Miniature Painting in Ireland

HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN

NAME: CLIONA MacDONNELL.

DEPARTMENT: VISUAL COMMUNICATION

B.A. DEGREE THESIS SUBMISSION IN HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN AND COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES.

JUNE 1985.

PORTRAIT MINIATURE PAINTING OR LIMNING IN IRELAND

Miniature painting is the painting of small portraits, mainly oval sometimes round or square, which first developed in the 16th century. While the word miniature is used nowadays to describe any small scale object, in painting it is accepted as meaning a portrait executed in any medium i.e. watercolour, oils, enamel or plumbago and drawn to such a small scale that it may be easily held in the hand. Its size may vary from a portrait no larger than a thumbnail, to one as much as 8 to 10 inches and at least one example is known to exist which measures 27 x 37 inches (in oval format) although this latter size is unusual, but, by far the greater amount are 2" x $3\frac{1}{2}$" ovals.

Miniatures can be divided into two classes:
Ornamental miniatures, those that are circular or oval and were worn on the person as ornaments of jewellery and Cabinet miniatures, the larger ones which were often placed in oval or rectangular frames to hang on a wall.
These portrait miniatures were commissioned as personal mementoes of loved ones, intended to be worn on the person, or carried about when travelling.

I have chosen to study miniature painting in Ireland as I had in the past the opportunity of seeing and examining works by Irish miniaturists of my ancestors, works in other private family collections within the country and also in the National Gallery Dublin. I was also able to visit the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, where I compared Irish Miniaturists to British and Continental Miniaturists. It was there that I assembled many of my photographs for my research.
While in London I decided to ask advice from the main antique dealers in miniatures, such as Christies and Sothebys, about the hundreds of Irish miniatures that they value and put up for public auction four to six times a year. They brought me down to the stores where the

experts assess and analyse the drawers full of miniatures. It was interesting to note how they nearly always knew an Irish miniature by its frame, as they frequently had some kind of memorial in the back of the case or they, more often than others, used dark blue glass to decorate the frame. Another characteristic of the Irish miniaturist's style was to use a filigree of chevron pattern on the frame surrounding the miniature. That is, they chased and generally decorated the frames much more frequently than the English miniaturists.

Before I begin to discuss Irish miniature painting, I feel it is necessary to explore the origins and development of miniature painting in more detail.

Originally these small portraits were called limnings, or painting in small and this name for them survived well into the 17th century when the word miniature replaced it. The work is derived from 'minium' the Latin word for red lead or vermillion, the pigment used to paint initial letters on the illuminated manuscripts of the middle ages. The verb 'miniare' denotes the process and the person who did this work was called a 'miniator'. From this we can see that the origin of the word miniature derived from the materials and the process rather than the object as we know it today.

It is difficult to say exactly when miniatures first came about, because no contemporary appears to have been sufficiently interested in the development of painting at that particular time to publish anything coherent about the subject. The result is that its origins can only be traced in an unsatisfactory fashion by piecing together scrappy biographical allusions, references in inventories and accounts and so forth. It is believed that the two most likely sources of miniature paintings would seem to be the art of book illumination and that of the portrait medals of ancient Rome. Illuminators of

early manuscripts before the discovery of printing, were employed in drawing and painting of all forms of written communication, which included official documents, books of hours, bibles and missals. The writing was executed on vellum or parchment, the former prepared from calfskin and the latter from sheepskin. The borders of the pages were decorated with foliage and flowers, and occasionally small paintings of biblical incidents were embodied in the general illumination of the page.

At first no attempt was made at portraiture and it was not until the time of Henry VIII that any real effort was made to paint true likenesses on the documents which were in use in diplomatic circles for communication between one court and another. These portraits were used almost as a signature of proof that the document had been seen and agreed to by the sender, who was the person portrayed. They were not intended to be cut out and kept as separate paintings, but, there is no doubt that in some cases this was done and the portraits placed in small frames. This has led to confusion between the art of the illuminator and that of the painter of portrait miniatures. The theory that another possible source of portrait miniatures may be the portrait medals struck in Rome during the 4th and 5th centuries and revived in Italy during the Renaissance arises from the fact that these medals, made in limited numbers, were for the recipient to wear. They were modelled with great care and in them the artist attempted to portray a real likeness. Moreover they were housed in small circular containers covered in glass, not unlike those used by the earliest painters of miniatures.

It is therefore true that both the miniatures and medals, although entirely different forms of art, had certain points in common: they were circular in form, similar in size, meticulously wrought, and both were used as articles of personal adornment.

The early miniaturists painted on vellum or parchment. The parchment used for portrait miniatures, was the thinnest possible kind. The parchment was stuck down with starch paste on card, usually part of a playing card, the card probably being used because of its convenient size and suitable quality. The miniaturists were very particular about cleanliness and the materials they used.

According to The Gentleman's Exercise by Henry Peacham written in the 17th Century:

> "Take of the fairest and smoothest pasteboard you can get, which with a sleek stone rubbe as smooth, and as even as you can, that done, take the fine skin of an Abortive, which, you may buy in Paternoster Row and other places (it being the finest parchment that is) and with starch thinne laid on and the skin well stretched and smooth pressed within some book or the like, prepare your ground on tablet, then according to the general complexion of the face you are to draw, lay on a weake colour, that done, trace out the eyes,nose, mouth and ears, with lake or red lead, and if the complexion be swarthy, adde either of sea coale, lampe blacke to deepen and shadow it, when you have thus done, lay it by for a day, or till it be well dry, then by little and little, worke it with a curious hand with the liuely colour, till you have brought it to perfection."

The colours used by early miniaturists were bought in their raw state. The painter himself ground his colours in a flint, agate or porphyry mortar; he stored them in mussel shells or ivory dishes. When he wished to use them he mixed them with a solution of powdered gum arabic/or gum senegal, which is the cleanest and most easily soluble of the acacia gums. It has been suggested that some form of sugar or honey was also added, and the mixture dissolved in water before test patches could be made for correct colouring. Each artist would, no doubt, have had his own formula for mixing his paints, some of which had to be separated by washing because grinding

Hans Holbein (1497-1543) —
— Mrs. Pemberton (aged 13yrs)

would have destroyed their hue, but, all the colours would have been mixed with a 'binder'. His palette consisted of a piece of ivory or mother-of-pearl. Brushes at least he could buy ready-made in London. These brushes were made from hair taken from the tip of a squirrels tail and bound together in small bunches with the hairs curving in to form a suitable tip with which to paint, these were then set into goose quills which were mounted on sticks in much the same way as a modern paint brush. The pigments used in the 16th and 17th centuries were largely opaque. More frequently than not, the backgrounds of 16th century miniatures and many of those of the first half of the next century, were of a uniform blue.

Some of the colours they used were expensive, especially ultramarine and many were difficult to prepare. White lead particularly required meticulous care in its preparation. Arts Companion, a book by I. Jackson in the National Library Dublin, discussed the technique of miniature painting in great detail:

> "The best white that is presented to be sold in the watercolour manner, is the Flake - white which is better than the white lead ground. This, if it is pure, far exceeds the white lead in beauty; for the white lead is apt to turn blackish especially if you use it with hard water. The best white that I know is made of Mother of Pearl, or finer parts of oyster shells, made into an impalpable powder, that is so soft as to feel like ground of starch or powder. - If using white lead let it be first rectified with white vinegar, which will cause a fermentation and soon make the white settle. Pour off the vinegar and wash it with common water."

Also the gold which was used to embellish the miniatures and manuscripts was not gold paint as we know to-day, but, was pure gold leaf. It was used in powder form tempered with weak gum arabic. When larger expanses of gold were required a preparation of gum, water or isinglass to receive the leaf was put on to the design and dried. The gum preparation was breathed on to moisten it, the gold pressed gently down on to the desired place and any redundant

leaf brushed off, or cut away carefully. The Elizabethan miniaturists took great delight in the use of gold powder, ground from the pure gold leaf, for elaborate inscriptions and metallic pigments which they burnished to a high polish to highlight armour, jewellery, gilt buttons and embroidery on the sitter's costume. It was also sometimes used to highlight the sheen of satin on the doublet.

It was not until the reign of King Henry the VIII that one could put a definite date to the start of miniature painting in Britain, which eventually led to the spread of miniature painting in Ireland. This monarch came to the throne in 1509 and employed several miniaturists, most of whom were foreigners. Hans Holbein the Younger, who came to England from Germany in 1526 and again in 1531 was the most celebrated of them, but, among the others were a Bruges woman named Livina Teerlinc, and the Flemings, Gerard and Lucas Horenbout.

Nicholas Hilliard (1547 - 1619) was not only - as far as is known - the first great English-born miniature painter, but, probably the first great English-born painter. Hilliard learned the mastery of the craft from the Flemish miniaturist Lucas Horenbout. Hilliard spread his knowledge of painting on to Sir Isaac Oliver the second great English painter of the 16th century. They both link the 16th and 17th centuries and were the originators of a process which had years to be fully developed.

It is due to these two great artists that much is known about the technique of the 16th century miniature painting. Hilliard based his methods on those of his predecessor Holbein and wrote a treatise on the subject, which exists in an old manuscript copy in Edinburgh University.

The technique and pigments used by the 16th and 17th century miniaturists were closely allied to those used by the illuminators. This method of

Miniatures of two little girls. dated 1590
painted on card
by Isaac Oliver ~

painting was used by Holbeini and his followers including Hilliard and later in the 17th century by Samuel Cooper, although Cooper worked over the transparent areas with more opaque colour, giving a more solid gouache effect. He liberated himself from the bonds of the earlier tradition and achieved with his bold touch a power of characterisation which has not been surpassed by any English miniaturist. He was to a great extent responsible for the improvement in draughtsmanship. He put a layer of white paint on to his prepared background before starting his painting, a method which was adopted by other artists. The ornate inscriptions so characteristic of Elizabethan miniaturists were less in evidence and simple block signatures, frequently dated, took their place. The backgrounds were inclined to be more subdued in colour and occasional cloud effects were introduced.

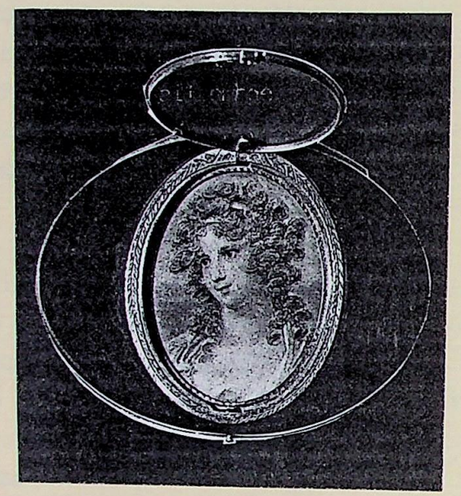
Miniaturists continued this method of painting until the turn of the 18th century when the Italian artist Rosalba Carriers (1675 - 1757) discovered that pieces of bone or ivory made a good base on which to paint and enabled the artist to use thin washes of colour where the flesh was visible, producing a certain amount of luminosity in the painting. The dress and backgrounds were still painted in opaque colours, and it was not until the second half of the century that artists discovered how to paint with thinner washes of watercolour allowing larger areas of ivory to show through. The water-colour could be floated on to prepared sheets of ivory, in much the same way as painting on paper and the use of ivory as a base totally revolutionised the technique of miniature painting.

It is important now to mention that there were three specific techniques in applying colour: stippling (otherwise known as pointillism, but, of course on a much smaller scale), hatching (these were short painted strokes something like the impressionists used) and then there was the flat paint technique which we have already been discussing.

Before the last years of the 17th century, there was little stippling or definite dotting in English miniatures: the shading of a face, for instance, was often stippled, but, not as a rule so as to leave the dots separate and distinct. In the early years of the 18th century, the new method of more definite stippling, probably derived from continental models, was practiced, especially by Bernard Lens and his sons, though their miniatures are only partly stippled. As the 18th century wore on, ivory gradually displaced vellum for miniature painting. Bernard Lens was one of the first English artists to use it. Vellum was, however, still occasionally employed. By the time vellum was no longer used, paper was available for the artists who did not wish to use ivory, and this was of course much cheaper. Card was another suitable alternative.

While the British 16th century miniaturists were painting in water-colour on vellum, the French on the other hand were enamelling miniatures. This art of enamelling miniatures was practiced for centuries in simple forms in China, Egypt, Assyria, Greece and Rome. The French perfected this technique and spread their innovation abroad. These miniatures were painted on a metal base and had to be fired in much the same way as porcelain. The base could be of copper, gold or silver and the colours used were in the form of powder which melted on the base in the heat of the kiln. This powder was a simple flux which contained proportions of silica, nitrate of potash and powdered glass, together with different metallic oxides which when mixed together give a variety of colours.

The two main methods of early enamelling were cloisonné and champlevé, the term 'Painted enamels' being a later development. The word champ-levé derived from the two French words, champ meaning a field and levé meaning raised. The design was first traced on the metal base and then the centre of the design hollowed out, leaving natural ridges. The remaining spaces were filled with powdered enamel and the whole article fired in a kiln. Cloisonné was executed in much



Unknown Lady 48mm.
gold mounted oval tortoiseshell box
by Samuel Shelley ~

the same way, except that after scratching the design on the metal, thin strips of metal were soldered on to form cloisons or cells. These were filled with enamel as before and the complete work was then fired to melt the mixture, the components of which fused together and when cool the article was polished. It was a difficult process, one which required great skill. The colours changed in the firing and any slight error in temperature resulted in the whole painting being ruined. Occasionally the metal warped or bubbles appeared in the firing. These enamellists gradually developed and improved their techniques to prevent this happening. They discovered that it was necessary to coat a convex piece of metal, to prevent the miniature from warping, with a layer of white enamel. It was then fired on the other side in much the same way and the miniature was then painted on with pigments, mostly metallic oxides, mixed with oil, usually spike oil, and then baked so that the pigments fused with the enamel. It was painted in several stages, a fresh firing being necessary after each.

