# THE LANGUAGE OF LINE

The Influence of Japanese Art on the Glasgow Stylists with Particular Reference to the Work of Jessie M. King, Graphic Designer and Illustrator.

by **Teresa Breathnach**

Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design and Complimentary Studies in Candidacy for the Degree of Bachelor of Design in Visual Communications 1992

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Felicity Woolf for her tremendous encouragment and interest.

## CONTENTS

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

**Fig.19** King, Jessie, Vellucent Binding for The Holy Graal, 1903

**Fig.20** MacDonald, Frances, Bows,Beads and Birds, c. 1905, watercolour, 30 cms x 35 cms

**Fig.21** King,Jessie, Three Covers for the Routledge Prize Series, 1902

**Fig.22** King, Jessie, In Her Hand She Had A Spray of Wilde Hemlock (from A House of Pomegranates by Oscar Wilde), 1915, pen and ink and watercolour, 12.8 cms x 15.6 cms

**Fig.23** MacDonald, Margaret, Summer (design for stained glass window), c. 1894, watercolour, 51.7 cm. x 21.8 cm.

**Fig.24** King, Jessie,And Lo The City Lay At My Feet (from A House of Pomegranates by Oscar Wilde), 1915, pen and ink and watercolour, 12.8 cms x 15.6 cms

**Fig.25** Mackintosh, Charles Rennie, Ladder Back Chair from Windy Hill House, 1901

**Fig.26** Mackintosh, Charles Rennie, Porch Window from Windy Hill House, 1901

**Fig.27** Detail of walled room, seventeenth century, Japan

**Fig.28** King, Jessie,When A Poor man Came In Sight (from A Carol - Good King Wenceslas) 1919,watercolour and pen and ink

**Fig.29** Hokusai, Travellers On The Tokaido Road At Hodogaya (from the series Thirty Six Views Of Mount Fuji), c. 1834, colour woodblock print, 25.5 cms x 37.4 cms

**Fig.30** King, Jessie, Her Face Was Veiled( (from House of Pomegranates by Oscar Wilde), 1915, pen and ink and watercolour, 12.8 cms x 15.6 cms

**Fig.31** Japanese Woodblock Print

**Fig.32** Kunisada, Mother Feeding An Infant (from the series Edo's Pride), c. 1818, colour woodblock print, 36.6 cms x 25.4 cms

**Fig.33** King, Jessie, I Have Never Seen Anyone So Pale (from A House of Pomegranates by Oscar Wilde), 1915, pen and ink and watercolour, 12.8 cms x 15.6 cms

**Fig.34** King, Jessie, Back Cover from A House of Pomegranates by Oscar Wilde, 1915

**Fig.35** Henry, George, Japanese Lady With A Fan, 1894, oil on canvas, 61 cms x 40.5 cms

**Fig.36** Utamaro, Charms Of Flowers Of The Four Seasons, c. 1780, colour woodblock print, 37.1 cms x 24.3 cms

**Fig.37** King, Jessie, Inside Covers from A House of Pomegranates by Oscar Wilde, 1915, pen and ink

**Fig.38 a** Katagami ( Japanese dyers stencils), Pine Branches (detail), Meiji Period, oiled paper, 40.5 cm. x 43.8 cm.

**Fig 38 b** Katagami (Japanese dyers stencils), Clematis (detail), Meiji Period, oiled paper, 22.2 cm. x 40.5 cm.

# INTRODUCTION

It has been suggested that it is possible to distinguish three main phases in the influence of Japanese art on that of the West ( **46, p. 11** ). The first phase began in the mid-seventeenth century, the second in the mid-nineteenth century and the third more recently in this century. It is the second phase of this influence which is the concern of this thesis.

This phase co-incided with the advent of Art Nouveau and Art Deco. It is arguable that these movements provided the basis for modern design, particularly when the issue of mass production is considered.

The study will examine in particular the influence of Japanese art on the Glasgow Stylists using Jessie M. King , graphic designer and illustrator, as a specific example. King has been chosen for this purpose as she produced the main body of illustrative work for commercial purposes emanating from Glasgow during the period in question.

The outline of the thesis is as follows.
Chapter one will attempt to show the development in the understanding of Eastern art by the West. This will be discussed in two sections. The first deals with the power relationship between Asia and Europe until the mid-nineteenth century including the controlling elements which shaped these attitudes and the ways in which these attitudes were expressed in art. The second section deals with the change in attitudes towards Asia by discussing the specific case of the artistic relationship between Britain and Japan, and will suggest reasons why this change occurred.

The purpose of the second chapter is to define the Glasgow Style within this context. The style will be discussed by relating it to the wider Art Nouveau movement, by establishing whether or not it had its basis in an ideology and the nature of that ideology, and how these concerns were expressed stylistically. This will enable me to establish those ideological and stylistic factors which resulted in a specific receptiveness within the Glasgow circle to the influence of Japanese art.

The aim of chapter three is to identify the sources through which the Glasgow Stylists may have been familiar with Japanese art in the context of Glasgow as an important commercial and artistic centre.

Chapter four discusses the work of Jessie King as an example of the influence of Japanese art on the Glasgow Stylists. The first section gives an outline biography of the artist. This serves as a context for the later discussion of her work. The remainder of the chapter discusses an early indication of the influence of Japan on her work and her return to this source of inspiration later in her career. The study goes on to examine King's use of symbolism and technical devices and how these aspects show the influence of Japanese art on her work.

# CHAPTER ONE

## FROM ORIENTALISM TO JAPONISME

## Introduction

In this chapter I will attempt to show the development in the understanding of Eastern art by the West. This will be discussed in two sections. The first deals with the power relationship between Asia and Europe until the mid-nineteenth century including the controlling elements which shaped these attitudes and the ways in which these attitudes were expressed in art. Section two deals with the change in attitudes towards Asia by discussing the specific case of the artistic relationship between Britain and Japan, and will suggest reasons why this change occurred.

## Orientalism

> There are Westerners and there are Orientals. The former dominate, the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power **( 30, p36 ).**

So Edward Said sums up the attitudes of Western imperialist nations towards the Eastern peoples. He makes the statement having formulated a complex argument, the crux of which is that the nature of the relationship between Europe and Asia has always been the relationship between those nations who see themselves as being progressive, ordered and stable, and those Eastern countries seen to be primitive, chaotic and unstable - the relationship between strength and weakness **( 30, p 40 )**.

The factors controlling Western attitudes towards the East can be divided in two **( 30, p 39 )**. Since the middle ages, the elements have been ; firstly a growing factual knowledge in Europe about the East which later on provided the developing sciences of ethnology, comparative anatomy, philology and history with a convenient case-study, a knowledge which was supplemented with romantic literature; and secondly the Western perception of this knowledge as a symbol of strength. The Western view of the Orient was granted the status of scientific truth in an age when scientific study was synonymous with progress, wealth and power.

The motivating factor behind the Western domination of the East can be seen to be fear. It created an Orient to which it attributed backwardness and chaos - those factors most despised in a scientific age - so that it could combat its fear of the unfamiliar in, and the power of, Eastern countries. Refusing to differentiate between nations, the West strengthened further its own creation of a primitive and chaotic 'Orient.' : a sub-world which existed completely extraneously to Western countries, which would no longer be a threat to the power of the West. Backward cultures were seen to be in need of colonisation to bring order to chaos. In this way the West could justify its domination of the East by seeing itself as a patriarchal figure with an indispensable role to play in its government.

