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INTRODUCTION

The increase in the number of books published during the reign of Queen Victoria (1837 - 1901) provided free expression for the artists of that time. With this came the extensive improvements of printing techniques, especially in the reproduction of coloured illustrations and the introduction of photographic half-tone processes. Though these advancements increased the quantity of books, quality was lost, especially when you consider that many artists' works suffered under the experimental stages and progression of the printing processes.¹ 'Still, we can only guess at what could have been achieved had those artists the advantages of today's sophisticated technology'.¹ Any artist of that period could avail of this new technology and helped to extend the careers of many more as graphic artists and illustrators.

Illustrations came about through the emergence of weekly factual, literary, humorous and religious family magazines. As these were produced mainly for the public market, the upper and middle-class audiences, they contained mostly information of the current political problems of the time, interpreted satirically. This in turn provided a continuous demand for profuse illustrations, and were therefore a source of regular employment. Indeed a great many artists received wider recognition than even their contemporary easel painters. (ref: "Fantasy" 1860-1920 - Peppin).

Consequently the various types of illustrative work attracted the most gifted artists around in the fields of imagination and humour - conjuring up make believe worlds and impossible but also slyly covering up deep-seated and satirical remarks. These talents were to be found in such journals as the "Illustrated London News", "The Graphic", "Punch" - papers that were popular during the early nineteen-hundreds. Such journals provided the employment and fame for many artists and speeded up the revolution of the printing techniques with the aid of photography.

However, the opportunity for artists to explore illustration through this new medium of photography (for example by using photogravure and photolithography) did not decrease their expanding talents in drawing. Instead there was a door opened to the world of book-illustration through poetry, story-telling and literature, classic and contemporary. The introduction of the 'gift book' was a successful venture in which the talents of both artist and author were combined, usually bound in a lavish leather cover with embossed gold designs. In these great books artists visionary

worlds of faeries and dreams were explored and it was owing to the enormous popularity of literature that book-illustration was really given a boost.

At the turn of this century, book-illustration was principally taken over by the great British artists of the day. People like Beardsley, Rackham, Blake and the Robinson brothers were among the few who made it to the top. Dulac from France, Nielsen from Denmark and Harry Clarke (who was the only Irish artist of that time to gain recognition) are just a slice of a great number of illustrators who committed themselves wholly to the trade and made famous by the breakthrough in book illustration.

Irishman Harry Clarke won exceptional distinction in open competition with his English contemporaries. We identify him as the only Irish artist who made a real break from a decaying tradition of a religiously orientated art in Ireland. There is always the need for an artist to create a tradition of his own. Clarke, was inspired by the stained glass work in the ancient cathedrals of the continent which he visited in his youth so he has combined his influence with a background steeped in history and folklore. He succeeded indeed, in combining many more influences which he picked up during his short life, and in gaining the knowledge to complete magnificent illustrations for special editions of "Tales of mystery and imagination" by Edgar Allan Poe, Goethe's "Faust" and many others.

During his few working years Clarke made an enormous contribution to the world of illustration. He helped Beardsley (to name just one artist) to educate society. They aimed at sexual fantasies that were real but never spoken of before in society. Clarke too was perverse in his illustrations (especially in "Faust"), unique images of the macabre appear and mix with motifs and decorations reminiscent of an Irish heritage. He was highly distinctive and creative of such ^{new} monsters of the unreal world - the subconsciousness. (Ref: "Fantasy" 1860 - 1920. Peppin. Studio Vista)

Footnote 1: Quote 'The Fantastic Kingdom'. David Larkin

CHAPTER I.

The Artist

HARRY CLARKE (1890 - 1931)

Harry Clarke was born in Dublin on March 17th 1890. He was the second son of Joshua Clarke and Brigid Mc Gonigle. His father, Joshua Clarke came from Leeds, England to settle in Dublin where he established a stained glass and church decorating studio at No. 33 North Great Frederick Street. Harry Clarke had an older brother Walter and two sisters younger, Kathleen and Florence; the family also lived at the studio's address.

EDUCATION

Harry Clarke attended many schools when he was young and as a result of his extraordinary individuality and intelligence he was accepted at Belvedere College at a younger age than was usual. While in Belvedere College, his remarkable artistic abilities were noted possibly at the stage when he began drawing caricatures of his teachers and classmates. When Clarke finished school he started working with his father in the stained glass business where they would work together on ideas for church commissions.

Clarke studied at the Metropolitan School of Art (now the National College of Art and Design, Kildare Street) at night. After a while he won a scholarship and began attending day classes at the Metropolitan School, in stained glass design.

'Clarke was a hard worker and keen to progress in his field'. 'He was fortunate to have natural powers of concentration and imagination, also being endowed with instinctive good taste as a colourist'.¹

His work in stained glass became increasingly noted. Even as a student Clarke won gold medals in competition with students of art from England and Ireland for two consecutive years - the first being dated 1912.

It was in 1913 that he was also awarded a travelling scholarship to study the cathedral windows of the continent particularly those of Chartres and the Île de France.

During his student days he was also a keen book illustrator. He sent some samples of his black and white pen drawings to George G. Harrap

Publishers in London. They liked his style of drawing, 'ranging from fantasy to horror'² and hence received a commission to illustrate such titles as Goethe's "Faust", "Tales of mystery and imagination" by Poe and in contrast to these he was also capable of illustrating Perrault's "Fairy Tales" and "The Years at the Spring", a selection of poems. These are but a mere section of Clarke's rich and versatile talent which will be discussed later.

Clarke's work in stained glass is just an extension of his art as illustrator and most of his stained glass design was done in his later years. However, Clarke remained a highly polished book illustrator and distinctive stained glass craftsman throughout his life. He is said to have contributed greatly to the revival of the Irish culture (Clarke was associated with the Irish Cultural Resurgence of the early nineteen hundreds) with 'just the right mixture of tradition and talent'.³

His short career was destroyed by tuberculosis - Harry Clarke died at Coire, Switzerland on January 6th 1931. He was forty-two years of age. (Ref: W. J. Dowling (article) 'Dublin Historical Record'. March 1962.