This latter method of applying colour in stages was introduced by a French Goldsmith, named Jean Toutin (1578 - 1644). He discovered that a variety of colours could be laid down and the portrait refired without any damage to the tints. This method allowed opaque colours to be laid upon the white enamel ground in the same way that water-colour could be painted upon ivory or vellum. Under the tuition of Jean Toutin and his son Henri (1614 - 1683) a school of enamellists grew up, much of their time being devoted to the embellishment of elaborate watch cases, which were in great demand during the reign of Louis XIII.

The art of this more sophisticated form of enamelling was brought over to Britain by two Swiss artists, Jean Petitot (1607 - 1691) and a Goldsmith, Jacques Bordier (1616 - 1684). They did not remain in Britain very long, probably due to the unrest at the time and were certainly back in France by 1650. It was not until the end of the

17th century that the art was re-established by an artist from Sweden, Charles Boit (1662 -1727) who came to Britain to work in London. Boit was responsible for popularising enamel miniatures again and his influence was far-reaching. Through his pupils, who included Christian Friedrich Zincke (whose work can be seen in the National Gallery Dublin), who in turn taught Jeremiah Meyer (1735 - 1789), the art followed through to the 18th and 19th centuries. Nathanial Hone the Irish miniaturist, has painted some classic work in enamel which I will be discussing later.

There are also miniatures painted on porcelain though few of these are signed, so attribution is difficult. Artists were employed in the porcelain factories to paint miniatures on china, and the best artists were well paid for it. They executed small fancy landscapes, or portraits of distinguished personages. Patrons who had commissioned the factory for a set of china sometimes arranged for their portraits to appear on each piece for the satisfaction of the host himself and the gratification of his guests at his banquets. The encouragement and financing of porcelain manufacture was largely due to the support of royalty and territorial princes, also to the magnates of those times.

The most widely known miniaturist in the painting of porcelain would be John Simpson (1811 - 1871) and John Haslem (1818 - 1884). John Simpson was connected with the Minton Porcelain Works and for some years painted miniatures from life, in enamel and on porcelain. John Haslem was attached to the Derby China Factory (now the Royal Crown Derby Porcelain Company) painting miniatures on porcelain and in enamel as well as executing paintings in watercolour. These miniaturists were rarely permitted to sign their work on china and this was understandable, as the factory was not interested in the goodwill of the artists employed, but, in its own. Some of the artists were allowed to sign their initials on occasion. Miniaturists had to be well paid to relinquish a lucrative private practice and who found their art swallowed up in the interests of the factory itself.

These miniatures must not be confused with the porcelain plaques made on the continent which were usually either imaginary scenes or copies from well known paintings. Some set in frames and smaller ones in brooches were turned out by the dozen and bear no resemblance to miniatures painted from life, the majority of which were isolated examples.

Oil was another medium used in the 16th century, oil miniatures being executed on metal, wood, or even occasionally on slate. Some have been painted on vellum, gold, silver, tin, brass, tortoiseshell, glass, ivory, semi-precious stones, various woods and in modern times hardboard. They have also turned up on the reverse of silver coins which have been rubbed smooth and occasionally encased in a screw top box made of two coins. One of a man about 1650 is painted on a piece of rock amethyst. Miniatures in the oil medium appear to have been painted from the 16th century and probably the greater number of them were painted on the continent. The study of oil miniatures is more difficult than that of water-colour miniatures because for some obscure reason, they are rarely signed. But, they were generally painted on copper, although the earlier ones were painted on wooden boxes, or sometimes on enamel snuff boxes. By the 17th century artists had developed the oval format and the miniatures were usually placed in wooden or metal frames. Oil miniatures do not have the same quality or appeal as watercolour miniatures. This is probably due to the fact that oil paintings when reduced to such a scale appear rather dull and are frequently dark through lack of space available for background and also due to oxidation on the copper which was often used as a base. The miniature in oil flourished more or less in the time of water-colours, but, never had so great a vogue. Some miniatures on copper are interesting, but, unless the artist had an exceptional skill his work was frequently dead in colour and heavy in appearance. The effects of light and shade that were obtainable with watercolour on card and ivory, were hardly obtainable on copper which seemed to absorb light to the maximum.

The earliest 16th century miniatures were all round, but, towards the end of the century the oval upright form appeared and has retained its popularity ever since. Rectangular shapes were also introduced and are to be found in most periods. Small flat boxes with lids similar to a seal box, and made of ivory and wood, were used to contain these miniature portraits. Another method of casing/setting miniatures was to place them in frames made of wood, gold, silver or any suitable metal. Decorated at the back with the sitter's hair and with initials designed in gold thread and seed pearls, they were sometimes placed on a background of coloured glass set over patterned silver foil and thus made to look like enamel. These, as time went on, were frequently studded with jewels and enriched with enamels, the jewellers employed in the making of these lockets and frames, not infrequently becoming miniaturists themselves.

Another development in the 17th century was the introduction of plumbago miniatures. These were drawn with sharp pointed plumbago otherwise known as graphite, on vellum which however, was not stuck down on card as in the case of ordinary watercolour miniatures. The term plumbago derived from the latin work plumbum (lead) and was used in the same way as a pencil today.

In the early part of the 16th century a mine which produced graphite or plumbago of the finest quality was discovered at Seathwait in Borrowdale, Cumberland and it was from there that the artists obtained it. It is supposed that the graphite used was pure, unlike today's which is mixed with clay. Plumbago miniatures were, however, a type which became popular between 1660 - 1720 many of which were of superb quality. The majority are executed only in plumbago with the occasional addition of small areas of watercolour. Examples of these plumbago miniatures can be found in Sothebys and Christies catalogues. Amongst the most important artists who executed plumbago miniatures in Britain were David Loggan (1635 - 1692), Robert White (1645 - 1703) and Thomas Forster. All these artists drew portraits of exquisite quality

and the dexterity with which they drew draperies and lace was such that every stitch could be discerned. In Britain they confined themselves to plumbago with soft washes of colour on the flesh parts. Charles Forster, Sir Thomas Lawrence and Walter Robbins were among the last to practice this method during its best period, though Maskins, Worlidge, Hay, Nathanial Hone and others produced black-lead miniature portraits at later dates. Sir Thomas Lawrence popularised the chair and red curtain format and before long his influence was shown in the work of other miniaturists. From about 1820 onwards, several of them produced large miniaturists with elaborate accessories - tables, bookshelves, musical instruments, vases of flowers and what not.

Now it is interesting to note how all these miniaturists actually applied the paint to their base. They all followed the same basic rules, each having their own individual style. There was a method of shading and Nicholas Hilliard gives an account of this in his book Art of Limning:

"Shadowing in limning must not be driven with the flat of the pencil (brush) as in oil work, distemper or washing, but with the point of the pencil by little light touches with colour very thin, and like hatches as we call it with the pen; though the shadow be never so great it must be also done by little touches, and touch not too long in one place lest it glisten, but, let it dry an hour or two and then deepen it again. Wherefore hatching with the pen, in imitation of some fine well graven portraiture of Albertis Duke (Durer's) small pieces, is first to be practiced and used before one begin to limn and not to learn to limn at all until one can imitate the print so well as one shall not know one from the other, that he may be able to handle the pencil paint in like sort. This is the true order and principal secret in limning, which that it may be the better remembered end with it".

The early artists put on their colours with brushes, or pencils as they were called, many of them being made by the artists themselves, although it was possible to purchase them in London. A pencil was not as has been frequently stated, a brush with one hair, as this would not in fact have been sufficient to carry the colour, while if the brush is too fine it leaves a scratchy appearance.

From the second half of the 18th century miniaturists painted with much the same pigments as those used today, although some still bought them ready-made and used them according to their own choice of palette. In England it was customary to paint the flesh parts on a pale ground rather than directly on the vellum. The artist would load his pencil with a liquid colour of the right consistency, usually basically white, to which small amounts of red, yellow, or brown and even blue were added, according to the complexion of the sitter. This tone was kept very light in order that it could serve as the highlight of the modelling. The flesh ground was called the 'carnation' by the early limners, and the method continued in England from the time of Holbein until the 18th century when the use of ivory became popular. Once the 'carnation' was painted the artist proceeded to sketch in lightly the outline of the features and to build up gradually the colours and modelling of the face in the stippling or hatching technique. Most artists kept the background quite simple, they either hatched or stippled the colour on according to their taste. More often than not, they mixed the different techniques within the one miniature. They often painted the clothes of the sitter in opaque colours, while the face would be painted with a wash and colour added in dots to form the features. Each artist had his own particular way of limning. The 18th century was the heyday of miniature painting and many miniaturists discovered new ways of applying colour. Here is a basic example of how an early 16th century miniaturist painted the eyes of his sitter (Arts Companion, I. Jackson):

> "The iris of the eye must be a mixture of ultramarine and white, this little, none in quantity than the other, adding there to a

Illustration I.

A young lady 1765 (63mm)
by Luke Sullivan

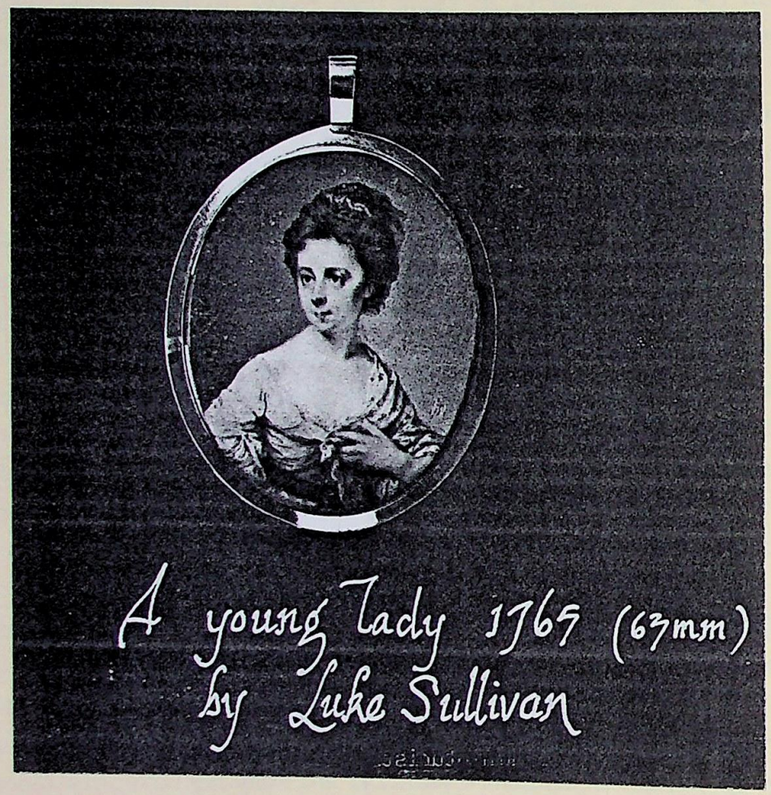
little bistre, it is to be of light hazel or a little black, if it is too liney. The pupil or sight of the eye is done with black and the iris is shaded with indigo, bistre or black, according to the colour it is of, but, of what colour forever it is, you would do well to draw a fine circle of vermillion round the sight, which blended with the rest in finishing gives life to the eye."

Nicholas Hilliard also gives descriptions of how to paint diamonds and precious stones in his book The Art of Limning. Many apprentices to miniature painters studied this book as it gave them a good insight into the techniques of painting. Miniature painting tended to be an art that was carried down through a family from one generation to another. This is an example from Hilliard of how diamonds and pearls were painted:

"Diamonds must be laid in quite black, then heightened with gentle touches of white on the light side. The same must be done for all other precious stones, only varying in colour. For pearls; lay a mixture of white and a little blue and shade then and swell them with the same but a little stronger. Lay on a small white spot just in the middle of the light side and on the other between the shade and the border of the pearl, give a touch of Masticoat to make a reflection; underneath you must give them a cast of the colour they are upon."

Sometimes the earlier miniaturists had problems with pigments. Many of their miniatures began to fade and often the colours they used reacted chemically, creating disastrous effects on their work. Certain colours particularly verdigris and artificial copper, blues and greens were prone to change when applied together. They only learnt from their mistakes as it often took some time before the light took effect on their work. An example of this would be some miniatures by Richard Crosse where the flesh colours faded, loosing their tints.

Illustration 1.