The expression of this condescending power play can be clearly seen in the arts of the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when their was a trend for things "Oriental" in Europe. The importation of Chinese porcelain had begun much earlier in the fourteenth century, the influence of which can be seen in the adoption of Eastern techniques of representing depth in some Italian painting during that century **(19, p75)**. Intelligent observation and interpretation of Eastern art was not , however, to continue , and Western energies were concentrated on the development of geometric perspective. Chinoiserie, one of the main design styles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, began with the fashion for imitating Eastern dress styles and the creation of pastiches of Oriental subjects. The depiction of the strange "Cathay" - as the fanciful, imaginary China was called **( 19, p80 )** - could be seen in textile designs, engravings, lacquerwork and ceramics. These depictions were created by mixing elements from scenes painted on imported porcelain and laquerwork from China. These, however, were regarded in their country of origin as being of inferior quality. Shoddy, shallow Western interpretations of them further decreased the quality and provided the West with a depiction of an absurd land and its people who could be dismissed from the 'progressive' Western view of reality and were limited to novelty and exoticism. A complete lack of understanding in Europe about the diverse vertical depiction of depth in Eastern art further impeded an appreciation of it. This encouraged the belief that it was inferior to Western art . One of the main identifying characteristics of Western art was the the system of geometric perspective which had been discovered relatively recently and was perhaps seen as the most advanced method of

depicting depth. Eastern motifs were often combined with grotesque elements , augmenting the notion of the Orient as a sub-world, external to the reality of the West.

As late as 1820, items such as the English musical clock in fig. 1 were still being produced . On its base various scenes are depicted while above this the clock face - ridiculously small in relation to the entire piece - is flanked on either side by single palm trees. Above this again, an over-powering pagoda-like structure forms a perch for an exotic creature. The impression made is one of excess and confusion, in complete contradiction with either the minimalist simplicity or the rich but controlled nature of patterns in Far Eastern art.

Later, Orientalist painters and writers concocted one image of the East as a sensual woman **( 30, p70 ).** In the painting 'Le Bain Turc" (fig 2) Ingres bases his erotic image of the East on this perception.

A large group of naked women are pictured together listening to music and watching one another dance. The woman on the right looks directly at us as she stretches her arms behind her head languidly as though she were initiating voyeuristic attention, as does the dancer on the far left. Both women appear to be existing only for the viewer of the painting. The over all impression is one of vulnerability and lack of identity on the part of the women, corresponding directly to the Western perception of the East at this time. The image of a group of women exuding sensual exoticism and passivity perpetuates the notion of its patriarchal antithesis; that is , a group who are powerful, dominant, active and stable but who ultimately need to create a weaker group to feed their image of themselves as being superior. It is this type of dynamic which is discussed by Edward Said in his book Orientalism and that which is expressed in the art-world by both the frivolous Chinoiserie of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Furthermore, the mixing of borrowed motifs from a variety of Eastern sources expressed visually the grouping together of diverse Eastern cultures as a single entity.

The consequent creation of a single, exotic Orient can perhaps be seen as a deliberate policy on the part of Europeans to destroy individual Eastern national identities , leading to a perception in the West of a negative group identity in

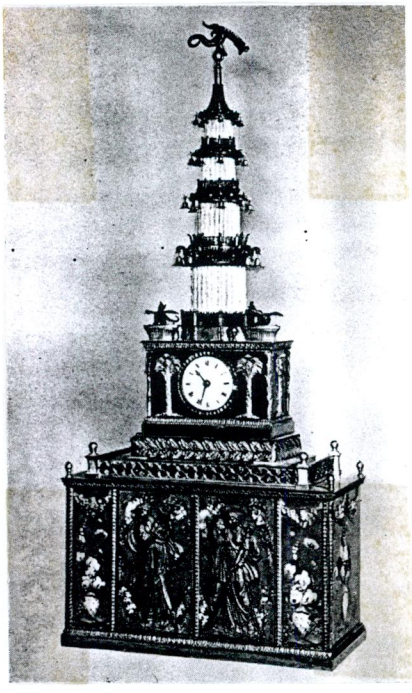
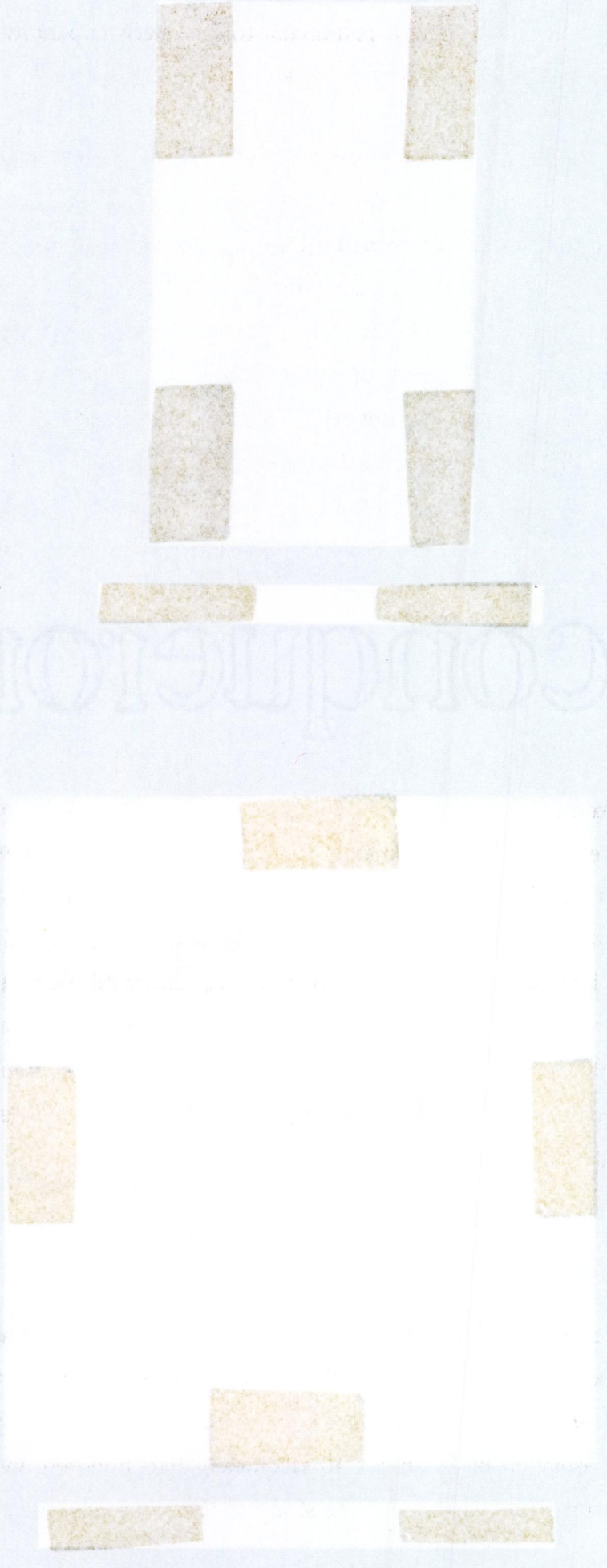


**Fig.1** English Musical Clock c. 1820

**Fig.2** Ingres, Dominque, Le Bain Turc, 1862,



the 'Orient'. Through playing a patriarchal role Western imperialist nations were able to justify their exploitation of the East.

The section Asia (fig. 3) on the Albert Memorial designed by Henry Foley RA (1818 - 1874) provides us with ample evidence of the condescending behaviour of the West towards the Eastern nations during the period in question. The central figure is a semi-naked Asian woman seated on a prostrate elephant, an animal long identified with the East. On three sides stand male figures representing various sections of Asia. The official handbook describes the woman as a symbol of the unveiling of the products of Asia at the great Exhibition in 1851 and the elephant as a symbol of "subjection of brute-force to human intelligence" **( 16, p21 )**. In the light of my discussion of Orientalism to this point, it would seem reasonable to identify the woman with those in Ingres' painting (fig 2) - she is revealing herself for the satisfaction of Western culture (as patriarch) - and to interpret the kneeling elephant -"brute force" - as the conquering of Asia by the West - "human intelligence".