THE ARTISTS INFLUENCES

Harry Clarke was keen on illustration from his early days and it is only natural that being so sensitive from such an impressionable age that he was greatly influenced by everything around him. The effect of such influences on his work will be discussed. Meanwhile, here is an introduction of his main sources of influence, as follows:

- a) His cultural background and association with the Cultural Resurgence in Ireland.
- b) Stained glass: Clarke made many contributions to this craft and received great inspiration from his work in the studio and from the great medieval works on the continent.
- c) Through the popular artistic movements of the period such as the Art Nouveau, Symbolists etc. and interest in Japanese art.
- d) Social changes and technological advances (which affected every artist).
- e) It is reasonable to say that the contemporary Aubrey Beardsley was a great encouragement to and influence on Clarke.

Footnote 1. W. J. Dowling. "Dublin Historical Record". November '62 p. 55-61
 2. David Larkin. "The Fantastic Kingdom". Pan/Ballantine.
 3. Bruce Arnold. "The Concise History of Irish Art". Thames and Hudson, 1954-55

CULTURAL INFLUENCE

A background steeped in history and folklore is food for any illustrator, and Clarke had a way of translating this into the most imaginative, certainly the most macabre form of symbolism - decorated with masses of motifs and colour that show traces of our ancient manuscripts. He was undoubtedly influenced by his early Irish ancestors. Although there is no direct parallel between his work and the ancient manuscripts several motifs he has used are similar to what we would find in say the Book of Kells. Snakes, distorted men performing as decorative borders and decor. His colour too is fresh and vital. Some of these elements can be found in Clarke's illustrations to Goethe's "Faust". Other celtic inspired objects in his illustrations to "Faust" are the chalice, the manuscript and the typically celtic gold ornamentation of headresses and jewellery on the figures: which can be seen in figures 1. and 2.

Perhaps all these characteristics have left Clarke's work to be more easily accepted - especially as he had a big hand in the revival of motifs from ancient Irish culture. It was during the years 1916 - 1930 that Clarke contributed most to the cultural resurgence in Ireland.

Through his stained glass work he was able to depict subjects from Irish literature and drama for example 'The Journey of Diarmuid and Grainne'. Here he could introduce celtic motifs which may form part of the background.

Because Clarke was such a sensitive person, as many artists are, it was extremely hard for him to avoid gaining anything from his involvement with the cultural resurgence, his friends and the theatre which he loved. In fact everything he touched on inspired him. From his association with people like Seán O'Casey, Synge, Shaw and Yeats he was to make a series of panels known as the Geneva Window. Each panel depicted scenes from contemporary drama, for example "Juno and the Paycock" by O'Casey, "The Playboy of the Western World" by Synge and "Saint Joan" by George Bernard Shaw.

STAINED GLASS

Before even he pursued his dual career, Harry Clarke won a travelling scholarship (1913) from the Department of Education, so that he was able to visit the great stained glass works of the continent. The windows that impressed him most were in the cathedrals of France, like Rouen and Chartres.

They seemed to make a great impression on Clarke because the figures and clothing in his illustrations and stained glass panels are definitely medieval in style. They are characterised by long slender features, tiny hands and feet with pointed - period-style shoes and costumes. Clarke's treatment of illustration even in stained glass shows a great fluidity. It shows how the acid technique gave the artist complete freedom to express himself at his best in an original manner. This fluidity is seen even in 'The Geneva Window' which was one of Clarke's last works in stained glass.

Stained glass is essentially a decorative medium. Any attempt to produce a realistic effect say like a canvas portrait is wrong, and alien to the medium. Clarke accepting the limitations of glass and its beautiful characteristics carried his work and style to his pen in obtaining rich decorative effects. His experiments with technique in stained glass influenced his drawings and the use of strong colour is an obvious inspiration from coloured glass too. His stained glass windows with their jewelled lights and deep rich colours afford startling contrasts to some of his very early works and illustrations, but these differences are just a demonstration of his various skills in craftsmanship and style.

Clarke's association with the Council of Arts and Crafts Society in Ireland gave him a continued interest and involvement in his work. In "Irish Art and Architecture" by Harbison, Patterton and Sheehy, Clarke is said to be probably the most outstanding stained glass artist of the century and a superb book illustrator.

ARTISTIC MOVEMENTS

The artistic movements of the day were followed by the majority of artists. The most popular being Japanese, Arts Nouveau, Symbolists and Pre-Raphaelites as well as of course the Art and Crafts Movement.

The Japanese movement created the fashion for very beautiful, simplified and decorative work. Clarke's illustration to 'Overheard on a Saltmarsh', a poem by Harold Mouro from "The Years at the Spring" is a typical example. This illustration - obviously a watercolour, shows the kind of delicate colour that tells us it is Japanese in flavour. If one looks at the illustration to the 'Wild Swans' from Andersen's "Fairy Tales" one will notice how the swans are treated in the traditional Japanese style. They are typical and imitative of old oriental prints. The swans are shown in flight with necks stretched outward. The colour again is delicately placed and the decorative blossoms add to the Japanese air of the scene.

Other aspects of Clarke's illustrative work that were influenced by Japanese prints are found in most of his work dating around 1916 - 1920 when he worked at drawings for the above books and also Poe's "Tales of mystery and imagination". Elements of design are extremely noticeable - the picture being divided up into great masses of blacks and whites, even colour. Simplicity shows up any detail in such motifs as the flower or even the highly ornate headresses and patterned clothing. Backgrounds are high horizons, uncluttered, not unlike the work of his English contemporary, Aubrey Beardsley, (whom I shall speak about later on in this chapter).