A young Lady 1765 (63mm)
by Luke Sullivan

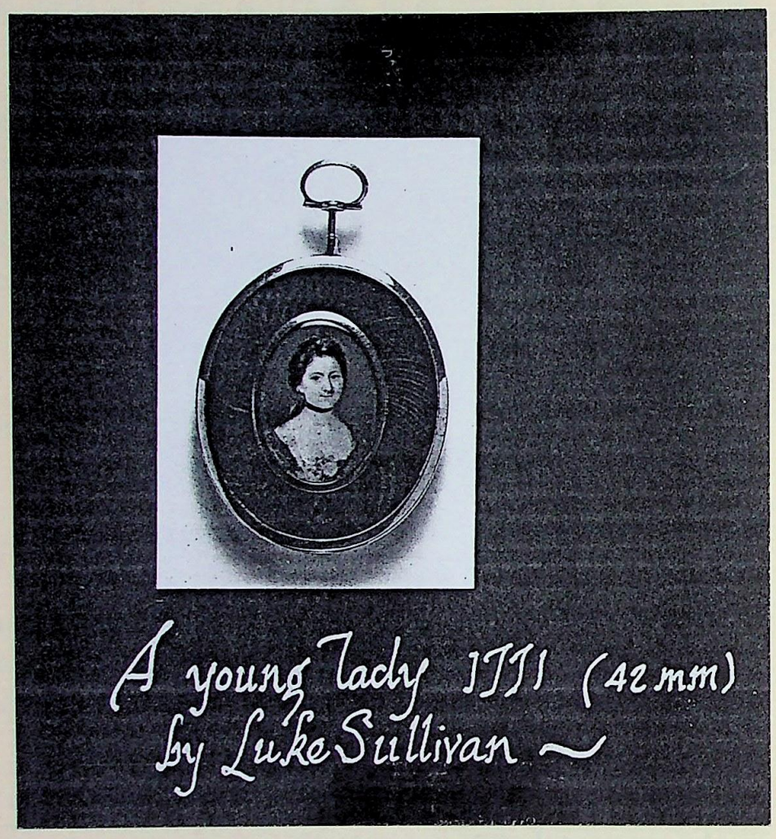
little bistre, it is to be of light hazel or a little black, if it is too liney. The pupil or sight of the eye is done with black and the iris is shaded with indigo, bistre or black, according to the colour it is of, but, of what colour forever it is, you would do well to draw a fine circle of vermillion round the sight, which blended with the rest in finishing gives life to the eye."

Nicholas Hilliard also gives descriptions of how to paint diamonds and precious stones in his book The Art of Limning. Many apprentices to miniature painters studied this book as it gave them a good insight into the techniques of painting. Miniature painting tended to be an art that was carried down through a family from one generation to another. This is an example from Hilliard of how diamonds and pearls were painted:

"Diamonds must be laid in quite black, then heightened with gentle touches of white on the light side. The same must be done for all other precious stones, only varying in colour. For pearls; lay a mixture of white and a little blue and shade then and swell them with the same but a little stronger. Lay on a small white spot just in the middle of the light side and on the other between the shade and the border of the pearl, give a touch of Masticoat to make a reflection; underneath you must give them a cast of the colour they are upon."

Sometimes the earlier miniaturists had problems with pigments. Many of their miniatures began to fade and often the colours they used reacted chemically, creating disastrous effects on their work. Certain colours particularly verdigris and artificial copper, blues and greens were prone to change when applied together. They only learnt from their mistakes as it often took some time before the light took effect on their work. An example of this would be some miniatures by Richard Crosse where the flesh colours faded, loosing their tints.

Illustration 2.



A young lady 1711 (42mm) by Luke Sullivan ~

Often miniatures appear at auctions, which look almost ghost-like. This is when the colour in the face fades and the background colour remains strong in contrast. This reaction creates a strange effect creating an optical illusion, whereby the portrait becomes quite flat rather than three dimensional.

All of these techniques are more easily described when discussed in relation to particular miniatures, so I have a selection of photographs of Irish Miniaturists work, which give a good cross section of the style, technique and quality of painting between 1700 and 1830, the period of miniature painting in Ireland. Sometimes it is difficult to say if an artist is Irish or English because of the fact that many of these miniaturists travelled and worked in between the two countries. They were often known as 'Itinerant artists'. Irish miniature painting is broadly speaking merged in the English school. Several of the leading artists in Ireland such as Nathaniel Hone, Luke Sullivan and Sampson, T. Roche worked in England and certain English born artists such as George Chinnery and Horace Hone and a few foreigners such as Vispre worked for a time in Dublin. I will therefore try and select those that have spent a reasonable length of time working in Ireland. My intention is to give an overall feeling for the type of work that was being produced in Ireland at that time. Having written about the origins and techniques of miniature painting, these Irish Miniatures should be more readily understood and appreciated. This is a list of the Irish Miniaturists who represented the art and its technique in its highest form.

Luke Sullivan	1705 - 1771
Nathaniel Hone	1718 - 1784
Gustavus Hamilton	1739 - 1775
Horace Hone	1756 - 1825
Adam Buck	1759 - 1833
Frederick Buck	1771 - 1839/40
Sampson Towgood Roche	1759 - 1847
Charles Robertson	1760 - 1821

Illustration 3.

Sarah Holt of Bury 1765
48 mm high
by Luke Sullivan

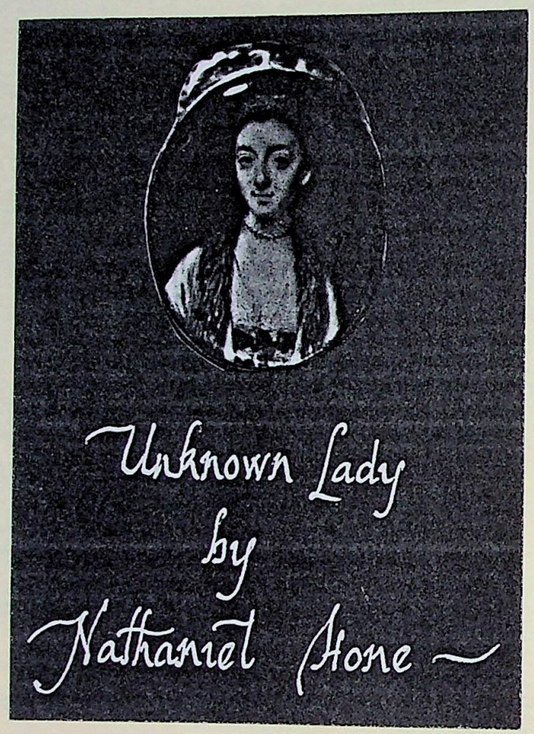
Illustration 4.

It is suggested that the development of miniature painting in Ireland may have been encouraged by visits to Dublin by the Flemish artist Gaspar Smitz, who settled in Ireland and died there about 1707, followed by visits from Peter Paul Lens and Christian Friedrich Zinche (the enamellist). This is the reason why there are so many works by C.F. Zinche in the National Gallery in Dublin. A specifically Irish school of miniature - portrait painting did not come into being until the mid-eighteenth century. It is certainly true that the last decades of the 18th century saw a remarkable flourishing of the watercolour medium. Gustavus Hamilton, Horace Hone, John Comerford and Adam Buck all produced excellent work, on a level with all but the very best of their English contemporaries. Charles Robertson surpassed them and may be considered in the same class as Cosway and Smart (the leading miniaturists in Britain in the 18th century), although in the United Kingdom his work would not be so sought after as works by for example John Smart.

It is hard to isolate a particular Irishness in the work of these artists. They were working in a tradition which stemmed from London and it is only an occasional Irish-looking face that points to their origins.

These artists were generally members of the Society of Artists and exhibited several times during the year. This society was brought about by the Royal Dublin Society. When this society began its activities in 1731, one of the immediate aims it set itself was to reactivate the practice of drawing as basic to the development of the arts and crafts and the activities of painting, sculpture and other allied practices. It is difficult to be certain when the drawing schools actually commenced. However, since 1740 premiums were awarded for painting and sculpture and exhibitions were held in the Parliament House. In 1757 the Society, having taken a house in Shaw's Court, off Dame Street, established there a school of drawing and appointed Robert West, an accomplished artist, it's master. Here West taught

Illustration 9.



Unknown Lady
by
Nathaniel Hone ~

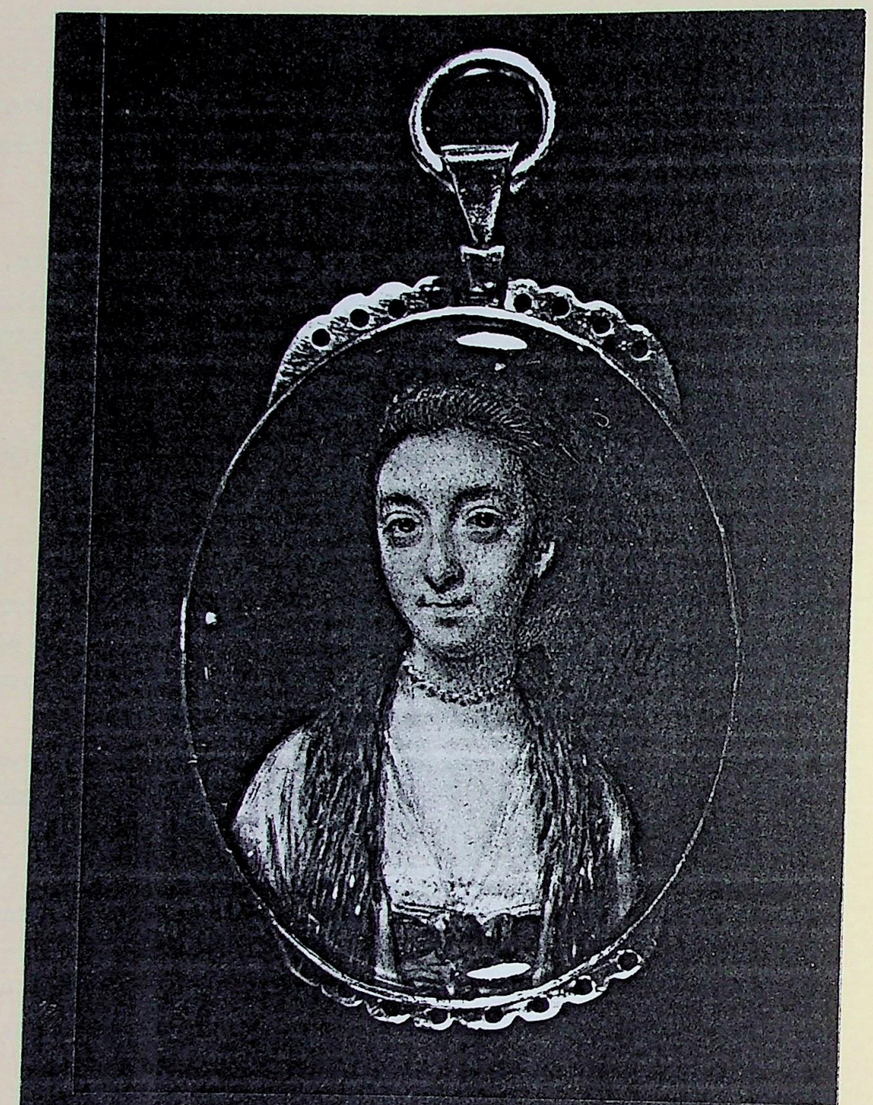
with success for some years, many artists who afterwards became famous receiving their early instruction from him. He died in 1770, but his son Francis Robert West succeeded him as master and likewise his son Lucius Robert West. The celebrated name West lived on for years in the Society of Artists in Ireland.

From that time forward the society organised, ran and maintained, schools of drawing, painting, sculpture and the rest, continually in three separate premises until 1878 when the control and administration of these schools was taken over by the Science and Art Department in South Kensington, London. The school then became known as the Metropolitan School of Art and is now called the National College of Art and Design.

A stream of artists emerged from the Society's schools through the teaching of pastel portrait painting by the Wests. There were also many renowned Irish Miniaturists who became presidents of this society including George Chinnery, Hugh Douglas Hamilton and John Comerford.

It is understood that Luke Sullivan was one of our first miniaturists. He was born in Co. Louth and was brought to England by his father at a young age. His father became the groom to the Duke of Beaufort and it was he who noticed Luke Sullivan's talent for drawing. His first employment was in the stables, but showing strong marks of a genius for drawing, the Duke arranged an apprenticeship with an engraver named Le Bas. This was the beginning of Sullivan's training. He is also said to have worked with Hogarth and is known to have assisted him in engraving 'March to Finchley'.

Sullivan painted water-colours, landscapes, architectural views and of course miniatures. He exhibited, and was a director at the Society of Artists, of which he was a member from 1764 - 1770. He was also a member of a club of artists and amateurs which met in Leicester Square.



Enlargement of illustration 5.
Nathaniel Hone. —

Women had a fascination for Sullivan and his chief practice is said to have been among the 'girls of the town'; he was too much attached to the good things of the world. He resided almost entirely at taverns and brothels and according to J.T. Smith in his 'Life of Nollekens' (the sculptor) described him as a lively handsome fellow. He was of extremely irregular and dissipated habits, and Hogarth is said to have experienced considerable difficulty in keeping him under his eye.

The interesting fact about miniatures is that they can tell you a lot about the period in which they were painted. One can often identify a miniature by the clothes the sitter is wearing or by their hairstyle.