It is with this background that attitudes towards the East in the latter part of the nineteenth century were formed, not least in the arts. Initially, little or no attempt appears to have been made to understand diverse elements in Eastern art, such as the Eastern approach to perspective, which in its assumption of superiority, the West presumed to be actual ignorance of perspective. This, and an equally ignorant adoption of exotic motifs, detracted from the East as a reality, and relegated it to the fairytale , the decadent or the comical. And yet, it is in the late nineteenth century that it is possible to see some progress in Western understanding of Eastern art, a progress particularly evident in the European interest in the Art of Japan.

**Japonisme**

Britain's relationship with Japan had tenuous beginnings in the seventeenth century, when the British East India Company was founded to handle the exportation of goods from Japan to Britain. However, due partly to the self-imposed isolation of Japan for approximately two hundred and fifty years, British Japonisme proper, that is ""the study of the art and genius of Japan""

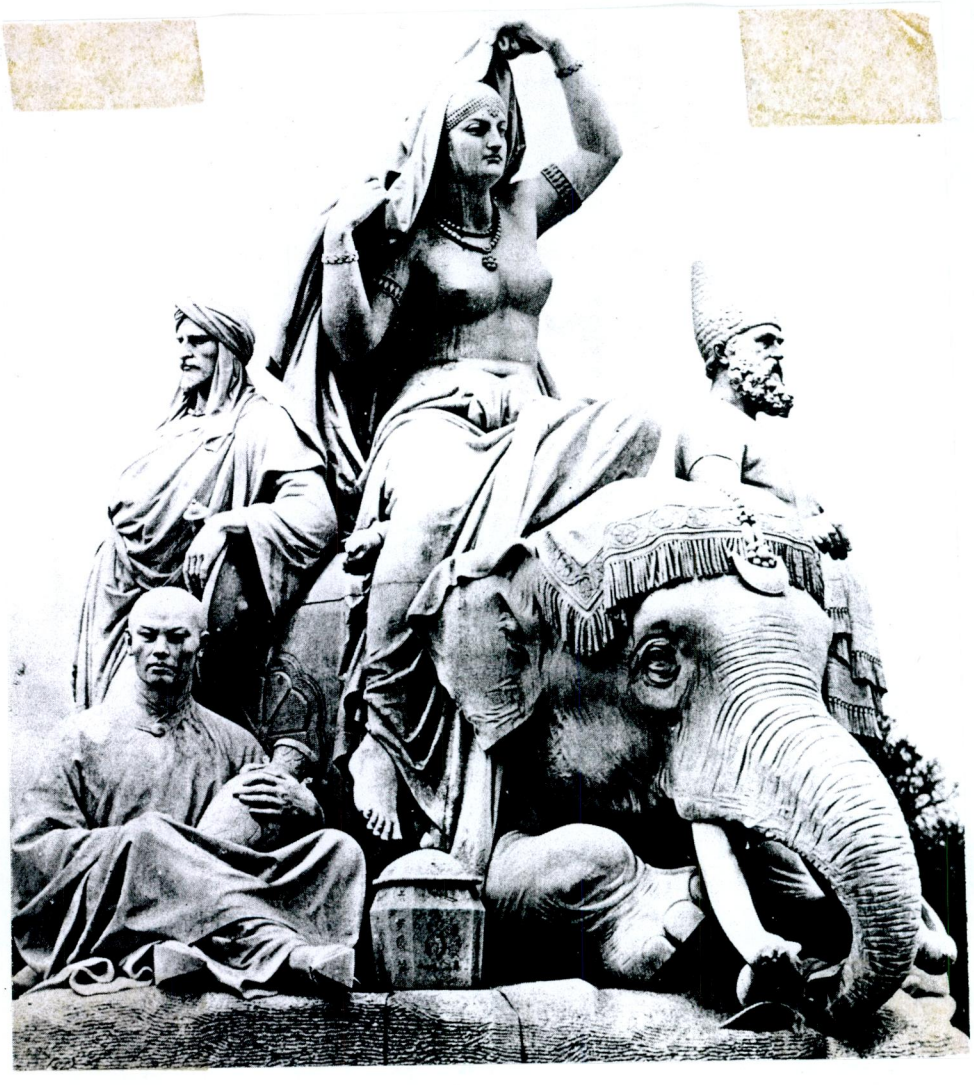


**Fig.3** Foley, Henry, Asia (section of the Albert Memorial),

( 38, p13 ), was not to begin until the mid-nineteenth century. As late as 1851, Japan was not seen in isolation from China and the other Asian nations. At the Great Exhibition in that year, the Japanese items displayed there were not granted the status of an individual stand, but were included in the Chinese exhibit.

After the signing of the Treaty of Edo - a diplomatic and commercial agreement between Britain and Japan (1858) - a deeper appreciation of Japanese art began to be felt in Britain. The huge success in the amount and variety of Japanese goods being imported as a result of the new agreement was mainly responsible for the heightened awareness of Japan and its art as an individual culture, an awareness which was repeated in commercial centres all over Europe. This change can be seen in the devotion of an entire section to Japan in the International Exhibition of 1862, and the positive response to it. However, despite the high profile of the section the Japanese government did not participate in its organisation, of it as this was undertaken by Rutherford Alcock, British minister to Japan. Now, significantly, the British attitude towards involvement in Japan ""was not supremacy over or interference in Japan, but a faithful observance of the commercial treaty"" ( 38, p77 ).

This influx of Japanese art to Britain coincided with a growing concern for the obvious decline of quality in machine manufactures . The rapid developments in technology had not yet allowed the designer to grow accustomed to the possibilities of machine production, and this lead to the non-design of mass produced articles. High Victorian design consisted of an eclectic mess referredto as Historicism. This was the indiscriminate borrowing of motifs and form from a variety of historical sources without any attempt to understand their underlying principles.

An example of this can be seen in the porcelain vase in fig.4. It was designed for Minton and Company in 1857 by Silas Rice. Semi-stylised and semi-naturalistic, the vase is decorated with both human and plant forms. Not only is every surface space decorated , but the basic form is supplemented with classically derived ornamentation. As with the clock in fig. 1, the overall effect is one of confusion and pomposity.

