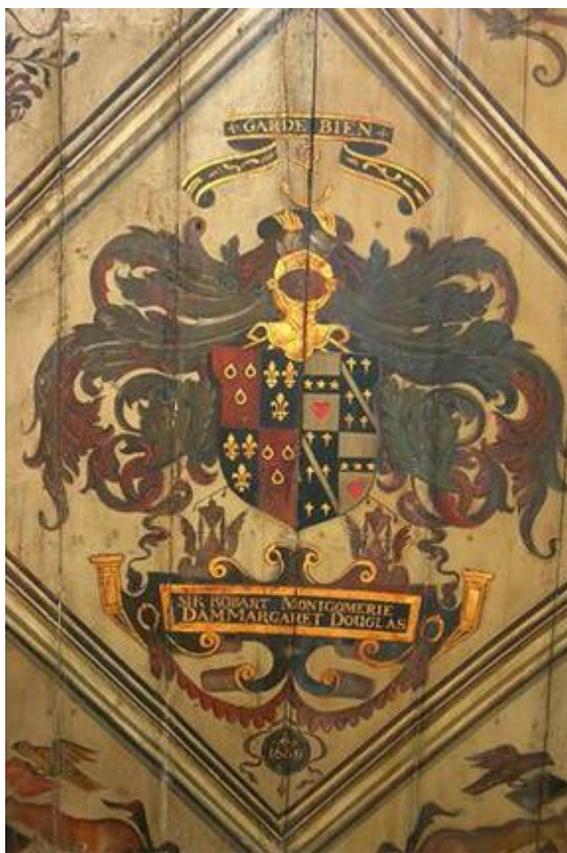


Plate 14

James Stalker, *Heraldic Displays* (c.1638), Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.



Plate 15

James Stalker, *Adam and Eve* (c.1638) Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.



Plate 16

James Stalker, *Esau and Jacob* (c.1638) Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.



Plate 17

James Stalker, *Fortitude*, (c.1638), Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.



Plate 18

James Stalker, *Ver* (c.1638), Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.



Plate 19

James Stalker, *Aestas* (c.1638), Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.

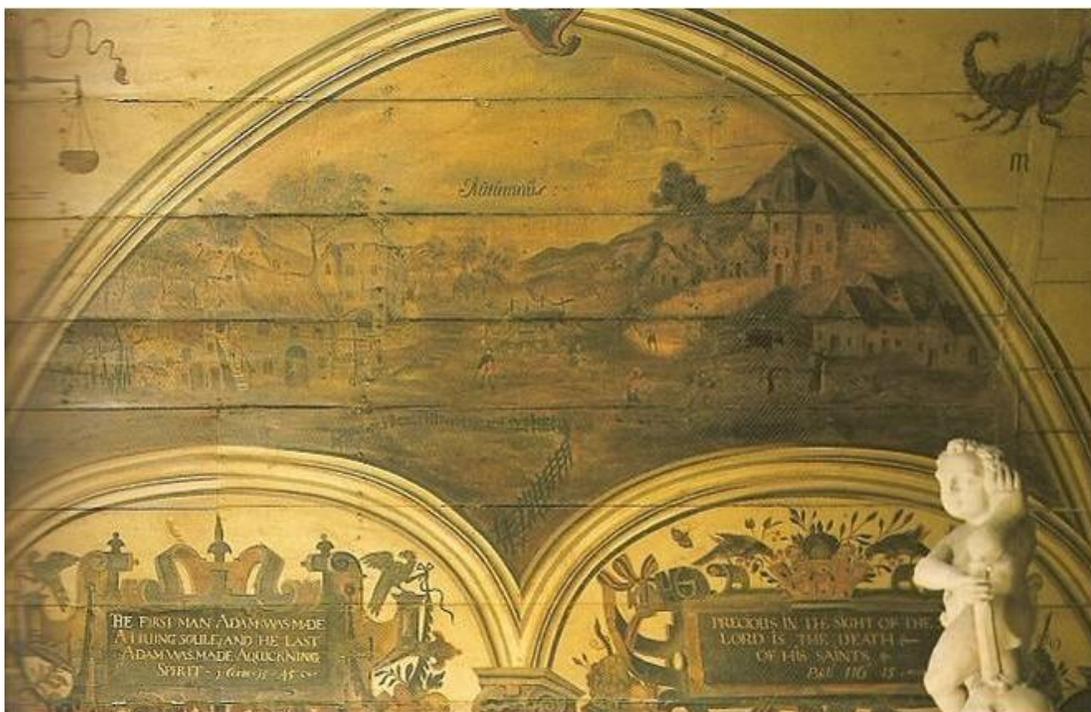


Plate 20

James Stalker, *Autumnus* (c.1638), Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.