This miniature of a young lady by Sullivan (illustration 1) signed and dated 1765 is a watercolour on ivory. The dress that she is wearing is very typical of the period, low-cut with a green sash tied above the waist band. She is also wearing a cream and brown shawl over one shoulder. Sullivan delicately paints the features of the face to portray the gentleness of her character. He paints the background in a mixture of blues and greens going from light to dark as he moves away from the sitter. This gives a halo of light around this young woman, almost signifying her purity and angelic appearance. He enhances this feeling in the way he paints her hand, gently holding up her shawl. This is a particularly good miniature. You see so many miniatures of young women, but, rarely do they show such sensitivity and dexterity in their execution. It has an elegant radiance about it with her face serenely tilted to dexter. Sullivan paints her hair in such detail that it almost seems tactile, adorned with pearls and a blue ribbon. He uses several techniques within this miniature, the background seems to be stippled, applying the bluish colour first and then more green to the left of her head. The hair is painted in fine brush strokes, identifying the different strands and her face seems to be a basic 'carnation' or wash of colour, where the slightly red complexion is stippled in afterwards. Sullivan gives real atmosphere to this miniature by the manner in which he paints the eyes. She stares into

space with that very innocent look in her eye and that sweet smile on her face. The clothes are painted in flat brush strokes showing all the folds in the material. The colour is applied to large areas of the ivory unlike the hatching or stippling technique. This miniature is absolutely full of life, the soft pastel colours all merge to give the image of this obviously placid character.

Similarily, this miniature (Ill. 2) by Luke Sullivan really is exquisite. He could certainly paint a pretty face. This miniature is a precious little 'jewel'. It is readily understood why these miniatures were kept as memories of their loved ones. The artist could spend hours watching his model just to capture the right expression in order to portray the real character in the face of his sitter. The proportion of the frame to the size of the image really adds to this miniature. This again is a watercolour on ivory of a young lady dated about 1771. Both of these, Ill. 1 and Ill. 2, were executed towards the end of his life and show the high standard of draughtsmanship which he attained.

In the second example Sullivan shows a young lady wearing a fashionable low-cut dress of the period. This type of costume can be seen in miniatures by Nathanial Hone, a contemporary of Luke Sullivan and were not unlike their French contemporaries in style.

Sullivan paints the background in a combination of two colours, grey and brown. He lays down the lighter colour first and he moves away from the sitter, he adds the darker colour. This technique tends to lighten up the figure emphasising the pale complexion, though occasionally his flesh colours have a yellowish tinge. The emerald green of the young lady's dress complements the greyish-brown colour in the background. This green is then cleverly used again in the ribbon holding up her hair, creating an even triangular form within the miniature. This young lady looks so graceful with her posy which Sullivan so delicately paints in touches of orange and dark greens. Sullivan always takes a very naturalistic approach; his sitters always look

very comfortable; they never appear to be posing for their portraits. I have included two black and white photographs of miniatures (Ill. 3 & 4) by Sullivan in order to see the overall style of his work. He nearly always paints the clothes in a very free style. He usually shows the clothes draped across the figure in a loose manner folding and turning as they hang from the shoulders. His work is almost always well drawn even up until the year he died, 1771, he could still draw beautifully. This miniature (Ill. 3) is of an unknown lady and, signed and dated 1760, is somewhat earlier than the previous example. But even then his drawing techniques were extensive. In this particular miniature, he paints a lot of detail; the face is very finely executed and the background is painted in fine brush strokes all slanting away from the figure. All Luke Sullivan's miniatures are very attractive and show that he had an exceptional talent for painting. He had the ability to portray the true gentleness of his characters through the manner in which he painted. He applies the colour so delicately as if touched by the sitter's sensitivity.

Another artist who painted in the same period as Luke Sullivan was Nathaniel Hone. There are certain similarities in their work. For instance they were both very skilled draughtsmen and liked to paint the features of their sitters in great detail. Nathaniel Hone was born in Dublin (1718 - 1784) and like Sullivan spent most of his life working in England. According to records, the Hones were merchants of the Wood Quay, for it was in this part of Dublin, the very nerve-centre of the city, that most settlers established themselves. During the 17th century, Wood Quay was a fashionable area, due undoubtedly to the accessibility of Chichester House where Parliament was held until 1729. As the new Essex Bridge was then just completed, we can probably assume that a brick house along the Wood Quay and near the Wine Tavern, became the home of the hard-working immigrant from the Netherlands. Living above his place of business, as was the custom of the merchant in those days, our first Hone, the immigrant Nathaniel, prospered and then married. His choice was Rebecca Brindley of Brindley Hall, Staffordshire.

Young man by Nathaniel Hone –

Nathaniel Hone (the miniaturist) the third son of the first Nathaniel Hone and Rebecca Hone, was born at his father's house in Wood Quay on April the 24th, 1718. When just a boy of sixteen, Hone was already a painter, although it has not been established who taught him to paint. He began by painting owners of Irish country houses and their families, but, as he did not succeed in receiving enough work in this field, left for England in 1737. An account of the way in which Hone obtained work is written in a book written by Sir Joshua Reynolds:

> "In the earlier part of Mr. Hone's life, he contrived to make his way by becoming an erratic portrait painter. He bought a house in Smithfield in the Spring; and, when he had journied through the finer part of the year, he disposed of it again on his return to the metropolis. He was accustomed to ride up to the best inn in the town and beg to dine with the family. If there were any children, he began his operations in flattering the feelings of the mother by praising the exceeding beauty of Master and Miss. This eulogy was followed by an enquiry, if the pictures had been drawn; which if succeeded by a negative, he immediately disclosed his profession".

Hone went to England as a young man, practicing as an itinerant portrait painter and when in York in 1742, he married Mary Earle, a twenty one year old heiress, after which he appears to have settled in London. In 1750 Hone went to Italy, where he studied for a time in Rome. In 1752 he became a member of the Academy of Florence, where he is thought to have met Sir Joshua Reynolds. Some sort of feud sprang up between the two men which resulted in many unpleasant attacks on each other's characters. Hone was ambitious to attain the same success and popularity as a painter in oils as he had already achieved as a miniature painter in enamel and in his jealousy of the success of Reynolds he lost no opportunity in endeavouring to defame him. In 1774 Hone attacked Reynolds directly by proposing Gainsborough for the presidentship of the Academy and the following year he offered to the Academy a picture entitled 'The Conjuror' for exhibition in which he

Ill. 7.

1766
A young lady 32 mm high.
by Nathaniel Hone

Ill. 8.

A young lady (enamel)
by Nathaniel Hone

satirized Reynold's plagiarism of Van Dyck and of the classical painters and suggested that Reynolds had formed an intimacy with Angelica Kaufmann. Despite his alterations to the picture the work was refused by the Academy. So Hone set up an alternative exhibition. His jealous temperament and hot-headed action were not forgotten, however, and some artists refused to have any more to do with him.

Hone married a second time, but the lady's name is not known. He had ten children, five boys and five girls and was survived by his second wife, who died in 1791. Two of his sons, Horace and John Camillus continued the tradition of miniature painting in the family. Horace, who became one of the finest miniaturists of his day and John Camillus, Nathaniel's third son, went to the East Indies and was very successful there.

Hone died on 14th April, 1784, at 44 Rathbone Place, London and was buried in Hendon Churchyard. Hone established a flourishing profession as an enamel painter and was regarded as successor to Zincke, whose poor eyesight had caused him to retire from business about 1746. Hone's style is less expansive than that of Zincke, but, is remarkable for its freshness of tone and fidelity of detail. He was also well known for his miniatures in watercolour, but, he was generally known to have painted in oils. Almost all of his miniatures are small ($\frac{3}{4}$" - $1\frac{1}{2}$") in height and many of them are set into bracelets or boxes. He seems to have been a prolific artist. In terms of technique he used a lot of opaque white when painting lace and shaded the faces of his male sitters with soft diagonal hatching. His portraits of ladies are usually attractive and have great charm. Two of his self-portraits are in the British Museum and a third, painted in oils, is in the National Gallery Dublin. His miniatures are almost always signed with a simple monogram NH, in which the last stroke of the N forms the first stroke of the H. He generally dated his miniatures, but, none seem to have been dated later than 1770 and it is assumed that he gave up painting miniatures then. Most of his miniatures are $\frac{3}{4}$ - face but there are some full-face ones also.

Here are four examples of work by Nathaniel Hone, three of which are watercolours and one an enamel.

Ill. 5, the coloured example, is of a watercolour on ivory by Hone. It is a portrait of an unknown lady in which Hone applies the paint in little dots to build up his image. This detail can be seen by magnifying the miniature (15 x 1). In this miniature, Hone uses a very limited palette; he mainly uses blue, green, yellow, black and white. The overall tone is therefore quite yellow. It is interesting to see how he constructs the painting with small spots of colour. First of all he obviously layed down his basic 'carnation' and over that he has added the spots of orange, green and blue to identify the features in the face. He uses the green colour as shading, this is apparent under the chin, around the eyebrows and under the mouth. This colour is applied in a technique known as stippling. Actually all the colour that is used in painting the face is stippled, while the hair is painted in very fine brush strokes of orange, brown and cream colour. Each hair is visible as it forms a plait across her head. It is executed in a very intricate style. There is a very definite orange colour used throughout, which holds all the colours together. He also outlines the eyelids in orange to emphasise the shape of them. Hone's style is like that of the impressionists: he juxtaposes colours which vibrate against each other in order to create a sense of liveliness. The impressionists who painted about 100 years later say they introduced a totally revolutionary technique; perhaps this was not the case. The colours he used to paint the hair merge into the colours used in the background. The technique he employed in painting the background is very noticeably hatching, the technique used by many artists. It is understandable that artists should mix these well known techniques of stippling and hatching etc., within a miniature to achieve the correct effect. It is the manner in which they use these techniques that distinguishes one painter from another. The miniaturist then develops his own particular style with experience. In this case, Hone has used cross-hatching in the background, he layed down the lighter colour first which was yellow over that he applied the blue colour in the

opposite direction giving the crossing technique. Later he added a little black to give the background some depth, the black dots can be seen in the lower right and left hand corners. This unknown lady has a very relaxed expression on her face with her head slightly tilted down to her right. She is wearing a string of pearls around her neck which is quite interesting as the miniaturists had a special technique in the method of painting pearls. It is understood that these techniques stemmed from the work of the earlier miniaturists.

> "The pearls layed with a white mixed with a little black, a little indigo blue and a little masticot, but, very little in comparison with white. That being dry, give the light of your pearl with silver, somewhat more to the light side than to the shadow side"

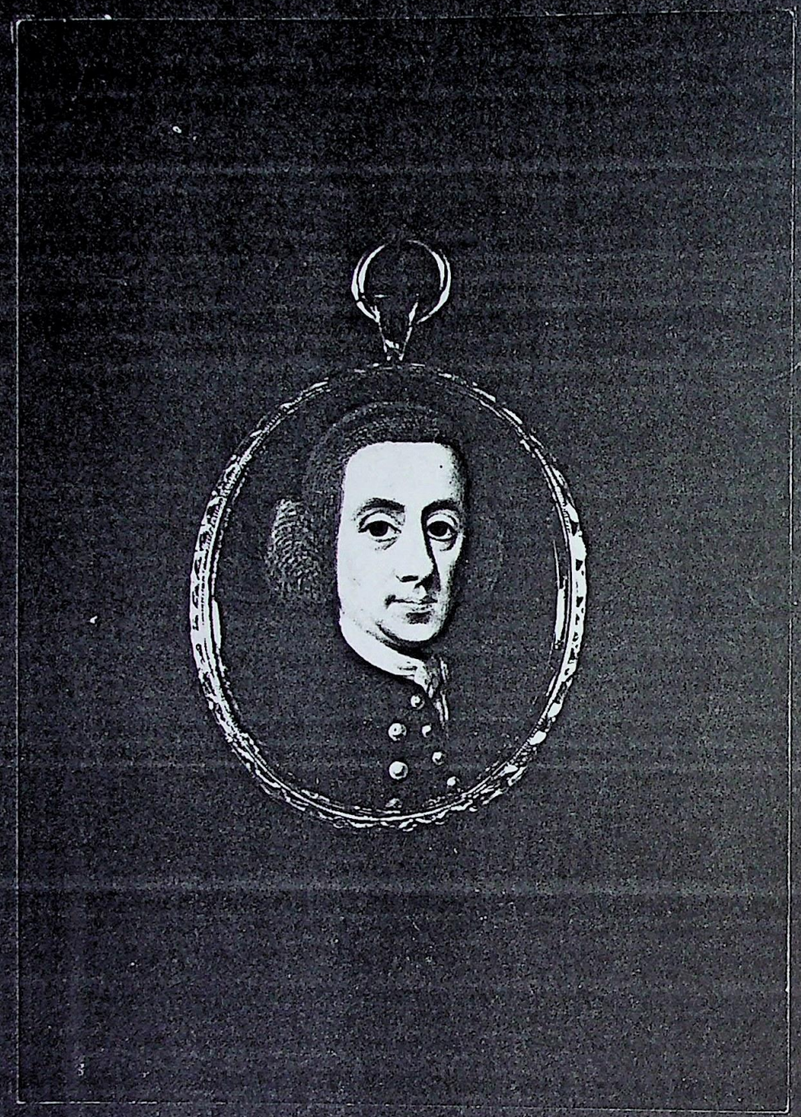
(Nicholas Hilliard - The Art of Limning). The silver highlight of the pearl was then burnished with the tooth of a weasel or some small animal. Stones and diamonds were painted with certain techniques which I have already mentioned. These techniques have developed somewhat but the basic elements are still being used. Hone paints the blue shawl in around the lady's shoulders in short brush strokes which slant in much the same direction, a style similar to that used by Gustavus Hamilton and which I will be discussing.