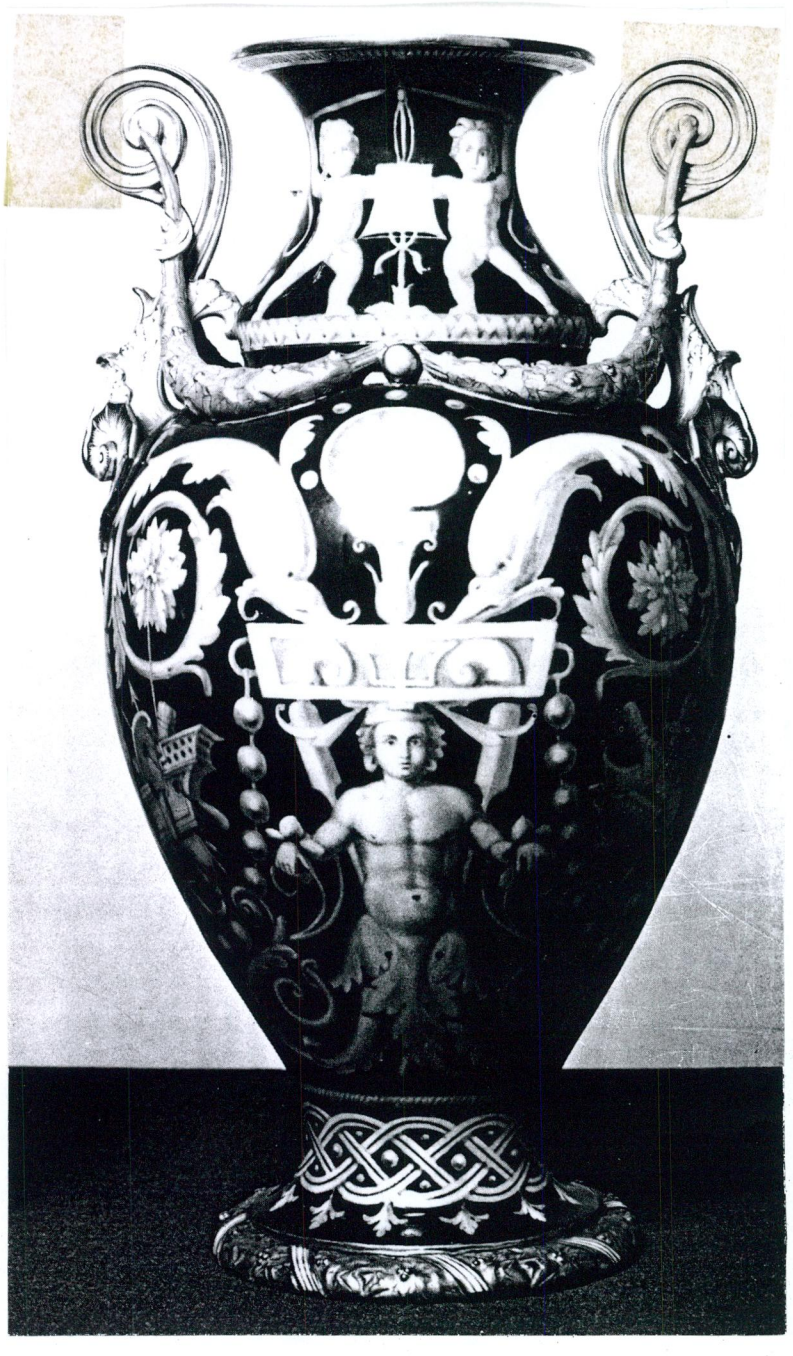


**Fig.4** Rice, Silas for Minton and Co., Vase, 1857,

In reaction to this type of manufacture, there was a general attempt by art theorists , artists and designers to reintroduce a higher standard of design into everyday life and indeed one of the main ideals of the Great Exhibitions was to promote this aim. The movements and individuals associated with these attempts have all been linked with specific interests in Japanese art. At this point it is necessary to discuss these briefly in order to identify the nature and importance of the influence of Japanese art i the context of the rejuvenation of British arts, and particularly design, at that time.

The Aesthetic Movement, led by James Mac Neill Whistler, is perhaps that most associated with Japanisme in the late nineteenth century. The movement's fundamental motive is expressed by the catch cry " art for art's sake", that is the emphasis on the autonomy of art as opposed to a way of imitating nature. Whistler aimed in his painting and in his interiors, not to record in detail what he saw, but to create a new beauty which would exist on its own terms. In order to achieve this, he and other aestheticists incorporated Japanese objects in their painting, not as mere exotic props, but as a means to enhance the beauty of the painting( **12, p47** ). At a more concrete level they adopted compositional devices and techniques of colour utilised by Japanese print artists, which became factors similar in their work to the type of influence that Japanese prints had on French Impressionist painters.

In the graphic arts, Aubrey Beardsley, whose name is synonymous with the decadence of the late nineteenth century, was an illustrator whose style was greatly affected by his interest in Japanese prints. He drew his grotesque symbolic images mainly in black and white, balancing masses of light and dark with areas of intense pattern, a technique most familiar in Japanese art. His figures with silhouette-like treatment are dressed in flowing kimono-like robes, with only heads and hands to break the pattern or the solid mass of dress (fig. 5). These are to similar depictions of kimonos or kabuki actors in Japanese art (fig. 6). Like artists such as Gauguin, Toulouse Lautrec and Vincent Van Gogh - all of whom have been noted as being influenced by Japanese prints - Beardesley's expressive, confident use of line can be attributed to the Ukiyo-e print - artists of the Japanese Edo period.

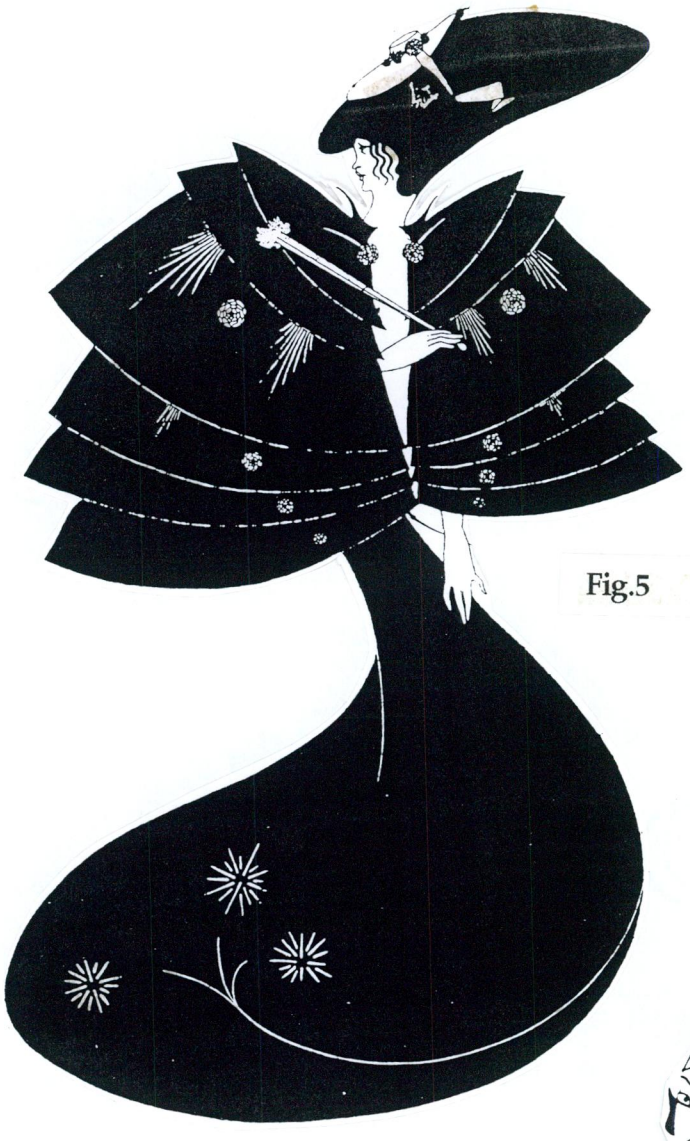


**Fig.5** Beardsley, Aubrey , The Black Cape 1893

**Fig.6** Kunisada, Actor in Black Kimono, 1847,

Toshio Wattanabe comments on the connection made by the medieval revivalists between medieval England and contemporary Japan. To illustrate the response of designers to the Japanese exhibit at the 1862 exhibition, he quotes an enthusiastic statement made by medievalist William Burges : "the Japanese court is the real medieval court of the exhibition" (10, p27). The Medievalist Movement, appalled at the sorry state of British manufactures, returned to the past in order to find a direction for design of the future. They completely rejected new developments in technology , and attempted a return to the handcrafting of goods, the aim being to reintroduce acceptable standards in design. Their motives were to restore the craftsperson to a place of equality with the fine-artist, to be "true" to materials and "honest" in design (27, p23).