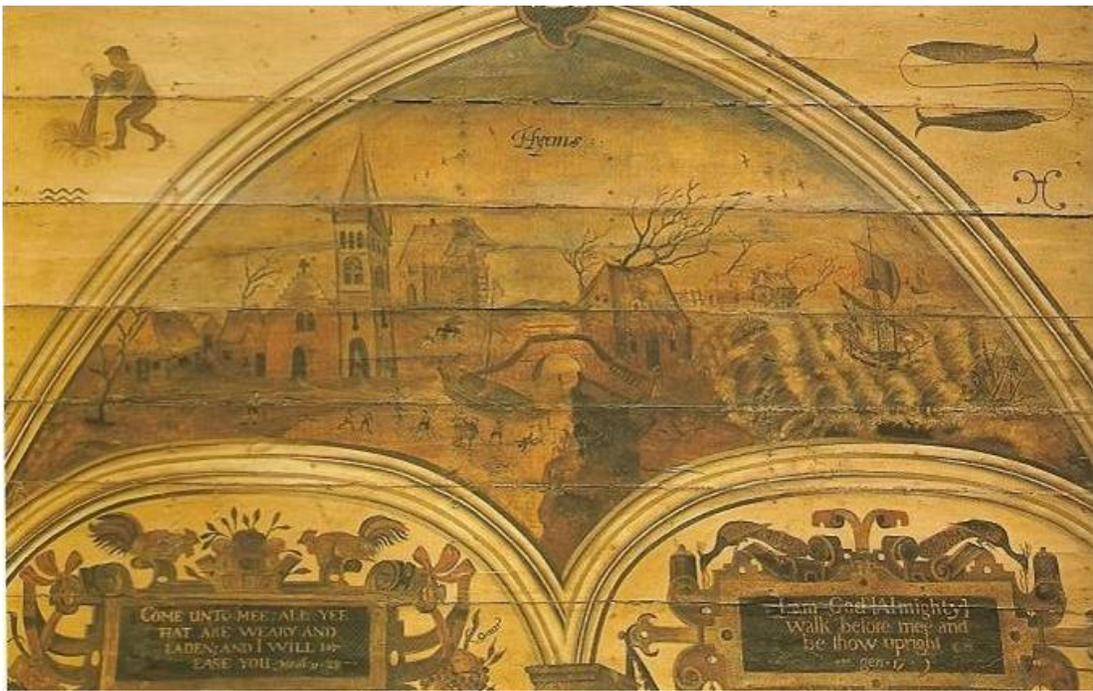


Plate 21

James Stalker, *Hyems* (c.1638), Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.

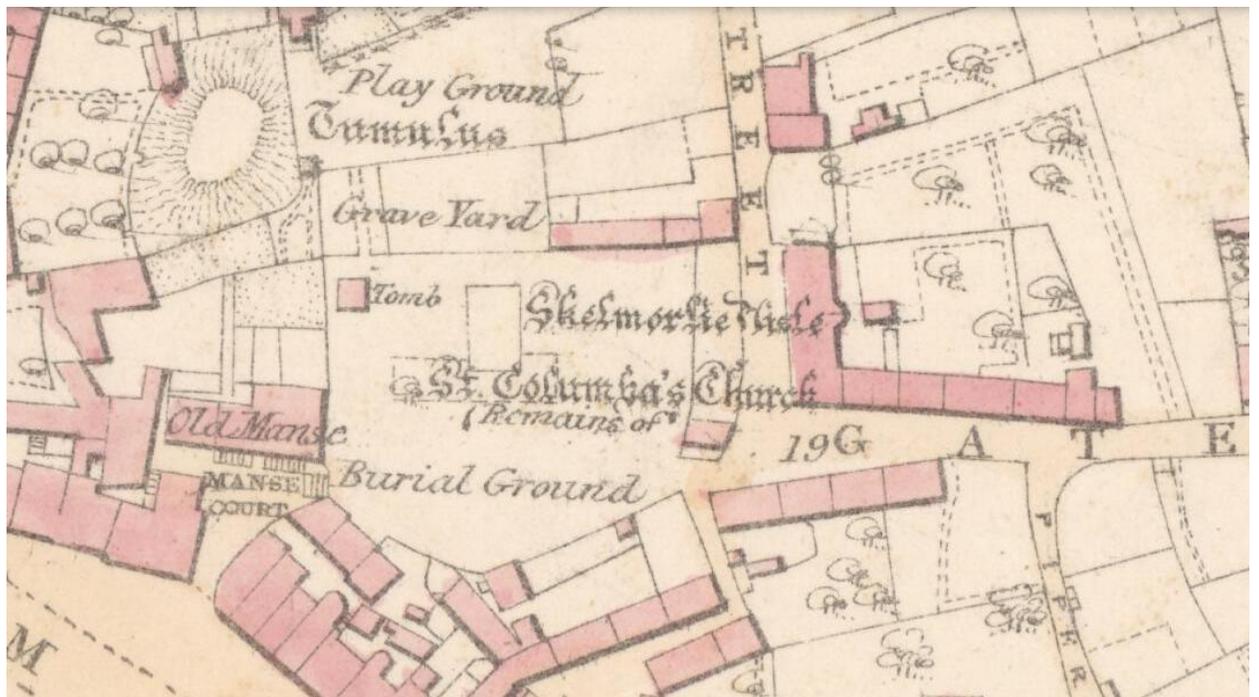


Plate 22

Ordnance Survey Map, (1857) Largs, Ayrshire.