The Art Nouveau stream of the 1920's has a root in the Japanese movement and Clarke was also touched by this. The main characteristics of the Art Nouveau movement were, a prevailing fashion for simplicity contrasted with elaborate, bizarre styles of clothing and headresses; vast areas of space complementing equally vast areas of patterns and decoration. The Art Nouveau style was quite a jump, introducing decoration and space in a graphic fashion with an interplay of extraordinarily repetitive motifs of flowers and diamond-shapes, curvey headresses and absurd costumes. When we look at Clarke's illustration to 'King Pest' fig. 3. all these elements can be seen clearly. The floor is strewn with flowers just like the ones in 'Overheard on a Saltmarsh'. The bizarre headresses, one forming patterns like a fir-cone; jewellery is abundant especially rings. The Art Nouveau had more of an influence on Clarke's work in pen-and-ink as very fine detail is difficult to work with brush, still even some of the above elements can be found also in his stained glass panels - the wings and hair of angels, people's clothing etc.

Now, like many artists and authors Clarke got involved in the Symbolist Movement. Symbolism became remarkably widespread as a result of a sudden increased interest in traditional folklore and newly translated stories. Some of these stories came about by the acquisition of new territories by the British Empire. In Ireland it was a result of the revival of celtic art.

Clarke's object was to express in simple terms the unfamiliar and invisible, to translate words into combinations of symbols. Symbols represent something of the real world so that sometimes symbolism can 'cover-up' or disguise an outward emotion or as in Ireland a troubled people (during times of war such as 1916 and 1921).

It was at this period that Clarke started using symbolism to break the barriers of society's rigid puritanism. The Victorian age produced a people who were repressed especially in such matters of homosexuality and other sexual fantasies. These sexual matters were unmentionable. With ingenuity and discretion Clarke, who was also influenced by Beardsley's illustrations on the subject, found a way of dealing with sexual subjects by indirect expression in illustration. One lovely example is fig. 1, the illustration to "Has no copy been taken"?

The scene shows a rather girlish gentleman, having his portrait painted. He wears white gloves, sits with his feet pointed inwards in a very ladylike posture, and sports a rather boyish type beard consisting of a few straggling whiskers in comparison to his mates. His eyes have a wistful, longing gaze.

One recurring element is the dwarf who is a rather popular chap in illustrations of many artists. Clarke's colour plates from "Faust" and the "Years at the Spring" show this dwarf; he is a wicked fellow casting evil glances in all directions. Demonic expression is Clarke's forte which is why Goethe's "Faust" illustrations appealed to him so much and much of his tendency towards the fantastic is revealed through symbolism in these works.

SOCIAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES

Industrialisation revolutionised the world of printing and for artists like Harry Clarke who had to keep in touch with the constantly changing printing techniques it was certainly hard work. Clarke had the added difficulty of maintaining an equal interest in both illustration and stained glass.

The new technical innovation of photolithography provided opportunities for improved decorative design and colour. As Clarke was a great colourist he wanted to achieve the same richness and extravagance of his stained glass in his book illustrations. His obvious success can be seen in any of the colour plates produced in this essay, which are practically all taken from first editions of these books Clarke was commissioned to illustrate.

Illustrated books and magazines of the early 1900's were reflecting 'social problems and prejudices of the age that produced them'¹, even through these problems were often not faced openly. 'Fantasy illustrations also involve making deeply seated and sometimes unacknowledged feelings of

fear or ecstasy, or desire, materialise as recognisable images'.²
 These can be represented by symbols which are a reflection of the familiar world we abandon.

AUBREY BEARDSLEY (1872 - 98)

Although I have already said that Clarke was a highly individualistic and talented artist it is not right to say that he was also truly original in ideas. He was influenced greatly by Beardsley, an artist eighteen years older than himself. This link is very apparent when we look at the black-and-white illustrations of both artists. Their use of symbolism was comparable though Beardsley was more adventurous in its use, 'sometimes of a very personal nature'.³

Beardsley was a remarkable designer in black and white while Clarke was more artistic in his use of form, space and pattern. They both found an effective combination using simple line against great areas of white or solid black. Both artists' work is characterised by skill and precision with patterns of great delicacy. They relied on the harmony of a whole composition being held together by balanced pattern. A rhythm is created by careful study and use of lines varying in thickness in proportion to the areas of space between them.

Clarke had a definite direction or flair towards the fantastic which challenges that of Beardsley. Beardsley's sexual references are more explicit than Clarke's but in a society so intolerant of such matters both artists escaped criticism. They were certainly before their time. In fact it was only artists like Beardsley and Clarke who were able to pass through this 'barrier of sexual evasion with discretion, creating a world of sexual variety for the public through images'. 'Their awareness extended to the forbidden topics of prostitution, homosexuals etc.'⁴ The similarity in style and technique of the two artists is quite obvious in a number of illustrations which shall be discussed in a later chapter. These are:

- a) 'The Rape of the Lock'. figs. 8, 9 (Beardsley).
- b) 'Bluebeard' fig. 5.
- c) "'Don't give yourself airs', said the old man", fig. 2.

A reason for such similarity between artists can be attributed to movements such as the symbolists, art nouveau and the interest in Japanese art, which simultaneously influenced a great number of artists, at the

turn of this century. Both Beardsley and Clarke were also inspired by the Old Masters, and from the Baroque and Rococo styles. These styles were characterised by extremely ornate and decorative designs. These influences were followed by the fashionable themes of eighteenth century France, with elaborate costumes and frills and headresses even more elaborately bejewelled than those found in the illustrations inspired by Art Nouveau. Both Clarke and Beardsley's illustrations applaud one another in their use of decoration and pattern in scenes to 'The Rape of the Lock'. Each is superbly accurate in the fashions of clothes and furniture of this era.

All through the years Clarke's work shows a style imitative of Beardsleys, more so in his illustrations than stained glass.

Footnote: 1. Brigid Peppin "Fantasy"
2. Ibid
3. Ibid
4. Ibid

CHAPTER II

PRINTING

The ease and speed of photomechanical methods was the revolution of a new era of illustrators. Rackham, the Robinson brothers, Dulac, Nielsen, Beardsley and Clarke were just a few of the many struggling artists at the start of the twentieth century who found freedom of expression through their illustration. They were fortunate in not having to design for the wood-block which retarded the earlier artists drawing: instead they created a new, free-er style of drawing, made possible with the innovations into the printing world. With the introduction of the colour half-tone the liberation of the illustrator became complete. (Ref: "The English Book Trade" - Marjorie Plant).