He also uses a lot of opaque white in painting the dress and again he applies the green colour to accentuate the folds and pleats in the material of the dress. This shadowing is very roughly painted but this is how many of the miniaturists painted their sitter's attire. Hone has painted the left-hand side of the miniature somewhat darker than the right and he seems to have painted it in flat brush strokes giving the impression that it was painted with opaque colour. This actual miniature was originally worn as a bracelet, which can be seen from the ridges of metal on either end of the frame and the curved angle of the case/frame on the verso.

This is a fine example of how excellent a miniaturist Nathaniel Hone was, and it is only inevitable that his sons would follow suit.

The second illustration by Nathaniel is an enamel of a Young Man. I think that this one is particularly like Luke Sullivan's miniature (Ill. 8) of the woman holding a letter. The whole feeling about it is very similar; they both portray the gentleness of their sitters in the manner in which they paint. I feel that the enamel miniatures are more three dimensional than watercolours, but, enamels lack the vitality and spirit of a watercolour probably due to the translucent effect of the watercolour on the ivory. There is a magnificent radiance from a watercolour which can not be achieved in an enamel and this is the reason why so many miniaturists preferred watercolours. This is evident from the numerous amount of watercolours in comparison to enamels. It can not be argued that this miniature is not of a very high quality; techniqually speaking, it is remarkable. As this was a very difficult process of painting a miniature, it is obviously an extremely good one. The remaining miniatures by Nathaniel Hone emphasise the unique talent that he had and the abundant amount of energy that he put into his work. The characteristic signature NH, the monogram, is seen in all of the miniatures. They show a good cross-section of his work and the style in which he liked to paint.

Illustration 10.



Unknown man 1765
by Gustavius Hamilton

The artist who followed Nathaniel Hone was a man named Gustavus Hamilton (1739 - 1775). He bagan painting about 30 years later than Hone. He was the son of the Rev. Gustavus Hamilton, Vicar of Errigal in the diocese of Clogher and rector of Gallon in Co. Meath. The family settled in Co. Tyrone in the reign of James I and claimed descent from the Hamiltons of Priestfield, Midtlothian. He died in 1775. The artist was one of the youngest of a large family. He began his training in the drawing school in George's Lane, instructed by Robert West, whom I have previously mentioned. In Ireland, the Dublin Society (now the Royal Dublin Society) was founded in 1731 and in 1740 a Drawing School was opened by Robert West, an accomplished artist. In 1758 the society took over the school and 'The Arts Schools of the Dublin Society' were formed. These schools provided training for most of the Irish artists for over a hundred years and held regular exhibitions. Hamilton was also an apprentice or pupil of Samuel Dixon of Capel Street where with James Reilly, another miniaturist, and Daniel O'Keefe he was employed in colouring the basso-relievo prints of birds and flowers produced by Dixon. Setting up for himself as a miniature painter, he acquired an extensive and fashionable practice patronised, says John O'Keefe in his 'Recollections', by ladies of the first rank and making 'a power of money by his pencil' (A Dictionary of Irish Artists - WG Strickland). From 1765 to 1768 he was living in Parliament Street, then at No. 1 Dame Street, at the house of Stock and Hosier and afterwards in College Green, He contributed miniatures for exhibition to the Society of Artists in Dublin from 1765 to 1773. Shortly before his death he had moved to Cork Hill where he died on the 16th December, 1775, aged 36. He was buried on the 18th December at St. Werburgh's.

Hamilton's miniatures are usually small in size and many of them were painted for lockets or bracelets. Hamilton paints a fairly stylised miniature. Often the contours of the face, upper eyelids and eyebrows are delineated in brown and the face shaded with blue, particularly under

Illustration. 9.

Rev. Joshua Nunn 1767 35 mm high.
by Gustavius Hamilton —

the eyes. He frequently used a reddish flesh tint. Gustavus Hamilton with his individually stylised technique certainly could not be accused of being a mere 'photographer' of his period. His portraits with their distinctive style are all recognisable as his and even if they were not signed, one could easily attribute his miniatures. Many miniaturists like him also had idiosyncrasies that make it possible to recognise their work. His works are virtually all signed either 'Ham, 'G. Ham, G. Ham^{tm}, Gus Hamilton.

This (Ill. 9) is of Rev. Joshua Nunn, Rector of Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, signed Ham^{n} 1767, 3.5 x 3.1 and is a watercolour on ivory.

This miniature was originally worn as a bracelet which can be seen from the shape of the case/frame at the back. It is slightly curved at the back which lends itself to be worn comfortably on the wrist. The gold ridge at the top is where the chain or bracelet was attached, the equivalent ridge at the bottom is missing and now there is an added pin on the back so it can be worn as a brooch. This style of painting is very characteristic of Hamilton. The hair in particular is a strong feature of Hamilton's miniatures. His miniatures are quite stylised, painted in a graphic style. There is a strong grey colour prevalent in the miniature. The hair is painted with such dexterity. It looks as though he used a brush with one hair, which was impossible as noted before because a brush with one hair could not hold any amount of colour. He applied the paint in a stippling technique. He uses blue and grey paint and applies the colour in fine lines side by side. He uses very subtle dark colours in nearly all of his miniatures. The background is painted in a dark brown colour and is applied to the ivory in fine dots. Hamilton's sitter almost always fills up the complete frame and he paints the background in one colour. He never paints a picturesque background; the sitter is most important to Hamilton. He paints the eyes of his sitter in a particularly stylised fashion. They always have sharp lines surrounding the eye and the eyebrows are very

Illustration 11 and 12

Two young men by Peter Paul Lens—

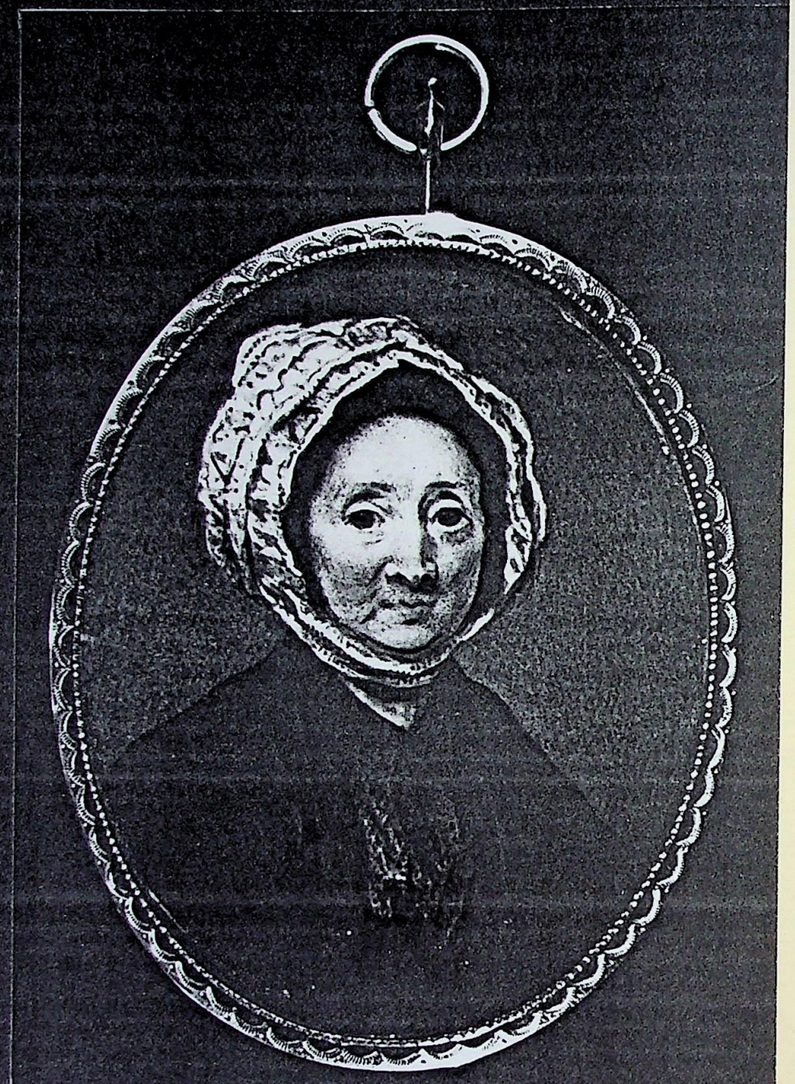
distinct. This miniature is charming and the collar of the rector is quite decorative against the black cloak. The Rector's face is quite cold looking, as Hamilton uses a lot of grey colour in the face, especially around the chin and eyes. Hamilton seems to over emphasise the eyes and they seem to be somewhat out of proportion to the face.

(Ill. 10) This miniature was painted in 1765 when Hamilton was about 26 years of age. There are obvious similarities between both miniatures by him. He uses a style which is unique in comparison with nearly all miniaturists. The only ones that I feel show any similarities are those works by Peter Paul Lens (1714 - 1750) who worked in Ireland for a short time. Peter Paul Lens seems to paint his eyes in the same detailed fashion, delineating the eyebrows, and the overall impression is slightly similar. Lens exaggerates the eyelashes which is the way in which Hamilton works also. Hamilton uses a hatching technique while Lens stipples the colour on to the ivory. I have given some examples of Len's work to show the comparison (Ill 11 & 12).

In Ill. 10) Hamilton paints a dark background, this time a mixture of dark-brown and black and he applies the colour in short brush strokes. He tends to use blue, brown and grey in most of his miniature painting. He uses very little colour in the face and he shades the features with a light grey. They look as though they have been drawn rather than painted because the brush lines are so fine. This is an example of how Hamilton uses a lot of grey around the eyes; they appear as if, they have been outlined with a plumbago pencil, to give a slight bulging about the eyes.

The features in the face show the hand of a superb draughtsman. Under magnification they seem to have been drawn in quite freely but when held in the palm of the hand at normal eye vision the fine proportions and lines can be seen to be well thought out and conscientiously constructed. It is difficult to understand how these miniaturists achieved such dexterity as they must have worked through magnifying

Illustration 13.

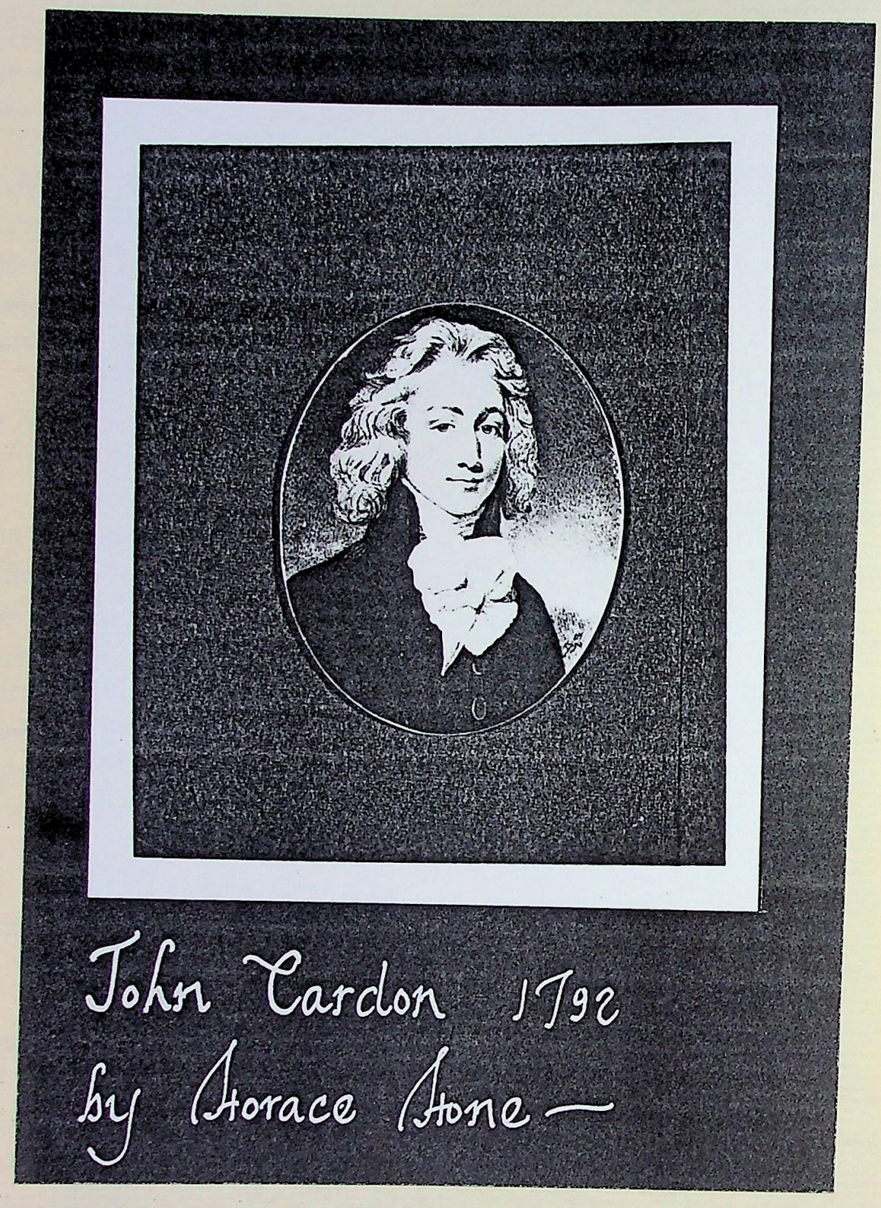


An old Lady 1789.
by Horace Hone 1756-1825

glasses. This must have strained their eyesight but it is certainly not noticeable in their work. It is amazing how they could paint to such a small scale and still keep the figure in proportion. There are slight touches of red colour in the face and this is balanced by the redish colour in the brass buttons of his coat. The buttons look very intricate to the naked eye but when seen under magnification they appear to be dashes of yellow and red juxtaposed in a rather free style. The artist could sit for hours at a time trying to achieve the correct colour and this would mean employing the right light source. Hamilton had a strong sense of colour, which gives his miniatures depth and strength. He executes his miniatures to perfection producing a good balance throughout. His formalised style of painting gives a decorative appearance to all his miniatures.