Having isolated itself from the technical developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Japan's arts and crafts had remained as handcrafts, and as a result reflected many of the qualities much admired in European design of the middle-ages. The medievalist belief in truth to material - the concern for the inherent qualities of the natural materials as a basis for the construction of design items - and their feeling that the function of the object should govern the form of it - utility as a basis for beauty - compare well with the traditional beliefs of Japanese craftspeople (23, P10).

Christopher Dresser, the nineteenth century designer perhaps most aware of the stimulation of Japanese art, shared with the medievalists their disgust at the state of design in British industry. However, as one of the first designers trained for machine production, he embraced technology and sought out a formal language which would suit machine manufacture and which would reintroduce good taste and clarity of form into machine produced goods.

As early as the 1880s, Dresser was producing well defined designs such as the tea and coffee sets in fig. 7, and the elaborate teapots in fig. 8. The tea and coffee pots are true to both the qualities of the material, and function of the objects - the truth and honesty advocated by the medieval revivalists. In fig. 7, the surface decoration is simple and is positioned intuitionally. The circular designs are similar to the heraldic crests of Japan. While Dresser was an admirer of early medieval design, his main inspiration for the fresh sophistication of his

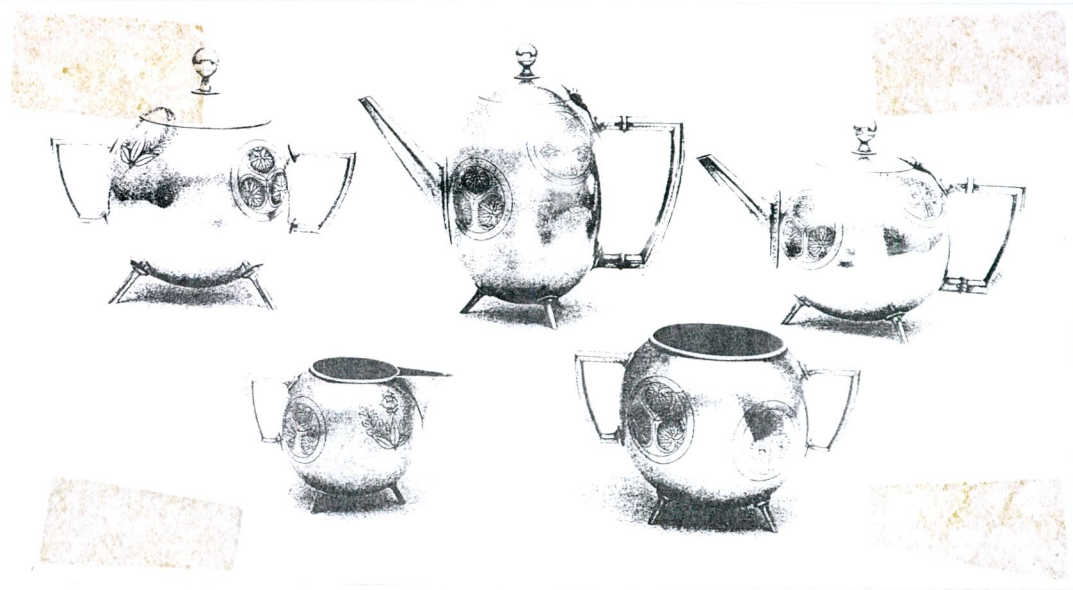


**Fig.7** Dresser, Christopher, Solid Silver Tea and Coffee Sets, 1879,

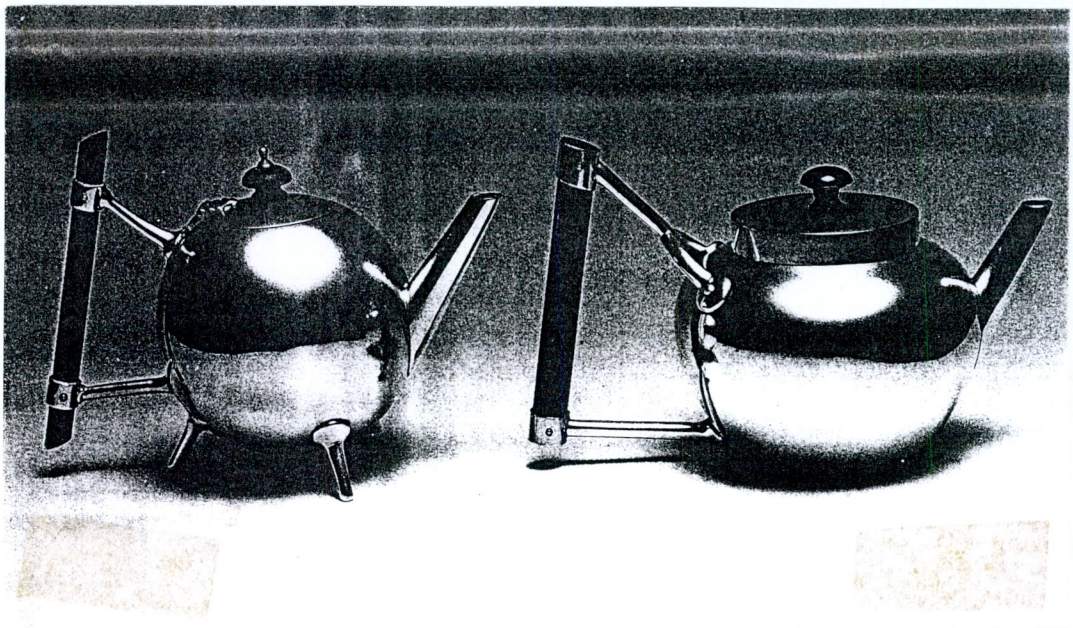


**Fig.8** Dresser,Christopher, Electroplated Teapots, 1885,

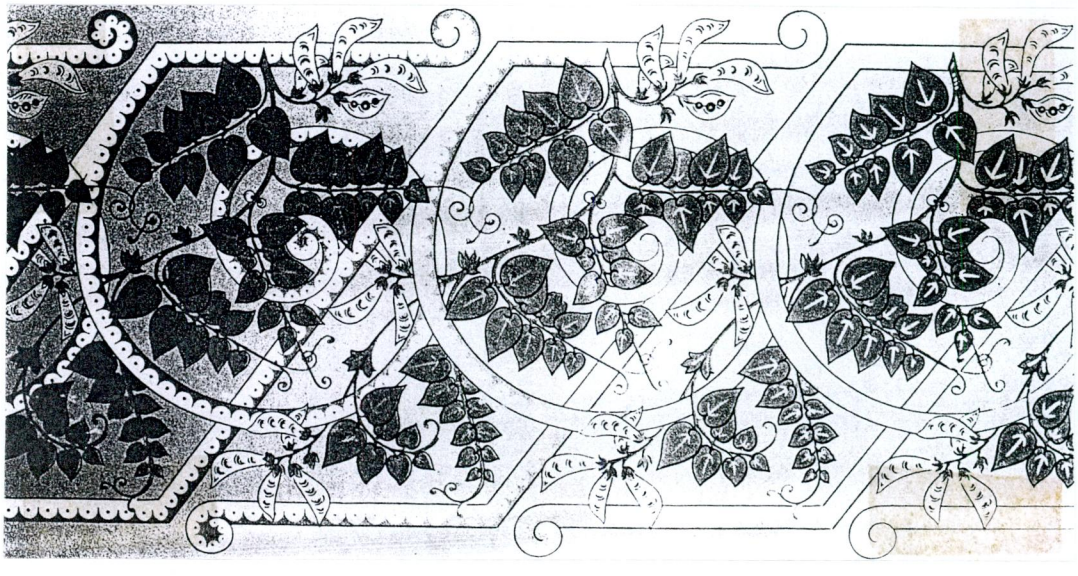


**Fig. 9** Dresser,Christopher, Wallpaper Frieze, 1877

creations was undoubtedlyto be found in Japanese art, and the Japanese approach to art.