Technically speaking the period 1860 - 1920 of book illustration is divided roughly into two stages by the introduction of photomechanical reproduction. Before 1890 and slightly earlier in Europe and America, drawings intended for reproduction had to be engraved or etched by hand onto the surface from which the print was to be made. One of the most popular methods was wood-block engraving. But this involved a delicate cutting away of wood from a block; colour printing from the wood-block meant that separately engraved blocks had to be made for each colour.

In the 1870's, chromolithography could produce the same effects as above, less laboriously. This is a lithograph printed in colours - usually three-colour. But now the introduction of the photomechanical process had a tremendous effect on speeding up production even more.

The 'process', as it was called, affected illustrative styles and artists trained in drawing for the wood-block often had difficulty in adapting to the new method. With 'process', every line, dot, scribble or texture, accidental or deliberate could be reproduced with photographic precision. The younger generation of black and white artists responded immediately to this innovation by expanding their graphic styles.

A number of different photomechanical techniques were developed more or less concurrently. Half-tone blocks represented shading by means of a screen of dots varying in size and so various methods of screening originals developed.

HALF-TONE PROCESS

This new process meant a cheaper form of reproduction. In half-tone the whole picture printed shows as a series of dots and the lighter sections of smaller dots, more widely spaced. Experiments on this principle had been made about 1800 by Fox Talbot, who used gauze for his attempts. But it was Meisenback, a German, who made the process more practicable by devising the modern screen. The picture to be reproduced was photographed through a screen consisting of two glass plates, each closely ruled with black lines. When put together the lines cross one another. The light passes through the screen and the size of the resulting dot varies according to the proportion of light coming through each square. For a more perfect reproduction a finer screen was used. Unfortunately, a fine screen demands very smooth shiny paper, which is not only trying to the eyes but alien also to the character of the paper used in the printing of the book. That is the reason why so many of the older books have mounted colour plates. In fact the editions of Poe's "Tales of mystery and imagination" illustrated by Harry Clarke published in 1919 is an example of the type of book which was being produced: the mounted plates being totally alien to the printed matter and also a new element in the book trade.

The printing block for this process was made by copying the negative on metal and etching, as most photographic processes are done.

The half-tone block was a cheaper process than any former means of book illustration, and the block could be printed as rapidly as type. The half-tone process was a sudden development and gave new life to books and newspapers.

THE LINE BLOCK

Fortunately the line block, which reproduces exactly what the artist draws was capable of being printed on any type of paper; and with the innovation of the colour - half-tone process the prints had a quality of the earlier wood-block prints. The process too was similar, colours being put on one at a time by separate blocks as before, except that these blocks were produced photographically. The colour half-tone process was mastered during the 1890's, although the technique was not widely used until the early years of the twentieth century.

By its nature the line-block cannot reproduce tonal variation. It reproduces exactly what the artists draw. It is especially used for pen-and-ink linework. So many artists like Clarke could avail of this new printing method to produce the delicate precision work of a pen which the earlier wood-block users could not master. Indeed Clarke's illustrations to such master-pieces as Goethe's "Faust" were printed by line-block process and show the true precision with which he worked.

The drawing for printing was photographed onto a photosensitised zinc or copper plate. Ink rolled across the plate, staying only on the lines of the photographic image and rejected by the rest of the plate; then by placing in an acid bath, the plate is etched so that the lines of the drawing stand in relief. This type of drawing which could take one or two days to produce could now be ready in a few hours by this method. (Ref: "The English Book Trade" - Marjorie Plant. "Fantasy" 1860 - 1920 Brigid Peppin).

CHAPTER III

The Irish Cultural Resurgence and Clarke's Contribution

After one hundred years of troubled history, Ireland became a lively country from the early 1900's to the late 1930's. In fact the political and artistic resurgences ^{coincided — no other literary} or artistic movement attracted so much attention as the Irish cultural revival. The past was unearthed and a number of remarkable people, men and women, emerged. Ireland enjoyed the most interesting theatre of the time (the Abbey theatre with which Harry Clarke was closely associated), plus poets, writers and painters.

*It was through Lane, an art critic for the Irish Arts and Crafts Society, that many artists gained fame. Lane exhibited their work in an effort to show an exploration of Irish art and culture that was taking place then. This exhibition was to demonstrate to the world that there was an undeniable gift for visual expression in Ireland. This dream of national independence flourished during the 1920's, despite troubled times, and many people including Clarke who exhibited their work gained recognition and appreciation.

Clarke's personal involvement must surely stem from his association with 'an Tur Gloine', a stained glass workshop founded by Sarah Purser in 1903. Most of his friends connected with this include Michael Healy, a stained glass artist and watercolourist, Evie Hone and Wilhelmina Geddes also stained glass designers. All artists involved in this movement conveyed in different ways the lyrical and mysterious quality that had been a part of Irish art and that was developing in Ireland. It was an effort to revive celtic art, to master the intricacies of interlace and to create an Irish art with genuine roots in the past. The revival attempted to restore and understand the native roots by contemporary expression. This creative independence had existed before in the medieval period and Clarke's detail in stained glass an overall treatment of his drawings are Gothic in flavour. He deliberately adapted native medieval devices to his own style as in fig. 11(a). In this illustration we can pick out definite medieval motifs found in ancient manuscripts and stained glass windows, (the decorative representation of a rose, the spirals, bird and costume) and recognise apparent sources.

*From his connection with the stained glass studio Clarke was already acclaimed by critics for his work as one of the greatest of the stained glass artists; but his work in book illustration is irresistible, succeeding in retaining the essential brilliance of glass along with the detail and precision of a pen. In Clarke's earliest coloured illustrations for example figs. 11, 12 and 12(a) the rich colour and elaborate detail is reminiscent of medieval art of manuscripts and stained glass. These illustrations show such motifs of dot, line, curves, circles and spirals - a variety found only in such places as celtic art and employed in a more modern fashion.