It is always interesting to note the hairstyle and the costumes of the sitter. In this case, the unknown man is wearing a wig which already suggests an approximate date as to when it was painted. Wigs were worn until about 1790 and the clothes also can tell you about the period in which they were painted. For instance, the mens clothes in miniatures by Nathaniel Hone, Luke Sullivan and Peter Paul Lens, tend to be more decorative; there is a lot of embroidery and stitching on the jackets and they often had velvet collars. In this one by Gustavus Hamilton the clothes are more simple which points to it being painted later. The plain velvet jackets with brass buttons were worn towards the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th century.

Horace Hone was next in line to Gustavus Hamilton and he is the bridging point between the 18th and 19th century. Horace Hone was born in Frith Street, London in 1756, the second son of Nathaniel Hone, the miniaturist mentioned earlier, by whom he was taught to paint. It was often a tradition for the practice of painting to be carried on through the generations. Horace entered the Royal Academy Schools on 14th October, 1770, later exhibited at the Royal Academy from

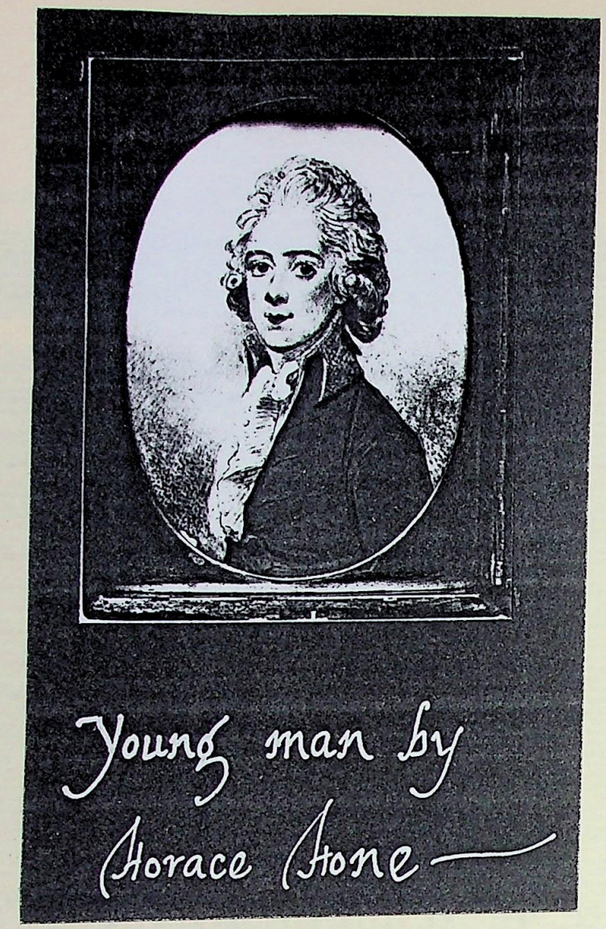


John Cardon 1792
by Horace Hone —

1722 - 1822 and he was elected A.R.A. in 1779. Hone went to Ireland in 1782 at the invitation of the Countess Temple, and soon had a thriving business in Dublin, living for some years in Dorset Street. Horace painted many of the prominent personages of the time such as the Earl of Charlemont, the Countess of Lanesborough, the Duke of Leinster, James Gandon the Architect, etc.

During Hone's stay in Ireland there was a lot of political unrest. Patriots like Gratton and Lord Charlemont (known as the volunteer Earl) were hostile to the destruction of Ireland's parliamentary independence that they had helped to establish. They knew that Irish trade and industry would be destroyed by English competition. Dublin deprived of her Parliament would become poor, for gentry and noblemen who came here would cross to London. Finally, in the United Parliament, Irish representatives would always be in a minority and Irish interests would be neglected. Pitt's proposal for a union was defeated the first time in the House of Commons by 111 votes to 106. Pitt did not give up hope. He gently persuaded members to change sides with bribes and eventually the Union passed with a government majority of 43. This had a detrimental effect on the Irish, as most of the gentry moved to London, where all the business and socialising took place. This meant that the artist had to travel also as it was only the gentry who could afford to commission work. It was a great loss for the Irish, as Dublin was no longer a centre and many of its riches were being taken abroad with the exit of the gentry to London. It was after the Union in 1800 that Hone found his practice declining as many of his fashionable sitters moved to London. He decided to follow the trend and settled in London in 1804. He took a house in Dover Street where he continued to practice with great success. He was married and had a daughter Sophia Matilda, who died unmarried.

Hone painted miniatures both in enamel and watercolour. In the former he was inferior to his father, but, excelled in the latter, producing



Young man by Horace Hone

Illustration 16.

Unknown Lady Horace Hone

works which rank high in British miniature art. He displays two distinct styles. In the first, his miniatures are carefully and minutely finished, well modelled and good in colour. In the second, generally on paper, his work is coarser and his colouring, especially in the background, unharmonious and too brilliant.

Hone's health deteriorated as early as 1807 and he became depressed. He died at his house in Dover Street on the 24th May, 1825 and was buried in the grounds of St. Georges Chapel, Bayswater Road.

He copied some of the works of Hugh Douglas Hamilton. He also executed some engravings. His style of painting varies a great deal yet has a suggestion of elegance and of having been painted without undue labour. His miniatures of ladies are attractive and well posed. He used the rich colouring and force of oil painting and painted the eyelashes distinctly. The use of stippling can often be discerned in his modelling of features and the sitter's eyes are freqently painted in dark colours.

Horace Hone was one of the best miniaturists of the 18th century and some of his works equal those of Plimer and Engleheart. His miniatures are accurately drawn and are very expressive. He paints partly in very distinct paralled brushstrokes, using the scraper for the execution of the hair. The light in the eyes is always placed very high and often touches the upper eyelid.

I decided to take this example of Horace Hone's work (Ill. 13) because you so rarely see very good miniatures of elderly ladies. The rendering in this miniature is exceptional, Hone involves every different technique possible to portray this sweet old lady. Firstly, he stipples in the background in orange and ochre creating a very warm colour. He then paints the bonnet in a totally free style in grey, brown and a lot of opaque white. He took meticulous care to ensure that it looks just right. Under magnification it looks very sketchy

Illustration 17.

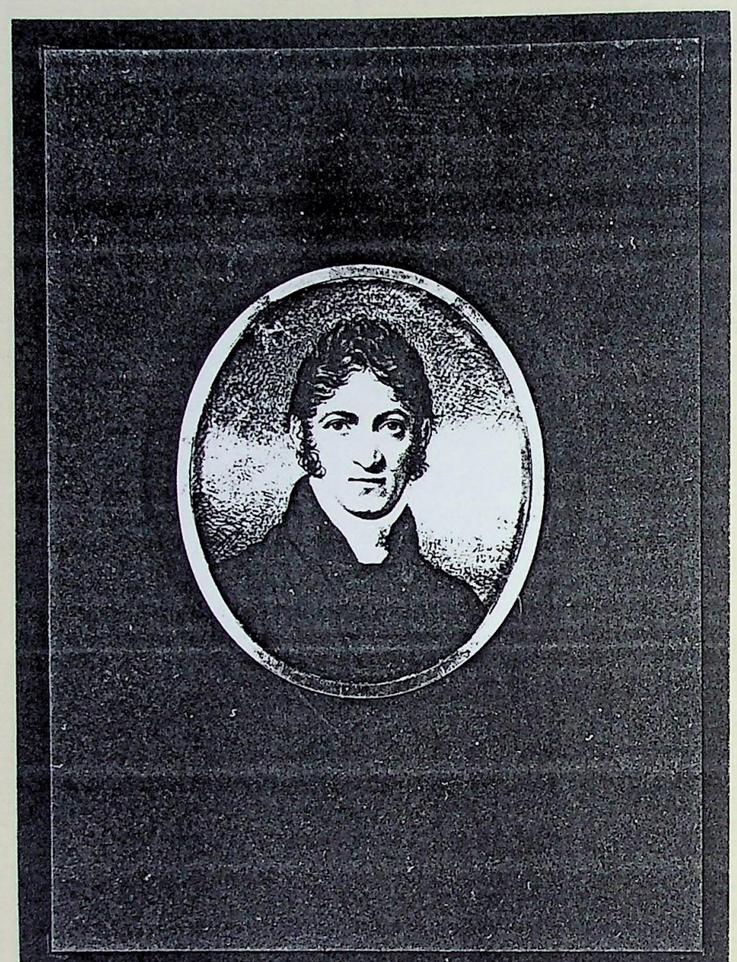
Mrs. Lendrick 1804.
by Horace Hone —

and it is a wonder how they knew that when seen with the naked eye that the painting would be totally accurate. Hone paints the hair with little dots of colour: brown and black spots, tightly positioned together on the ivory. The face is partly painted in the stippling technique, partly in fine brush strokes and the rest in flat areas of colour. The features of the face are all delineated and touches of red are stippled in around the cheeks. The eyes are drawn to perfection with the highlights touching the eyelids and dark brown colour is used to show the depth and shape of the eye. He uses the red colour in the eyes to give age to the lady and he picks up this colour again in the pursed lips. He also uses short brush strokes to show the lines in her face. The clothes are so dark they almost look opaque while the blouse is painted in the stippling technique. Hone uses the right balance between light and dark in constructing this miniature. The colours he uses are warm, perhaps to convey the gentle character of the sitter. The frame in which this miniature is encased has the typically Irish chevron pattern all over and in the back is a lock of the old lady's hair woven in a criss-cross pattern.

This second colour illustration (Ill. 17) of Miss Lendrick (mentioned in Strickland) by Horace Hone is very typical of the way in which he painted women. It was painted in 1804. He paints in a free manner and he uses a lot of stippling in the face. The hair is also painted quite loosely, indicating the time in which it was painted. Her dress is also quite different to anything seen earlier. The style is much simpler and Hone seems to take a very natural pose. This can also be seen in (Ill. 16) of an unknown lady.

Hone shows his true skills as a draughtsman in (Ill. 17) as he builds up the image in tiny dots impossible to see with the naked eye. He paints these dots in a mixture of red, blue, yellow and brown. His technique looks terribly similar to that of several of the Impressionists. He paints the features in the face very sharply and there is a sense of freshness about this miniature. Finally, these two black and white prints of Hone's work (Ill. 14 & 15) emphasise his talent for painting. It is obvious that Hone was an extremely good miniaturist, and there is a certain grace and elegance about his work.

Illustration 18.



Self portrait 1790
Adam Buck —

The Buck Family

The disastrous effect that photography had on miniature painting in the second half of the 19th century was devastating, so it may be of interest to refer to circumstances when miniaturists were sometimes overwhelmed with commissions at an earlier period. Frederick Buck, (1771 - 1839) brother of the more famous Adam Buck (1759 - 1833), was at one time in such circumstances in Cork City. Of the brothers, Adam left Cork at an early period to practice in Dublin, eventually settling down to practice in London. Frederick continued in Cork, where he painted many portrait miniatures and built up a large local clientele.

So pressing were his commissions to paint miniatures in Cork during the period of the Peninsular War, when officers were being painted before their boats sailed from Queenstown for foreign parts, that Frederick Buck employed a number of good painters in his studio to assist him. Those people took a hand in painting upon the ivories, held in reserve, the uniforms of the best known Irish regiments. This was to save time which was precious, before the boat sailed. The most responsible part of painting the face was done by F. Buck himself. Frederick also painted miniatures with an officer in the green Irish uniform on one side and on the other side a portrait of a young lady, evidently his wife or fiancee. Most likely Frederick finished the lady's miniature at a more leisurely pace, after the ship had sailed. In any case, such miniatures painted front and back of equal size and in the same gold frame, no thicker than needed to hold the two portraits together, are exceedingly rare.

Frederick Buck was a son of Jonathan Buck, the silversmith of Castle Street, and a younger brother of Adam Buck. He was a pupil at the Dublin Society Schools in 1783 but later returned to Cork where he practiced for many years. He was a prolific artist, but, the quality of his miniatures varied. They are characterised by the use of a rather hot flesh colouring and the features tend to be sketchily drawn and harsh. The haste in which he so often painted reflected in the miniatures which are frequently met with in the showrooms.

Illustration. 19.

Master Buck 1815.
Adam Buck —

There was no miniaturist in Ireland who even remotely approached the output achieved by Frederick Buck. He had a remarkably long career being closer to forty than to thirty years. His career reversed the usual artistic pattern; his rare earlier work (1785 - 90) being much his best, with a steady deterioration of quality being discernable after about 1800, and with a catastrophic slide to disaster under way by 1810, although with no decrease in quantity. He had sometimes been categorised as a mass-producer of red-coats even though his army miniatures are actually heavily out-numbered by those of civilians. The miniatures by him up to 1790 all seem to be ovals ranging in height from $1\frac{1}{2}$" to $2\frac{1}{2}$" and are all mounted in gold cases, doubtless products of the Buck family workshop. The bulk of his early sitters appear to have been female, but, after 1790 gentlemen were equalling ladies as his subjects. The miniatures remained gold-mounted, some of them with lovely backs of blue glass and woven hair and the sitter's monogram in gold letters. The 1790's also brought the start of his military work, a period which falls roughly into three catagories: men with lightly powdered hair, wearing a dark coat, whose collar rises behind their neck; young women with powdered hair, much less curled and bouncy than the wigs of the 1780's, wearing white dresses usually tied with a blue sash; and, lastly, a small number of rather good miniatures of men with powdered hair wearing military uniform. Frederick had already developed his 'trademark': a sky-blue background which, once he had devised it, he adhered to for the remainder of his long career.