It has been stated that he deplored the "lavish display of ornament" that the Gothic revivalists delighted in ( **15, p67** ), but applauded those qualities in early medieval vernacular design closest to Japanese art. He included functional aspects of construction in the overall beauty of the piece - for example pins used to attach various elements in construction are part of the character of the piece and are seen to be beautiful in their function ( **10, p127** ). Clarity of form in Dresser's designs are similar to the definite, unconfused outline often used by Beardsley in his illustration. Both line and form, whether curvilinear or rectilinear, in Dresser's two dimensional and three dimensional work can be seen as his attempt at an abstract stylisation, the antithesis to naturalism. He believed "in the power of ornament to express feelings" by abstracting the basic laws of growth in nature( **15, p26** ). After experiencing at first hand both the art and architecture of Japan, Dresser was influenced by the attention to nature as a source of inspiration in design and as a fundamental part of life there ( **3, p204** ). This resulted in a controlled abstracted, stylised ornament in Dresser's work. (fig. 9)

**Summary**

The mania for Japanese art during the latter half of the nineteenth century was facilitated by the influx of art items from Japan due to the signing of the Treaty of Edo and hence the reopening of the ports of Japan to foreign trade.

The growing desire for beauty in the everyday in Britain, and the renaissance of decorative and applied art there, found in the art of Japan a pre-existing source of inspiration which corresponded to the aims of British artists and designers.

The presumed similarities in culture between medieval England and contemporary Japan allowed leading designers of late nineteenth century Britain to attempt a better understanding than their predecessors of Japanese art. This included the attempt to identify those characteristics of Japanese art which made it superior to contemporary British design and which they thought to be similar to those of medieval design, thus beginning to change the existing patriarchal and imperialistic attitudes of Western nations towards Eastern nations.

The perceived characteristics of Japanese art included: simplicity of line and form, the use of nature as a source of inspiration, the abstraction of nature in its representation and sombre colour. These characteristics were understood to have grown out of the Japanese refined sense of beauty and elegance, their attention to quality handcrafting, the equal positions of fine-art and craft in Japan, the attention paid to the inherent qualities of raw material, and the part which function played in the conception of form.

It can be concluded that the Western perception of the East and its art had grown from the condescending and sometimes degrading Chinoiserie and Orientalist art to the adoption of the perceived principles of Japanese art later in the nineteenth century. Japanese art was no longer regarded as a source of amusement, or as another area where the West could flaunt its supposed superiority over the East. Instead it was begun to be seen as a highly sophisticated approach to design from which designers and artists could learn much. There was no longer a situation where the Asian peoples were regarded as 'poor relations' in the context of design. Attitudes were changing and there was a situation emerging where designers were attempting to understand a different approach to design.

# CHAPTER TWO
## THE GLASGOW STYLE

**Introduction**

The previous chapter discusses those elements in British design which may have facilitated a better understanding of Japanese art and Eastern art in general. The purpose of this chapter, is to define the Glasgow Style within this context. The style will be discussed by relating it to the wider Art Nouveau movement, by establishing whether or not it had its basis in an ideology - and the nature of that ideology - and how these concerns were expressed stylistically. This will enable me to establish those ideological and stylistic factors which resulted in a specific receptiveness within the Glasgow circle to the influence of Japanese art.

As clarified in chapter one, there was an intensification of activity in the decorative arts during the period in question as a direct response to the deep concern for the lack of high quality design in machine manufactures. These arts, which had previously been considered as inferior to the fine-arts, enjoyed an importance denied to them since the Renaissance **( 26, p21 )**. Art Nouveau can be viewed as the culmination of some years of this growth in importance.

The movement encompassed a number of general artistic trends of the nineteenth century which included the synthesis of mystical/spiritual concerns and functionalist/rationalist concerns. It can be placed between the 1880s and the advent of the First World War. It manifested itself in the graphic, applied and fine arts, under various names depending on the country in question - Art Nouveau in France and Belgium, Jugendstil in Germany and Liberty Style in Italy amongst others. In this dissertation, the French form - Art Nouveau - is used as a blanket term referring to all of them.

In my understanding of the movement the principle characteristics of Art Nouveau are : an expressive and clarified use of line, the abstraction and stylisation of forms and motifs inspired by nature, asymmetry of form and composition , and the combination of geometric and curved forms. These elements were also perceived by artists and designers as characteristics of Japanese art. It is the emergence of these characteristics in the arts in Glasgow, referred to as the Glasgow Style, which is the subject of this chapter.

The term the 'Glasgow Style' is a local one which emerged during the final years of the last century and is used to describe the highly individual works of a group of graphic craft and textile designers, architects and furniture designers living and practising in Glasgow at the time. The style is described as Scotto-Continental Art Noveau which refers to the abstracted, symbolic and decorative work of both the German and Viennese Secessionists.

Despite claims to the contrary by Charles Rennie Mackintosh and others in the Glasgow Circle( **21, p21** ), the reference to the Glasgow Style as a branch of Art Noveau can be validated by identifying the common characteristics of both movements as William Eadie does ( **14, pp 50-85** ). He argues that both movements reacted against the meaningless historicism pervading Victorian design by combinging functional and aesthetic concerns, by attempting a synthesis of emotional and rational elements, by promoting interaction between the arts, crafts and architecture. These aims resulted in the use of a linear formal language which included the employment of asymmetrical composition and form, and the combination of curvi-linear and rectilinear forms often inspired by nature. The aesthtic interest in nature corresponds with the perception in both Art Nouveau and the Glasgow Stylist movement of nature as an analogue of human creativity. He goes on to say that a geometric formal language of 'tectonic neutrality' developed out of an earlier formal language which expressed dynamism and energy.

In my understanding, the last point refers to the distinction between 'high Art Nouveau' and 'late Art Nouveau'. Schmultzer distinguishes the former - Belgian and French - from the latter - Scottish, Viennese and German - by stating that "in late Art Nouveau , biological life and dynamism give way to rigid calm" **(31, p239).** A strong rectilinear basis replaces the whip-lash designs synonomous with the term Art Nouveau.

The difference between the two is obvious when comparing figs.10 and 11 In 1897, Alphonse Mucha - the designer perhaps most associated with French Art Nouveau - designed a series of four panels using the seasons as a theme. In fig. 10, Summer is represented by a voluptuous woman surrounded by sunflowers. She is contained within a long arched panel, between two horizontal panels.

**Fig.10** Mucha, Alphonse, Summer, 1896,

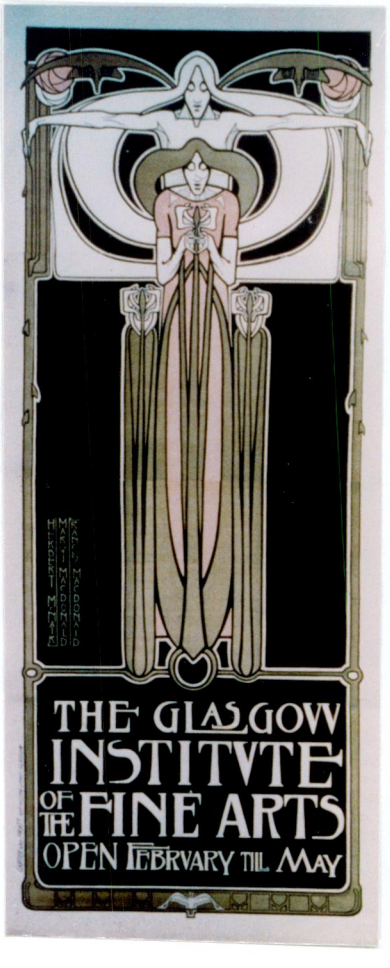



**Fig.11** MacDonald, Margaret and Frances, MacNair, Herbert, Poster for the Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts, c.1898,

The panel above her is decorated with a cluster of roses and the panel beneath her contains the caption "Summer".