One technical innovation Clarke gave to stained glass was his use of the acid technique as mentioned before, and was brought to its ultimate perfection in the famous Geneva Window. (This piece was a series of panels illustrating scenes from contemporary Irish drama such as 'Juno and the Paycock' by O'Casey and 'Playboy of the Western World' by Synge). The window was bought by the International Labour Organisation in Geneva but was never sent to Switzerland. The painting technique in the panels is as delicate and intricate as any work he did illustrations. Clarke succeeded in adapting his training in art and culture to his own style with 'just the right mixture of tradition and individual talent'.¹

'The romantic glow of the Irish cultural revival still exists'.² This we know from our constant struggle to keep our heritage, a language, folklore, traditional music and literature. It is impossible to suppress the Irish spirit, we are born into sentiment, wit and humour according to 'AE' Russell in his book "The Living Torch". Otherwise known as George William Russell, 'AE' was a poet also of artistic fame and also one of the leaders of the movement. He wrote about the 'Irish versatility and gift of expression for conjuring up the fantastic'.² He also says the Irish have a strong sense of personal involvement - factors that make Clarke a typical example of the people who contributed greatly to the revival of the Irish culture.

THE ARTIST'S WORK

There were several English illustrators of note at the same period but Harry Clarke was independent of them. He was nurtured in an environment which was only just awakening after being kept for so long under the strong influence of British rule. He made his name working a dual career as stained glass craftsman and graphic illustrator during the cultural renaissance in Ireland.

Clarke was rich in graphic invention, colour and fantasy, and his association with the cultural renaissance enriched his variety of vivid imagery with multicoloured motifs, decoration and contorted figures. His early works of around 1916 - 1920 show the overpowering brilliance of colours he chose, especially in figs. 11 - 12(a). These illustrations are comparable to stained glass panels as mentioned before. A sharp, clear effect of broken colour was aimed at, even in figure representations where clothes form a harlequin pattern of patches of different colours (fig. 11).

In his student days, Clarke worked in mixed media, pencil, pencil and watercolour, and pen and ink. His early work is quite delicately treated even his designs for church murals and decoration which he did while working with his father. Some of these works survive in the National Gallery Library and must be looked at in the original to fully appreciate the fineness and delicacy that was a quality of all Harry Clarke's work.

When we look at Clarke's work we come away with the feeling of having looked at someone struggling to create a world that did not really exist. His work shows a variety of ideas reflecting certain undercurrent problems for example of repressed sexuality, and other political problems of our troubled history. It was in keeping with Clarke's natural interests to illustrate 'Faust' and the 'Tales of mystery and imagination' in which his satanic images are inexhaustible. These are comparable to his versatility and ability to draw such delicate scenes to Perrault's and Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales.

Brigid Peppin, authoress of 'Fantasy', says that 'Harry Clarke was perhaps the most imaginative, certainly the most macabre in his use of symbolism (which shall be discussed later). This is evident in his 'Faust' illustrations and probably inspired by popular symbolism and representations found in religious stained glass. Here Clarke has invented grotesque monsters which are a combination of fantasy and realism. Illustrations for 'Faust' were carried out in pen and ink and are highly decorative but his works for the special edition are more intense, being coloured, with images of mutilated monsters, headless, limbless demons, dwarfs, winged and mouth-gaping creatures. Obscenity and vulgarity was avoided by Clarke in an atmosphere of joviality and humour which was an invitation to any onlooker.

In "AE" Russell's book 'The Living Torch' we read that 'Clarke is probably the ideal interpreter of Edgar Allan Poe, and wherever the imagination of Goethe conjures up the macabre, the witch, imp and devil, Clarke

will add a shudder which is congruous with the drama'. This is shown in his illustrations figs. 16, 17 and 18 from 'Faust'. When looking at the beautiful figure in fig. 16 in contrast to the demonic figure of the dwarf we can appreciate a style almost realistic in treatment, while the cloven-hooved evil-eyed dwarf becomes a part of the furniture, holding a mirror. Other grotesque monsters in this plate form a decorative border characteristic of early manuscripts in their manner of use, to add a little humour to the scene.

In Clarke's black and white illustrations to Goethe's 'Faust' the images are more clearly represented. Their simple treatment compares with figs. 16, 17 and 18. These illustrations are full of line, pattern and detail, treated in a decorative manner and some of Clarke's earlier drawings for 'The Rape of the Lock' by Alexander Pope and Poe's 'Tales of mystery and imagination' are treated in a Beardsleyesque style with large masses of pattern against large areas of solid black or white.

Clarke's versatility can be seen in following his work from 1916 when he executed works for 'Fairy Tales' of H. C. Andersen to 1925 when he worked on 'Faust'. The latter being some of Clarke's last published works. Clarke adapted his style to suit each commission, (unusual for any artist) yet there is a distinctive technique and treatment involved. His ability to turn to his work in stained glass is also an extension of his diversity. His work in both areas shows a definite graphic style which is why it suited him so well to work in pen-and-ink. His pen drawings show skill in balancing pattern and line and are more impressive in detail than much of his colour work. He paid great attention to the design of an illustration which was an influence of his training in stained glass design. His scenes are carefully composed; and figures blend inconspicuously into the overall decorative effect as in fig. 4 to 'The cask of Amontillado' and also fig. 7 which shows 'mephistopheles' who seems to be blended into the background and border of the illustration. In figs. 11, 11(a), 12, 12(a) the very colours Clarke has chosen portray a design attitude. He places strong areas of colour side by side which seems to simplify the illustrations greatly - this technique is not so obvious in illustrations to poems of 'The Years at the Spring' (1920) or even the special commission for 'Faust' (1925). The illustrations to Lettice D O'Walters collection of poems, 'The years at the Spring' show more of a romantic beauty than that macabre air of mystery and evil of 'Faust'.

Certainly, Harry Clarke has mastered his technique and fortunate to

have been commissioned such books to illustrate that appealed to his imagination and capability. Perhaps, we possibly have not appreciated his work as much as he deserves, nor duly recognised his prolific output of work in so short a life span. It was the Irish cultural revival that gave Clarke so rich a life and the opportunity to explore his ability and imagination.