Adam Buck was the elder son. He took up art and practiced for some years in Cork, painting miniatures and small portraits in watercolour. In 1795 he went to London and exhibited at the Royal Academy, British Institution, Society of British Artists and at the Royal Hibernian Academy. He was a versatile artist and taught portraiture and drawing. He executed a number of full-length portraits in watercolour or wax crayons usually on paper and occasionally did decorative work on furniture.

Illustration 20.

Col. William John Tucker 1790
by Frederick Buck

As I have had the opportunity of seeing a private collection of miniatures by Frederick Buck I have chosen to select one of his to discuss. This (Ill. 20) is an ancestor of my family. He is my great, great, great grandfather, Col. William John Tucker. This is painted shortly after 1790 and is one of his better military miniatures. It is encased in a gold frame with the hair of the sitter in a woven pattern in the back with his initials in gold overlaid W.J.T. The hair is powdered lightly and he is wearing a dark coat with a high collar, very characteristic of Buck during that period. He uses various tones of blue in the background going from light to dark as he goes towards the base of the miniature. He paints in the colour in short brush strokes following the contours of the hair and features of the face and he sometimes cross-hatches when shading. The uniform is painted in a very different technique, almost as if he had used opaque colours. He paints a lot of detail in the uniform which comes across quite decoratively. The pink flesh tone, already mentioned, is apparent in this miniature, but, it tones in well with the sky blue background. I am also including a selection of Frederick's miniatures which preserve a valuable social record of the faces, hair styles and fashions prevailing in Cork across a span of more than thirty five years.

Finally, I have chosen the two best Irish miniaturists to finish my analysis of portrait miniature paintings in Ireland: Charles Robertson (1760 - 1821) and Sampson Towgood Roch (1759 - 1847).

Charles Robertson was the son of a Dublin jeweller, perhaps the Alexander Robertson who died at Ormond Quay in 1768. Charles began his artistic career by executing designs in hair. When only about nine years of age, he exhibited some of his work at the Dublin Society of Arts. He lived with his elder brother Walter in Essex Street and exhibited miniatures for the first time in 1775. He worked for most of his life in Dublin, but was in London from 1785 to 1792 and again in 1806. He exhibited at the Royal Academy and in Dublin until 1821. Besides painting miniatures, he executed small portraits in watercolour and flower pieces.

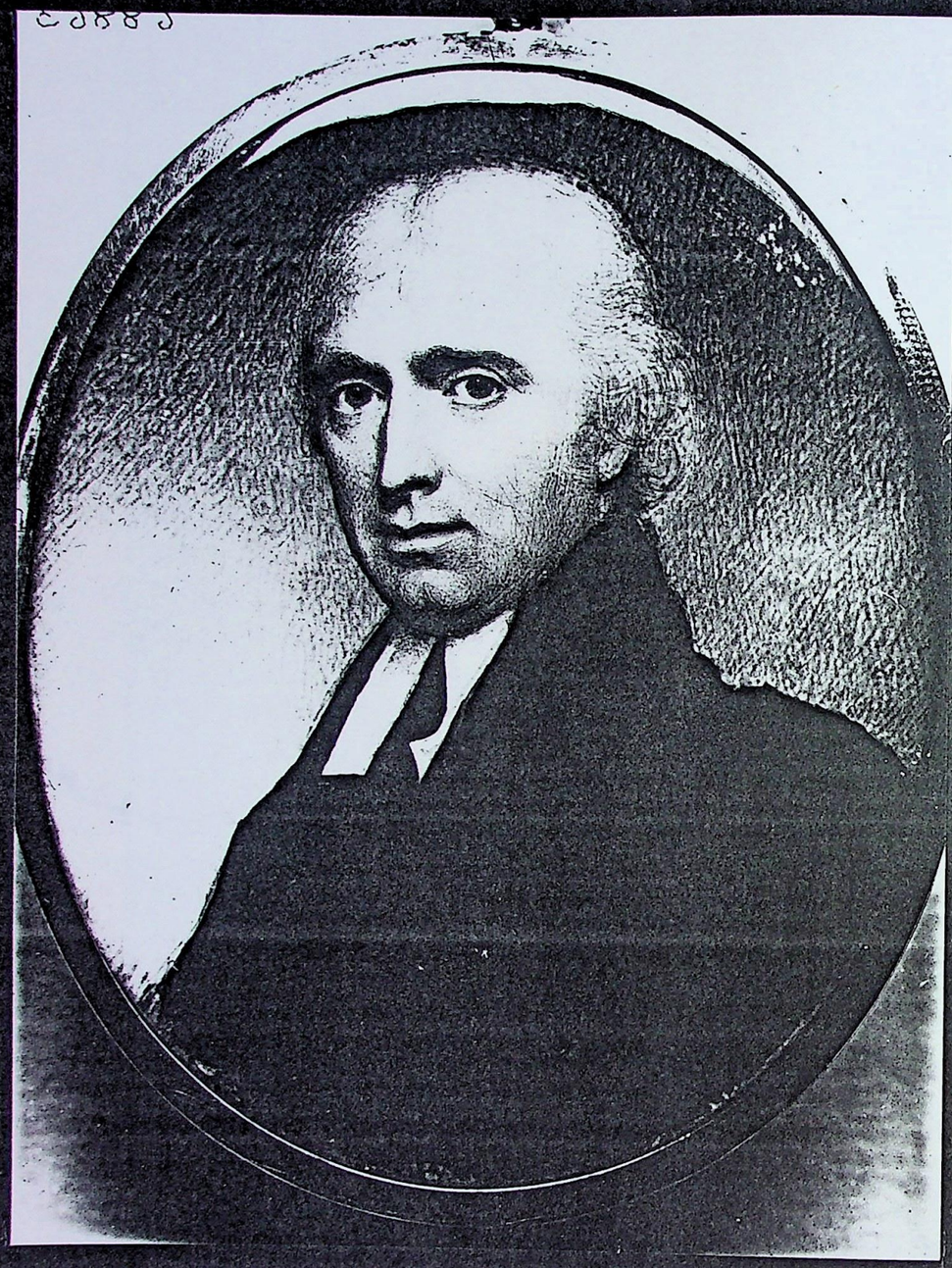
One of the miniatures to be discussed is one of my ancestors Col. John Wilson of Parsonstown Manor, Co. Meath, who is my great, great, great, great, grandfather of six generations back. (Ill. 21) Charles Robertson painted this miniature in 1781 and the other example (Ill. 22) is of an unknown lady. Robertson tends to shade the faces with a number of blue and grey strokes, particularly under the eyes. The features are modelled with long pinkish red brush strokes. The colours are very similar in both paintings and the detail is so fine that the image is almost in soft focus. He treats the bonnet of the unknown Lady in a very delicate fashion. Its stylised design, makes it look as though it has been carved out of ivory. Her dress is painted in a transparent colour which utilises the glistening effect of the ivory in order to enhance the silkiness of the dress. He has a slightly ruffled collar on the dress which is painted with dashes of opaque white. The eyes in both miniatures stare out at the viewer in an almost melancholic way. They slant down at the sides showing up the heavy eyelids. The hair is painted in great detail, especially the lady's; every hair is nearly recorded as it falls down into ringlets. The background is painted almost in the technique of 'Chiaroscuro'.

Illustration 21.

Col. John Wilson 1781
by Charles Robertson ~

The light around the figure is quite bright, but this gets gradually darker at the edges. This movement from light to dark is very slow and gradual. The paint appears as though it has been applied in flat brush strokes, but, when examined closely with very great magnitude (16 x 1) is seen to be executed in the hatching technique (see Ill. 23) The colour looks transparent; light tints of brown have been applied to the ivory and this blends in beautifully with the actual colour of the ivory. Robertson was also a highly skilled draughtsman and examples of his work are in the V & A Museum.

Illustration 27.



The Hon Thomas St Lawrence Bishop of Cork
by Charles Robertson (enlargement)

Sampson Towgood Roch (1759 - 1847) was born in Youghal Co. Cork. He began his studies as a miniature painter in Dublin and later practiced there for some years. He was born deaf and dumb and drawing was a way of communicating with people, for him. He was the son of Luke Roch and grandson of James Roch of Glynn Castle, near Carrick-on-Suir. He is known to have been painting miniatures in Capel Street, Dublin in 1784. He is also thought to have worked in Cork, for in the Dublin Chronicle of 1788 reference is made to his marriage at Youghal to a Miss Roch, his cousin, only daughter of James Roch of Co. Waterford. He was living in Grafton Street, Dublin from 1789 - 1792 and in the latter year he moved to Bath, where he had a flourishing practice and was patronised by the Royal Family. He exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1817 from Bath. He eventually retired and went to live with his relations at Woodbine Hill, Co. Waterford where he died in February 1847. He was buried in the Family burial ground at Ardmore but no gravestone can be found to prove this. He seems to have been a prolific artist and painted some good miniatures. Having seen a collection of work by him I can safely say that his work is of a very high standard.

The example by Sampson Towgood Roch (Ill. 25) is of Mrs. Morgan (nee Hoey), signed S. Roch, 1788, 6.7cm x 5.1cm, watercolour on ivory, purchased by Miss Langan in 1903. The background of this miniature is painted in two different techniques: hatching and stippling. The colour is laid on in very fine brush strokes with a tint of orange along side a tint of green. These colours tend to vibrate against each other giving the miniature spirit and vitality. From examination of this miniature in the National Gallery I could see that Roch laid the watercolour down in small dots, a technique known as pointillism. He had a very definite style of painting, so therefore most of his miniatures are quite easily recognisable. His main characteristics show up in the way in which he paints the eyes of his sitters. It is very obvious in this particular miniature of Mrs. Morgan that there are very definite lines around the eyes with grey and blue shading surrounding the complete eye. He also tends to give his sitters very angular eyebrows. The hair is painted so finely that one can almost see each hair on her

Illustration 24.

Young Lady 1829.
by Charles Robertson

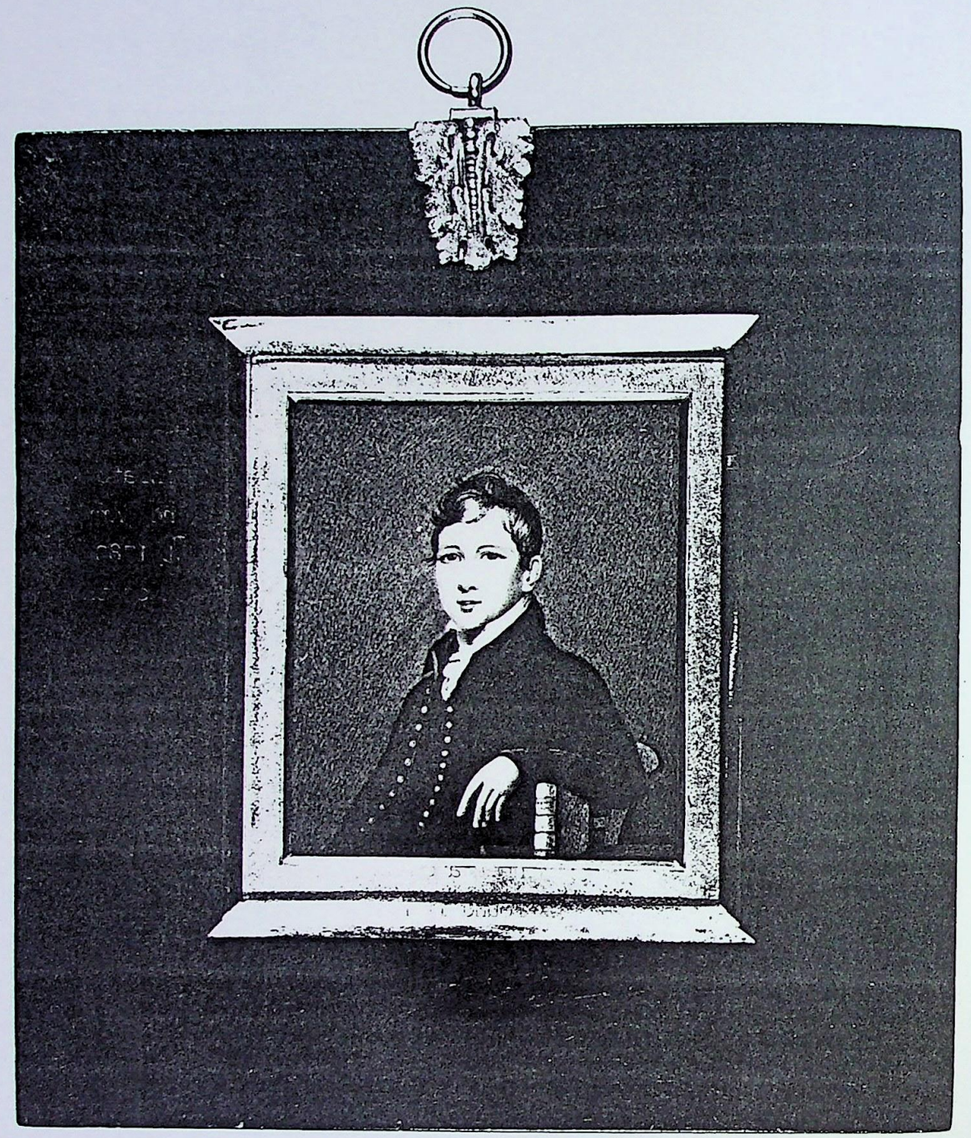
head. There is a lovely textural feeling from his miniatures probably due to the fact that he uses different techniques within the one miniature. The mouth inevitably painted as if the sitter is smirking; the lips invariably go up at the corners, giving this impression. The bonnet, then again is painted in a very free style; he lays on the colour in bigger quantities and covers big areas of the ivory. The pink ribbon is also painted quite freely; it does not have the same feeling as the tight graphic style with which the background and face are painted, but gives a pleasant contrast. The shawl around her shoulders is painted in an almost transparent white which makes the blue dress visible underneath. The shading under her chin and at the front where the shawl is tied is painted in a type of hatching. The greenish colour in the background merges in with the clothes giving an overall light shade of green. The frill on the bonnet is painted in three different techniques: firstly the white and grey watercolour is put down to give the basic shape of the frill, then he uses cross-hatching to show the shading between the layers of frill and then he uses the dotting technique to emphasise the lacey edge. The face is so accurately painted that it almost looks like a photograph but under magnification it can be seen that it is made up of tiny little dots, apart from the eyes, eyebrows and mouth, which are painted in long brush strokes. He uses a slightly greyish colour in the face probably to give her an elderly appearance. He also gives her slightly pinkish cheeks over her pale complexion. Her dress is painted quite roughly in comparison to the rest of the miniature. He lays down a basic blue colour and over that again, he adds a slightly darker blue. In some areas it seems to have cross-hatching and in other areas it is laid down with strokes of paint in different directions. The overall effect is like that of an oil painting when seen at arms length; it looks very effective.