Plate 23

Former entrance to church building, Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.



Plate 24

Glencairn Aisle, St. Maur's Church, Kilmaurs, Ayrshire.



Plate 25

Forbes Aisle, Pitsligo, Aberdeenshire.

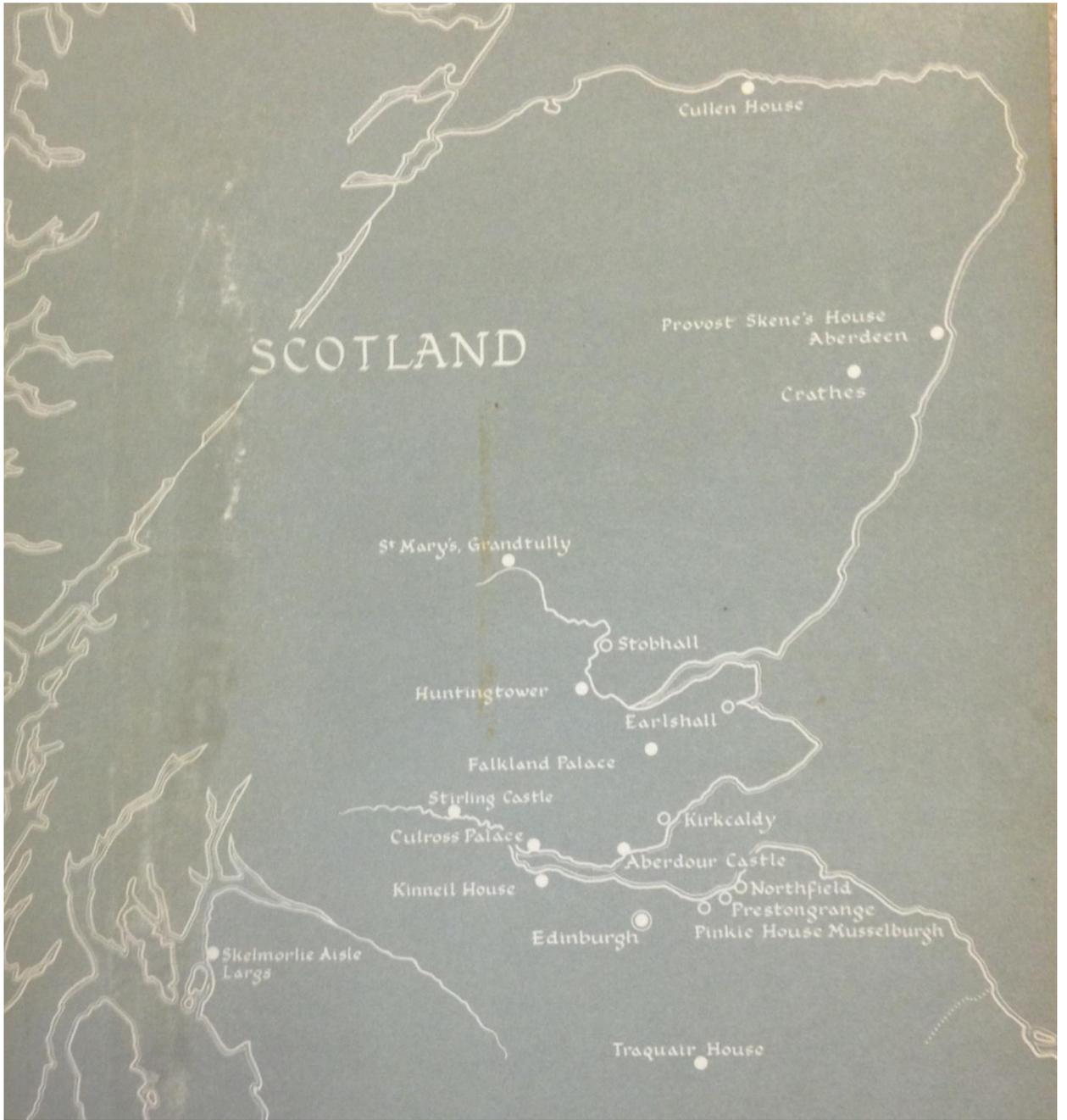


Plate 26
Location of Renaissance Decorative Painted Ceilings.