Fig. 11 shows a poster designed in 1898 by Margaret and Francis Mac Donald and Herbert Mac Nair for the Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts. This also utilises a long panel, divided in three. The central figure is also female. There are flowers on either side of her and a second figure behind her. In the uppermost panel, clusters of roses are also shown and the circular form of the arch in Muchas' design is replaced by an abstract circular shape formed by the hair of the second figure. Again the bottom section is devoted to text. Despite their shared format, motifs and strength of line, the differences between the two are overwhelming. The sensuous writhing line in Muchas' Summer is replaced by a much more rigid

use of line in the Scottish work. Both the treatment of plant motifs and the treatment of figures in the Stylist poster are extremely abstracted, while in comparison Muchas' treatment of these elements is a far more naturalistic one. The asymmetry seen in the French panel was also adopted by the Stylists but is not evident in the strict symmetry of this piece, which is also typical of the Stylists' work.

It is possible then to say that the Glasgow Style was a branch of late Art Nouveau, made up of a group of artists who shared in a common form- language of other-worldly abstracted figures, organic motifs and the combination of rectilinear and curved forms. It is necessary now to examine whether or not the movement was motivated by a shared ideology or simply by a shared form-language, in order to establish possible reasons why the stylists may have been receptive to the art of the Far East.

It has been suggested that, despite the original socialist Arts and Crafts background at The Glasgow School of Art, the style developed more as a style language rather than as a shared ideological conviction **( 13, p81 )**.The validity of this opinion depends on one's definition of the term 'ideology'. If it is defined as the set of ideas forming the basis of some economic or political theory the suggestion stated above is valid; the ideas of the Glasgow Style do not form the basis of an economic or political system. However, if the term is used in the

sense of a 'visionary speculation', and if art is deemed capable of enhancing a society's perception of life, then it is reasonable to ascribe to the Glasgow Stylists such an ideology.

Eadie attributes to the Stylists a 'deeper understanding' of the potentialities of form", that is a desire to communicate idea and emotion through form. In an interview with The Studio, Jessie Newberry - one of the Stylists - stated that " nothing is common or unclean, that the design and decoration of a pepperpot is as important , in its degree, as the conception of a cathedral" and that this rlates to "everything being beautiful,pleasant , useful"( **41, pp 88-92** ). It would seem then that the Stylists recognised their form language as a means to communicate their vision of a beautiful world, an idea not so very far removed from the socialist visions of Morris and The Arts and Crafts Movement. Morris expressed this when he said " Have nothing in your home except what you know to be useful and believe to be beautiful" The beauty of one's domestic environment is as important as the beauty of a cathedral". If as seems to be the case , the Glasgow Style was part of a Western movement which perceived the relationship between art and life as the relationship between idea and action, then it is appropriate to suggest that the style language to which Jude Burkhauser refers, was actually a concrete attempt at the quality of material, execution and taste sought after by Morris in the realization of beauty seen as an agent in social change.

The Glasgow circle appears to have been more successful in their endevours than Morris, who returned to an ideal of medieval hanicrafts to counter-balance the shoddy goods being mass produced by industry. These handcrafted goods were too expensive to compete with machine production, and it was largely due to this that the Arts and Crafts Movement died out. The Stylists, seen as a modern movement, embraced technology and mechanisation. C.R. Mackintosh, and others who worked within the Glasgow Style , acknowledged that machine made goods need not be ugly; that macine techniques need not violate integrity of design ( **21, p110** ). The Glasgow circle attempted to respond positively to a mechanized society by combining their visions of a beautiful environment as part of social change with a belief in the quality of design possible using machine techniques. With the recognition that technology was to play a major role in

society, modern movements such as the Glasgow Stylists deplored the Victorian tendency to disguise machine products with gothic ornament, which harked back to an earlier age, instead of embracing the recent developments in technology and devising a new idiom of design suitable for mass production. This end to historicism allowed designers the freedom to return to solving the problems of form based on the function of the item. The designer could then apply themselves to the application of the decoration based, as Madsen points out, on the principle that "decoration is never allowed to overflow and take posession of the object" (37, p33) . It is in this context that we should understand the intense interest of the Stylists in Japanese art. The simplicity of Japanese form and clarity of ornament suited the aims of the Glasgow circle. Perhaps its abbreviated form and confident line was seen as being appropriate for machine manufacture as well as for the 'rigid calm' sought after by the Stylists. It is also possible to argue that Japanese art offered a philosophy which was compatible with some of the fundamental concerns of the Stylists. This necessitates a brief discussion of their relationship with nature and how this may have been a factor in their openness to Japanese art.

**Nature and the Stylists**

The importance of the Stylist's relationship with nature was made clear earlier in the chapter when the idea that nature as an analogy of human creativity was identified as a common characteristic of both Art Nouveau and the Glasgow Style. This can be seen in the abstraction and stylisation of nature in these movements. This return to nature as inspiration was part of a general interest in the origins of life, perhaps linked with the publishing of Darwin's theory of evolution earlier in the century, and the effects of mechanisation on what had originally been an agricultural society (13, p217).

The Glasgow School of Art adopted drawing from nature as an important part of art and design education. Burkhauser quotes Lord Reay as commending to the students of the school the importance of studying nature with regard to design for manufactures, anaim similar to that of the South kensington authorities when they advocated drawing from nature as opposed to drawing from ornament (13, p 218). This attitude can certainly be perceived in Mackintosh's

view of the freedom to be gained from this type of study when he speaks of artists "who more and more are freeing themselves from correct antiquarian detail and who go straight to nature" **(21, p29 )**. Christopher Dresser had developed ideas on the relationship between nature and art in The Cult of Plant and Line which were subsequently adopted by Jessie Newberry **( 37, p 27 )**. Originally a botanist, Dresser commended the study of the basic laws of growth in nature and the application of these in art **( 15, p 25 )**.

The abstraction of nature into pure line can be seen in fig. 11 in the poster designed by Mac Nair and the Mac Donald sisters where, while roses, other plant forms and birds could in no way be seen as a naturalistic representations they yet retain the essence of their forms and growth. This could be seen to correspond with the abstraction of nature in Japanese art. Abstraction in Eastern art has been said to relate to the transcendental religions of the East in their belief in the importance of the relationship of the part to the whole. Worringer argues that the removal of objects from three dimensional space and their stylisation and abstraction is the expression of this world view **( 45, p 74 )**. In his book Japan, Its Art , Architecture and Art Manufacturers, Dresser discusses the abstraction of natural phenomena in Japanese art, such as the wave in fig. 12. This type of stylisation can be seen in the work of Jessie M. King fig. 13 where sea-water and waves have been shown in a tangible way as aflat pattern of colour and line which conveys the intangible natural phenomena completely. She is recorded as asking in a lecture "How can I simplify? How can I convey the essence with the minimum amount of information?"**( 40, p124 )**.