Illustration 25.

Mrs. Morgan (née Hoey) 1788 67 x 5 mm.
Sampson Towgood Roch

This miniature signed "Roch 1788" is easily recognised as a late 18th century miniature by the style of clothes that Mrs. Morgan is wearing. This particular style was very fashionable about 1790. The bodice is made from blue silk, open down the front and has a low round neck fastening with a draw cord and has long squared off points at the front, which is typical of the period. There is another example here (Ill. 26) by Sampson Towgood Roch which emphasises his true talent for painting. It is easy to see the similarities between both of these miniatures by him and it is his dedication to perfectionism that makes him a brilliant artist.

Illustration 26.



A boy 1821 75mm
A boy by Sampson Towgood Roche

SUMMARY

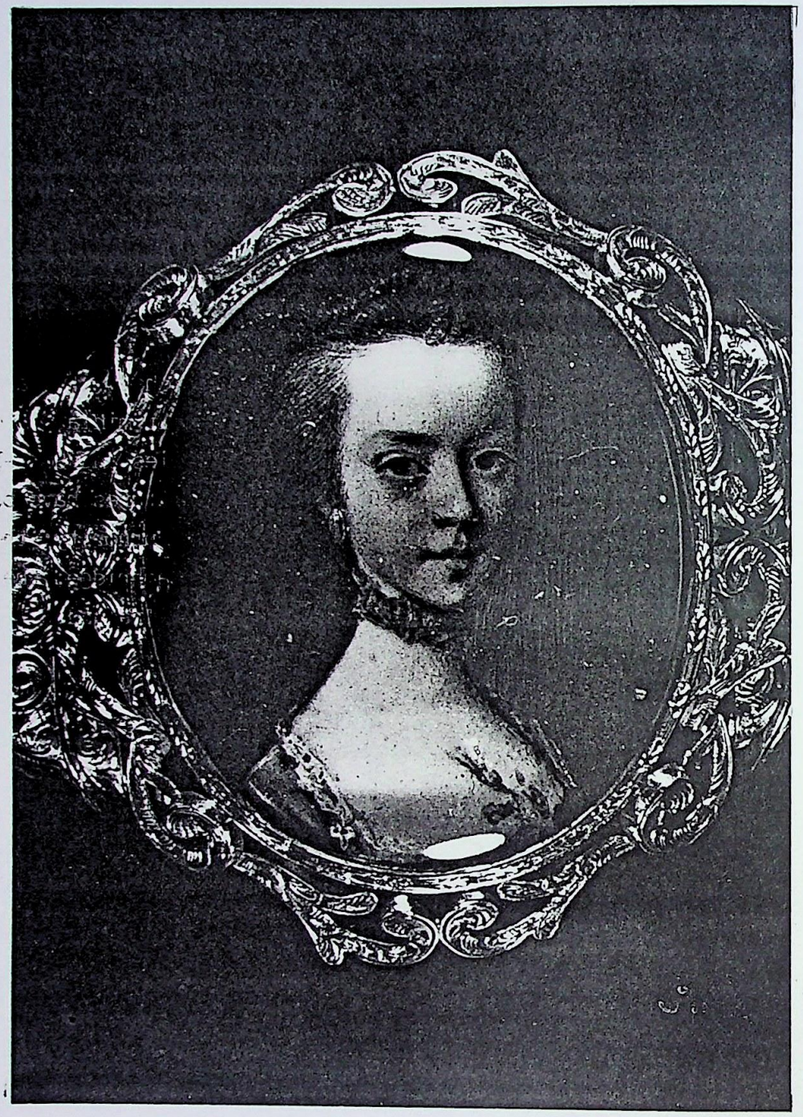
Having read quite a few books on the subject of miniature painting it is clear to see that very little is known about our past miniaturists. Virtually nothing was recorded in writing and these miniatures were rarely signed or dated so I found it difficult to figure out a chronological history of miniature painting. Between the different books and studying actual miniatures, I could gather that it's origins go back to the early book illuminators. It is believed that the Flemish were the first to introduce the art of miniature painting to the English and thanks to King Henry VIII miniatures were first recorded in Britain. The English eventually spread this form of miniature painting to the Irish and, as I had some miniatures of my ancestors, it encouraged me to find out more about the 'Art of Limning'. The heyday of Irish miniature painting ran from about 1780 to 1830. So I selected several Irish miniaturists who represented the technique in its highest form to show the gradual process and style of painting in Ireland. These miniatures preserve a valuable social record of the faces, hairstyles and fashions prevailing in Ireland at the time. It was after the Union in 1800 that the art of miniature painting began to decline in Ireland mainly due to the fact that the gentry, who commissioned most of the work in Ireland, moved back to London. Dublin was no longer a centre, without it's parliament. So many of the miniaturists found it necessary to travel to England to obtain work, as there was no trade in Ireland. With the introduction of photography in the mid - 19th century, miniature painting came to a final end. This meant that portrait miniature painting had a life span of only 75 years in Ireland. But even at that the 18th century saw a remarkable flourishing of the watercolour medium. Gustavus Hamilton, Horace Hone, Sampson Towgood Roch and Adam Buck all produced excellent work, on a level with all but the very best of their English contemporaries. Charles Robertson surpassed them and may be considered in the same class as Cosway and Smart, the great English miniaturists of the 18th century.

Gustavus Hamilton's work was in my opinion the most stylised having developed from early work which was almost of the naive school. Nathaniel Hone, as I have noted earlier worked in a watercolour style that when closely examined was quite impressionistic although because his miniatures were generally so small, this was not immediately obvious. Nathaniel Hone's son Horaces style was very professional and frequently of the very highest quality but in my opinion many of his portrait miniatures had that set piece quality about them which was also somewhat photographic. So I personally prefer the work of Charles Robertson who I feel caught the characters of his sitters while at the same time reached a perfection of painterliness not equalled by the others.

Although I have selected a very limited number of artists, they typified the art when it flourished in Ireland. It must not be lost sight of the fact that there were many other artists working in Ireland whose work was also of a very high quality and there may indeed be unknown masterpieces by artists like these waiting to be discovered.

I would like to finish up by showing some of the rarest and most unusual works done by Irish miniaturists between 1780 - 1830. Miniaturists were always faced with the problem of painting portraits small enough to be conveniently carried on the person and yet to be recognisable as portraits of their sitters. Here are two examples, one a miniature set in a gold ring mounted in diamonds and the other a miniature set in a gold bracelet.

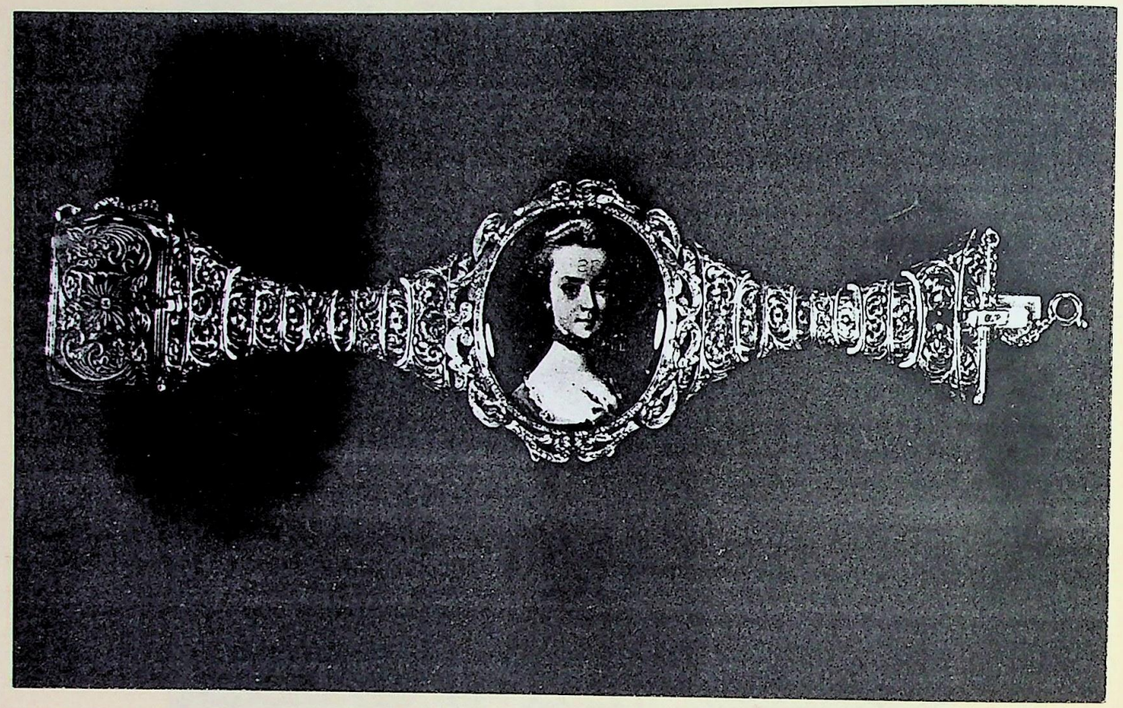
The ring miniature was painted about 1788 judging from the style of clothes and the hairstyle. Very little is known about this miniature, but, it came from a castle in Ireland. It was most likely a family ancestor of the St. George Peppers who lived in the castle. It is an exceptionally beautiful piece of work and the detail is extraordinary for such a small scale (12mm x 15mm). The photograph is approximately eight times the size of the original.



Enlargement of illustration 28.
Unknown artist

The gold bracelet with the miniature (Ill. 28) is really quite rare. Sotheby's of London, the Auctioneers identified it as being Irish because of the assay mark on the gold. The ornate floral pattern engraved on the gold is very characteristic of the Irish goldsmiths work. The miniature is also quite unusual with this unknown lady with a rather elongated neck. The artist has painted her in this way in order to give her an aristocratic air, possibly one could describe her as elegant and aloof.

My research carried me to such diverse places as the Victoria and Albert Museum which has the largest single portrait miniature collection in these islands; the great auction houses Christies and Sotheby's who through their regular sales of portraits miniatures have built up an expertise probably unequalled by any other authority; the Wallace collection; The Fitzwilliam Collection, Cambridge; the National Gallery Dublin and various private collections in Ireland.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Way Howe to Lymne - Jim Murrell
Published by the Victoria and Albert Museum London (1983)

The Dictionary of Irish Artists 1 and 2 - Strickland
Published by the Irish University Press (1969)

Collecting Miniatures - Daphne Foskett
Published by the Antique Collection Club Ltd. (1979)

British Miniature Painting - Basil Long
Published by the Holland Press (1966)

The Art of Limning - Nicholas Hilliard
Edited by Edward Norgate, pub (1981) by the Mid Northumberland Arts Group

Miniatures in Europe Shidlof
Published by the Akademische Druck - U. Verlagenstalt Graz Austria (1964)

Portrait miniatures in the Fitzwilliam museum Cambridge - Robert Bayne - Powell
Published by BAS, Over Wallop.

Miniatures in the 18th and 19th Centuries - The Hon. Donough O'Brien
Published by B.T. Batsford Ltd (1951)

Irish Portraits 1660 - 1860 Anne Crookshank and the Knight of Glin
Published by Paul Mellon (1969)

Irish Arts Review - Editor Brian de Breffny
Published by Eton Enterprises Ltd

British Portrait Miniatures - Daphne Fosket
Published by the Hamlyn Group Ltd (1968)