DISCUSSION OF CLARKE'S TECHNIQUE IN BLACK AND WHITE ILLUSTRATION

As a student Clarke had already learned the limitations of working in various media. With a knowledge of the problems and advantages of working for reproduction he quickly developed a style. Clarke's pen and ink drawings are his most decorative; his technique was a result of the instrument he used and also influenced by Beardsley's work. Technique can also be dictated by the style of book to be illustrated - sometimes the author will dictate how the book should be illustrated. But Clarke's advantage was in being commissioned to illustrate such stories that appealed to his fantastic imagination, like 'Tales of mystery and imagination' and 'Faust'.

According to E. J. Sullivan, author of 'The Art of Illustration', he praises Beardsley's belief that in the world of illustration everything was artificial and amusing. He says that 'if a physical fact was ugly it had to be made amusing and unreal'. In fact Beardsley's work is of an aesthetic quality more artificial in comparison to Clarke's. Beardsley was so intent on perfecting a style that he almost lost his powers of expression. On the otherhand Clarke shows a gift for pattern and form (like Beardsley) but in a manner that combines objects together unlike Beardsley's which seem to be exercises in design.

Clarke's illustrations developed into a construction of lines and forms, creating mass and continually evolving new combinations. The complexity with which he uses line forms sympathetic components in a composition as seen in fig. 4 or even fig. 6. To form composition he establishes a focal point around which other figures or objects revolve. In fig. 4 the central figure faces the left which is balanced by his chains running to the right-hand corner. Clarke creates harmony in this illustration by a pleasant relationship of densely patterned areas beside solid black. Elements like faces, hands, chains in this scene, are emphasised by leaving blank. The clothing is treated so delicately with patterns that the eye is drawn into the scene.

With Clarke's delicate sense of line and decorative use of the block he padded out large areas of backgrounds with delicately contrived patterns of tone and rhythm. An example of this is the walls and screens of fig. 2 - those expanses that do not usually play a major part of a scene yet help to combine the essential components. In later years he uses whole backgrounds of solid black or white, still complimenting intense patterns. Specific examples of this are his 'Faust' illustrations figs. 4 and 8 and also figs. 5 and 6 to Perrault's 'Fairy Tales'. In these illustrations Clarke is all the time obsessed with space; he rarely uses perspective to create the illusion except in figs. 3 and 5, instead he prefers to use plain backgrounds.

It was the influence of various movements in art too that made Clarke a creative inventor of pattern. The Art Nouveau stream especially introduced many motifs of flowers and repeat patterns. Distinctive elements of Harry Clarke's are flowers, foliage, the diamond motif - using one motif as this he was able to produce infinite patterns build on it; the checkerboard motif is very popular in all his illustrations. It appears as the centres of flowers, floor-tiling, ribbons and borders. Many of the motifs have symbolic meanings which shall be discussed in the next chapter.

Clarke achieves beautifully decorative effects that seem to be exercises in control and use of the pen and of the endless effects it can produce. In his illustrations to Pope's "Rape of the Lock" (National Gallery Library, unpublished) Clarke's pen drawing is very finely executed, he studied the aspects of fabric, fashions and furniture of the era just as Beardsley did in figs. 9 and 10. In fact these illustrations are practically identical and a result of Clarke's early influence by Beardsley which lessened through the years.

CLARKE'S COLOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

Harry Clarke had a natural sense of colour, and was kept fresh through his work in stained glass. He worked well in colour and his illustrations to Fairy Tales in 1916 show a direct stained glass inspiration. These were his first coloured works; the colours are saturated similar to glass. He used the colours in a glorious harmony with rich reds and blues being placed beside yellows or greens. The bright colours were relieved by a jewel-like quality achieved through the decoration. These illustrations of figs. 11, 11(a), 12 and 12(a) are reminiscent of church windows and the painting technique is as

delicate and intricate as any of his work in stained glass. In these plates Clarke has created the space and simplicity of his black and white work that is missing from the special edition of 'Faust' in figs. 17 and 18. There is a definite transition from simplicity to a complex and cluttered treatment through the years. In 'Faust' we see a lack of the decorative quality found in 'The Years at the Spring' of 1920; yet Clarke has not failed to create that same air of mystery in a more realistic style. In 'Faust' he has experimented with colour to create tonal values and lost the saturated look of 'The Fairy Tale' series. In fig. 15 he has used a series of tones and shades of a few colours, the effect is muted and in great contrast to even the delicate charm of fig. 14 where Clarke shows a leaning towards a Japanese style.

I feel Clarke experimented less extensively with colour in his works for Hans Christian Andersen's and Charles Perrault's 'Fairy Tales'. After this period he regressed into a less brightly coloured phase which resulted in illustrations for 'The years at the Spring' which are exquisitely treated in a more muted style. This change lead to the sombre, emotional treatment of imagery found in 'Faust'. It is satanic and perverse in imagination, and its treatment only reflects and implies the images of evil thought. Clarke's illustrations to 'Faust' are a perfect sample of carefully planned composition. These compositions form harmonious scenes with washes of colour holding a group of images together. These illustrations are masterpieces in combining the spirit world with reality in a naturalistic way. They are studies of life, when you consider how carefully he has handled apes, snakes, monsters, witches, creatures crawling from orifices, images of perverse expression along with the occasional human being.

Footnote: * Reference - 'Irish Art' Rosc catalogue 1975 - 76.

1. Bruce Arnold, 'Concise history of Irish Art'.
2. R. M.Kain, 'Dublin'

CHAPTER IV

Imagery, Symbolism and Motifs

The popular idea of imagination is of something vague, undefined and generally misty. It is usually associated with combining human thought and history, symbolism and the occult. It is a product of the mind's creative power to work through images of the consciousness. The mind can picture to itself, scenes, events and persons of which you may read or hear; in its pure form the artist, author or musician may reveal himself by these idealisations.