Plate 27

Peter Paul Rubens, Banqueting Hall Ceiling (c.1636), Whitehall, London.



Plate 28

Skelmorlie Castle, Skelmorlie, Ayrshire.



Plate 29

Skelmorlie Aisle, Barrel Vault (c.1638), Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.



Plate 30

James Stalker, Signature (c.1638), Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.



Plate 31

Geffrey Whitney, *In Utrumque Paratus* from *A Choice of Emblemes* (c1586).



Plate 32

James Stalker, Emblem (c.1638), Skelmorlie Aisle, Largs, Ayrshire.



Plate 33

Maarten de Vos, *Winter*, Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge, PDP, 3711 (5584).

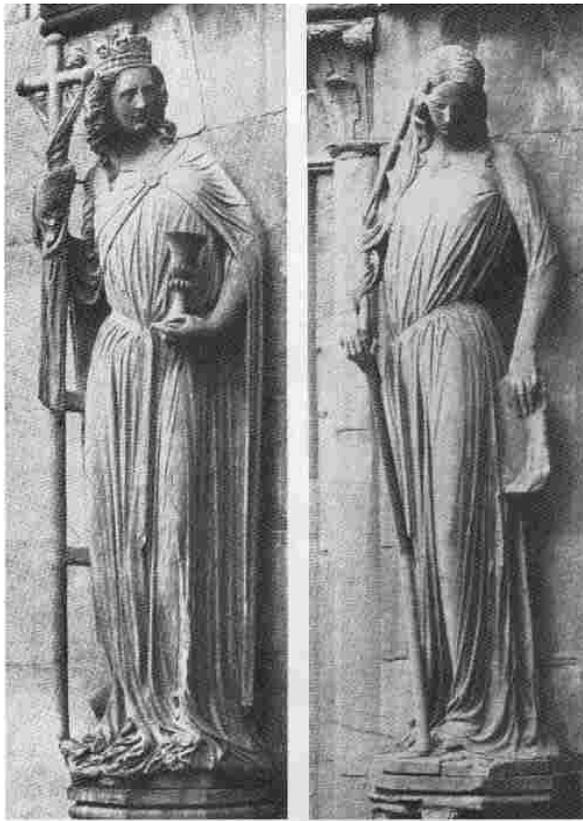


Plate 34

Ecclesia and Synagoga (c. 1230), Cathedral Museum, Strasbourg.



Quelle: Deutsche Fotothek

Plate 35

John Calvin, Personal Emblem.



Plate 36

John Workman, *Penitent Magdalene* (17th Century).



Plate 37

John Sawers, Manuscript Armorial, Arms of the Earl of Sterlein.



Plate 38

(Left) Hendrick Goltzius, *Equus Liber Et Incompositus*, (c.1579), Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge, Cambridge. (Right) James Stalker, *Image of Horse*, Skelmorlie Aisle (c.1638).



Plate 39

Geffrey Whitney, *To the Fairest* (1586).



Plate 40

Etienne Delaune, *Adam and Eve*, *Old Testament Series*, (1550-72).



Plate 41

Etienne Delaune, *Esau and Jacob*, *Old Testament Series*, (1550-72).



Plate 44

Etienne Delaune, *Arithmetic, Liberal Arts Series*, (Antwerp: Phillips Galle, (1560-70).

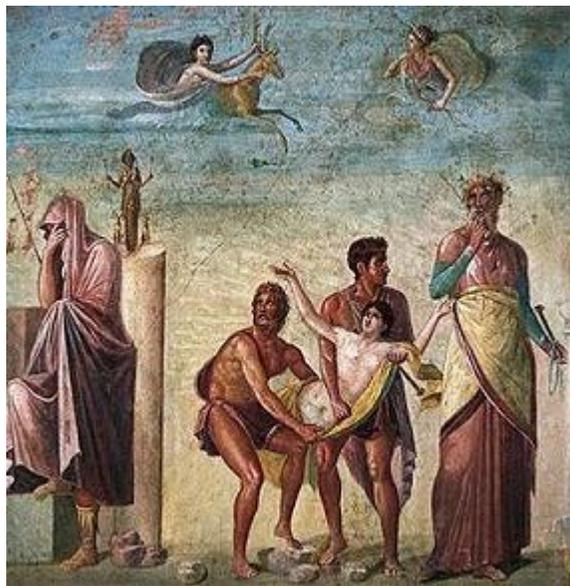


Plate 45

Timanthes, *The Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, (4th Century), Naples National Archaeological Museum, Naples, Italy.



Plate 46

Lieven de Vogeleer, *Memorial of Lord Darnley*, (c.1567/8), National Portrait Gallery, London.



Plate 47

William Johnstone, *A Point in Time* (c.1929), National Gallery of Scotland.



Plate 48
Eglinton Castle, Irvine, Ayrshire.