Harry Clarke, would reveal to us social problems, or indeed personal ones by use of symbols, imagery and even colour. His illustrations tell us many things. For example in much of his work he has used many religious images and symbolic representations which were probably inspired by some personal thoughts on religion. The fact that illustration is a reflection of problems, troubles or even emotions is true and not always made obvious was discussed in an earlier chapter. I go on to say that Harry Clarke in his use of perverse and satanic imagery, often having strong homosexual implications (as in figs. 2 and 16), ignored the contemporary social custom of avoiding such indelicate matters.

Clarke was intensely imaginative. His illustrations always involved a combination of realism and creativity. In his black and white plates we see clearly how he has contorted harmless scenes into strange shapes that disturb the mind. Space forms pattern and pattern forms images, especially in figs. 3, 4 and 7. We are drawn into the scene by atmosphere. He makes us uneasy by his use of macabre imagery and symbolic representations. He transposes reality into nightmares, seeking to express aspects of society which is particularly obvious in the 'Faust' series. In this book, Clarke captured the elusive truth of fantasy and continued to capture it when other artists got caught up in the aesthetic world of the art nouveau stream. You see, Clarke was not interested in creating romantic and pretty pictures. "Reality is not always beautiful". Instead Clarke turned the world into a macabre one - real people, troubled people, were trapped in smiling appearances, eyes laden with the burden of problems and all annihilating reality in dreams.

IMAGERY

Clarke's imagery is more astonishing than many of his English counterparts. A great deal of his imagery was inspired by his work in stained glass which included commissions for Roman Catholic churches*. "Many of his images seem to contain bizarre perversions of religious iconography".¹ Clarke's works in this area use many images of winged creatures, angels, devils. The crucifix can even be detected in parts of his inventive patterns.

Most of Clarke's imagery is based on motifs and repeated patterns, influences of various movements and a training in stained glass design. His imagery is a serious contortion showing the troubled society he was living in. It is reminiscent of celtic art and medieval windows and proves to us his knowledge of history with accurate descriptions of period-style costume and furnishing just as we see in fig. 2 or fig. 11(a). The spirit of the drawings are greatly emphasised by particular characters such as hairstyles, costumes, accessories, furniture and their treatment.

Most of Clarke's imagery is concerned with the fantastic world and this allows him certain liberties. An example is how he has used symbolism to manifest his ideas on sexual fantasies. His imagery is full of surprise it is typically religious, gloomy and slightly Irish especially in his illustrations to 'The Tales of mystery and imagination'. 'King Pest', fig. 3 is somewhat slightly suggestive of the 'Last Supper' scene from the Bible and fig. 7 to 'Faust' reminds us of our nagging conscience.

His imagery in 'Faust' is hideous; epidemics of monsters, witches, crawling, interlacing creatures and 'eye-tipped' penises are not unusual just part of Clarke's typical imagination to conjure up the impossible. In contrast Clarke's earlier illustrations are soft and beautiful, sometimes romantic as in scenes from Pope's 'Rape of the Lock'. The two drawings for this in the National Gallery Library show a tendency to romanticism. He emphasises the beauty of the bedroom scene in 'Her guardian sylph prolonged the bathy rest, a youth more glittering than a birth-night beam...'. This illustration contains that beautiful sense of fragility with areas of lacy patterns surrounding figures of sylph-like proportions that could only support the beings of an unreal world. These thin elfin creatures with huge sad eyes that appear in so many of Clarke's drawings seem like a signature of the artist himself. Each one seems to be a self-portrait. In appearance "he was tall and slender. His hands

were long and sensitive and he looked every inch the artist without any hint of pomposity in his demeanour".²

Clarke's early illustrations depended on decorative imagery. Elaborately patterned areas applauding flat areas of black, white or colour were later exchanged for a style dependant on colour to invoke the imagery of a macabre world. His best use of imagery being seen in 'Faust' in figs. 17 and 18 where the atmosphere is gloomy, mysterious and terrifying. This was Clarke's work in 1925. In 1916 we saw an aesthetic quality and naïve trend in his imagery. It is hard to believe that one man could have such variety of style and imagination but it is there to be seen.

SYMBOLISM

The basis of all fantasy relies on the use of symbolism. The language of symbolism in literature is translated for us in illustrations, it is a language of visions and dreams inspired by the world we live in. Symbolism is a representation of an idea, for example a dove represents peace. It is a way to express or obscure a troubled time and of escaping reality. Imagery embraces the use of symbols, and symbols are usually invented by man, hiding from a world he lives in.

Imagery is made up of symbols and recurring ones are produced by different generations. The beginning of the nineteenth century produced many symbols with the social and political disruption in Ireland and England at the time. Various emotions and social attitudes were expressed in this manner through the works of authors and artists.

During Harry Clarke's working period which coincided with the Irish cultural revival, there was a marked interest in folklore. This remarkable new interest in folk literature found expression for imaginative artists like Clarke. Symbolism came into vogue and authors, poets and artists wanted a part in the new movement. Symbolism allowed certain freedom of expression and Clarke's attraction to such suggestive illustrations as in the 'Faust' series lead him to his use of sexual metaphors which permeated the imagery. "His fantasies could be enjoyed unselfconsciously by a generation that had not been alerted to sexual symbolism".³ One example from Faust fig. 17, shows "Mephistopheles, who is portrayed as an elegant, bejewelled and sexually ambiguous creature with cloven high-heeled boots."⁴ Clarke's figures are grotesquely proportioned like many of Beardsley's especially in figs. 9 and 10, with bloated bellies, as 'AE' says, 'monstrous by reason of lust or hate.'

Clarke's use of symbols serve as a comparison to our appreciation of his drawings. Recurring symbols (which are still typical), include ones as the dove, symbol of love and peace (fig. 11(a)), the staff or crown, which appears in numerous plates (figs. 1, 3, 8, 12 and 12(a)) is symbolic of power and authority. Other are the flame and candle, representing the light of life, the rose or flower (also used a lot) representing beauty, purity and spirituality. Many of these emblems have literary and historic associations. Fig. 11(a) has that popular rose emblem growing from a spiralling tree, symbolic of the tree-of-life. Moons, masks, birds and any other symbols may have personal connotations tracing back to personal experiences with his family or religion. Clarke's religious fears are represented in the demonic faces and winged creatures possibly inspired by his training in religious stained glass work.

Symbolism gave strength and vigour to Clarkes already macabre imagination. It also helped him reflect his emotions and escape the real world. It enabled him to create an even stranger world.

DECORATIVE MOTIFS

Motifs are as popular in Clarkes drawings as his use of pattern. In fact many motifs he has used helped form patterns. Many were copied from the works of past artists, many were created from his inventive mind. As I have discussed before his use of decoration is more a characteristic of his works from 1916 - 1920 in those illustrations to 'Fairy Tales' and 'The Years at the Spring'. Art Nouveau had made an entrance bringing in new motifs and patterns.

The most used motifs in Clarkes works are the flower, the cross-shape, diamond, checkerboard, dots, lines and ribbons. Variety is attained by their manner of employment and many are the basis of more intricate patterns which influenced Clarke's use of texture and decorative patterns in 'Has no copy been taken' fig. 2 from Poe's 'Tales of mystery and imagination'. Often these patterns take on a claustrophobic air as each motif grows. Patterns start forming rhythmically. Clarke enjoys repeated motifs on clothing or fabric, always creating new variations on each motif. It is very noticeable in fig. 4. and in the illustration of the bedroom scene to the 'Rape of the Lock' (National Gallery Library) where he has used the diamond as a basic shape and built up endless variations on it.

There are many motifs we cannot find explanations for. As Peppin says, Clarke used a jellyfish motif in fig. 13, which was to reappear later in a poem called 'Overheard on a Saltmarsh' from "The Years at the Spring" - she called it a striking motif, yet it is not impressive to look at. However we can only assume that such motifs had personal implications. Certainly Clarke's use of repeating motifs and patterns imply great force and energy. Clarke was an artist who never rested, he lived a very full and short life but perhaps this creative force pushing him was a reflection of an inner knowledge of a short life.

Footnote: 1. 'Fantasy' by Brigid Peppin

* Ibid

2. 'Dublin Historical Record'. W. J. Dowling

3. 'Fantasy' by Brigid Peppin

4. "AE" Russell from 'Living Torch'.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

"After every period of excitement there is a reaction.

Individuals may take risks, but the higher human
faculties of imagination and intellect may be used
to draw their countryman to their side."¹

Indeed there have been many periods of excitement in our history in the last 100 years, especially the troubled times of the 1900's. At this time Ireland was fighting for independence from British rule and a civil war (1914 - 1918). Despite this there was a flowering of art or rather, a revival of Irish art. This movement was greatly influenced by various trends in art, literature and music too. Analysing these factors that coincided we see what has resulted in some of the most striking people emerging from Irish history. These people include great names like Sean O'Casey, Joyce, Synge, 'AE' Russell of the authors and poets and Hone, Jellett, Healy and Geddes of stained glass craftsmanship, not to mention Harry Clarke - a man of genius and imagination who pursued a career in stained glass design and book illustration.

Clarke's illustrations show such variety, intensity and imagination that it is hard to believe a man could gain so much recognition for two talents. His stained glass work is a reflection of his work in illustration but his illustration is a reflection too of his stained glass panels. The responsibility of an artist is to keep a respectable standard of work; Clarke has succeeded in maintaining this standard of brilliance throughout his book illustrations and stained glass.

Clarke had genius. "Genius is the principle behind all illustration. If the artist has genius he also has imagination and humanity - and we recognise them, because such things cannot be aped".² As 'AE' said, "The Irish have a gift of expression for imagination", and so it is true of Harry Clarke as we can see from his profuse and diverse skills. The best evidence we can produce to prove this are his illustrations to Goethe's 'Faust' in the slides figs. 16, 17, 18. These Faust illustrations were commissioned for a special edition of the book where Clarke's variety of talent is most obvious. In these plates he has represented the 'spirit world' in an individualistic manner with a macabre style. You see that the macabre

and demonic appealed to Clarke. 'AE' said "in these illustrations, Harry Clarke is not the seer of forms but of people which their passions and imaginations assume". Clarke's brilliant colouring and his decorative and fantastic manner influenced by his stained glass work and Aubrey Beardsley in turn influenced fellow artists like Michael Healy (also a stained glass designer). Healy who worked closely with Harry Clarke was often lead to a secular and even morbid flavour in his work.

Clarke's work is aimed at an adult audience, anticipating the liberated thoughts of our generation by many years. In the 'Faust' illustrations he expresses ideas on sexual affairs, probably based on the result of personal experiences. As illustration is a form of escapism we can assume Clarke was trying to escape from reality (as humans tend to do). He could do this through his imagination which is, after all, a reflection and reaction to the age he was living in. Illustration too is explanatory of some emotions or thoughts and the most communicative of the arts.

In contrast to Clarke's illustrations for 'Faust', his fresh conception of ideas for the 'Fairy Tales' of Andersen and Perrault are strikingly beautiful and brightly coloured. These are earlier works - the result of a striking young artist claiming recognition for his stained glass designs and illustrations and an identity. Clarke produced most of his black and white illustrations in the early 1920's whilst teaching stained glass design at the Metropolitan School. He was also on the Council of the Irish Arts and Crafts Society and producing commissions for stained glass. He was elected ARHA in 1925 and RHA in 1926*.

All through his short life he was producing work at an abnormal rate and each one a masterpiece. Clarke went to Switzerland in 1928 and returned to Ireland in 1930 where he set up the Harry Clarke studios at NO. 33 North Frederick Street, Dublin (now closed down). He returned to Switzerland, to a place known as Coire, where he died on 6th January 1931.

Certainly since Clarke's death we have produced no illustration as gifted and as versatile; perhaps too that trend of expression and liberation was the beginning of a new movement - a movement long overdue.

Footnotes: 1. 'The Living Torch' by 'AE' Russell
 2. Ibid
 * Ref. 'Irish Art'. Rosc catalogue 1975 - 76