It is possible then to say that the Glasgow Stylists and Japanese artists shared a subjective approach to nature in art - that is, an expressive, non naturalistic form of representation, using a simplified and clear line.

**The Four**

The Glasgow Style manifested itself in the work of a number of designers between 1895 and 1920. The main perpetrators of the style included Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Margaret and Frances MacDonald, Herbert macNair, Jessie Newberry, Ann Macbeth and Jessie King. They shared in the use of a form

**Fig.12** Hokusai, The Great Wave ( from the series Thirty six Views of Mount Fuji), c.1830,

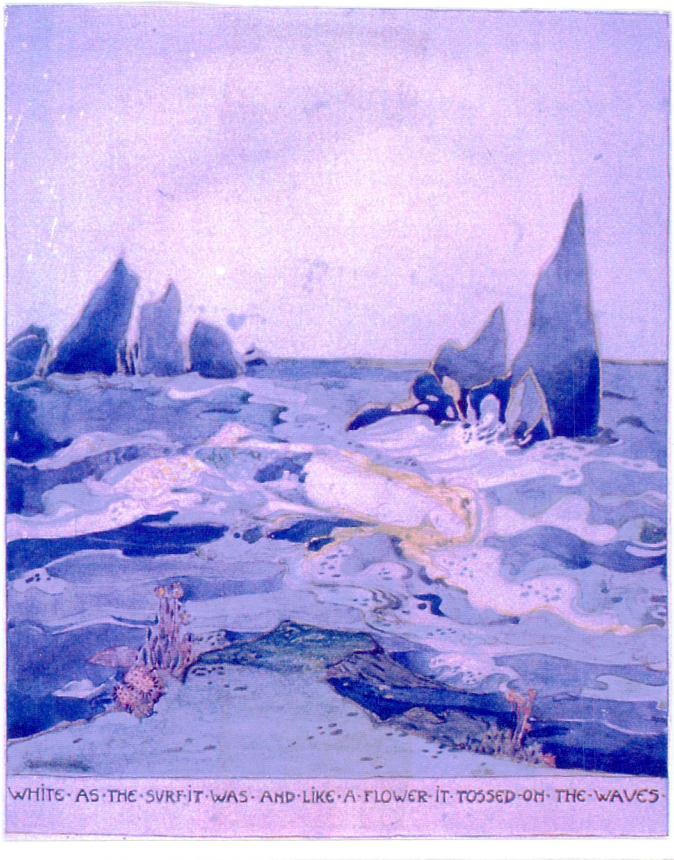



**Fig.13** King, Jessie, White As The Surf It Was (from A House of Pomegranates by Oscar Wilde), 1915,

language which consisted of abstracted, elongated figures, organic motifs - birds and plant forms - and the combination of rectilinear and curvi-linear forms. The style grew out of the work of C.R.MackIntosh, Macnair and the MacDonald sisters' who developed an initial symbolistic , abstracted way of working apparently independently of one another. Fra Newberry, the Director of the Glasgow School of Art, noticed the similarity in their work and introduced them to each other. The students became known as the Glasgow Four, or locally as the 'Spook School' due to their often grostesque other-worldly approach.

**The School of Art and Fra Newberry**

The Glasgow School of Art - with Fra Newberry as its central energy - played a major role in the development of the Glasgow Style. The institution had its origins in the government school founded ther in 1841 with the aim of improving the standards of design of manufactured goods and was funded by local industry, a key factor in the direction of its development. The management committee included local textile printers, engineers, shawl and upholstery manufactuerers' all of whom shared common motives in the advancement of local design in order to compete with the continent. This encouraged interest in design in terms of technology and mass production. The school came under the auspices of the South Kensignton Art and Science Department in 1852, the same year as the first Great Exhibition of the era. In 1884, a report was made by the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction on the state of the applied and industrial arts in the schools of art and design. The report had found that both areas of design had been neglected , and that this was a departure from the intention with which the schools had been founded : "the practical application of knowledge ... tothe improvement of manufacturers" **(33, p13-17)**. Francis Newberry was appointed head of the school the following year . It seems likely that the appointment was influenced by his commitement to the applied arts and his sympathy with the ideology of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Newberry had definite views on the role of education in society. Speaking on the subject of art schools in the economy of applied art in Edinburgh in 1889, he clarfied his position on the purpose of education, saying that the purpose "was not in supplying the demands of public taste but of endevouring to educate that taste"( **33, p13-17** ). From this, one can perceive Newberry's leaning towards the

teachings of Ruskin and Morris. This, together with his determination to combine the industrial and fine arts, male and female students, the artisan and middle classes, and his encouragment of originality and individuality provided the innovative ethos within which the Glasgow Style flourished.

**Summary**

The Glasgow Style can be described as a symbolic, abstracted formal language created by a group of designers and archiects from 1895 to 1920, to communicate their theories on beauty and its role in society. Their formal language included the synthesis of structural and decorative concerns, abstraction and coherence of form, functional and aesthetic concerns, rectilinear and curved elements in the expression of the fusing of an ideal of the past with contemporary progress. This was achieved in a practical way which integrated beauty into everyday life through the use of technology. The ideological components underlying the Glasgow Style were central to its success as a modern movement . The subjective approach to design and the attempt to integrate it with an objective society was a response to the effect in that society of industrialisation. Their's was not an abstracted vision of an ideal but was firmly entrenched in reality and was a part of the wider economic and political ideology in existence at that time. This subjective approach to design resulted in a receptiveness towards the subjective art of the Far East, which was finding its way to Glasgow in a number of ways which will be discussed in the next section, and which provided the Stylists with practical solutions in the problems which faced them in the stylistic expression of their aims.

# CHAPTER THREE
## GLASGOW AND JAPAN

**Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to identify the sources through which the Glasgow Stylists may have been familiar with Japanese art. These included: trading connections, international exhibitions, artist exchanges , access to experts on Japan, art dealers and collections of Japanese art displayed in Glasgow galleries during the period in question. These will be discussed in the context of Glasgow as a commercial cosmopolitan city, and hence a probable centre for Japonisme in Britain.

As a thriving cosmopolitan city, Glasgow played an important part in the rapid development of new theories in art and design at the turn of the century. Both fine art - the Glasgow Boys - and design - the Glasgow stylists - movements enjoyed success. Artists and designers of high calibre such as George Henry, E.A. Hornel, C.R. Macintosh and the MacDonald sisters were all living and practising in Glasgow - the debating and exchanging of ideas must have been tremendous. The ambience of innovation in the arts was encourged by the city in its funding of institutions such as the School of Art, where young artists and designers could find motivation.

As part of a general desire for originality, the people of Glasgow were exceptionally receptive to a new way of seeing, and as one of the main centres of Japonisme in Britain, an influx of Japanese art and philosophy fascinated them.There were plenty of opportunities for artists and designers to come into contact with Japanese art or with the leading interpreters of Japanese aesthetics. Points of contact included strong trade connections between Glasgow and Japan, Japanese displays at the International Exhibitions held in the city between 1888 and 1911, exchanges of artists between the two countries, and visiting lecturers well versed in Japanese aesthetics. These included James MacNeill, Whistler, Christopher Dresser and Professor Max Muller, the leading specialist at that time in Far Eastern philosophy. There was a significant growth in the number of art dealers in Glasgow between 1895 and 1905, and with a probable influx of Far Eastern art into the city through trade-connections, these dealers played a part in the wide spread dissemination of Japanese prints and other art works. The period also saw the development of exchanges of art works between Glasgow and Japan.

**Art Dealers**

Patronage of the arts in Glasgow was largely dependent on art institutions and wealthy individuals, mostly industrialists. This type of patronage was reflected in the number of art dealers located in the city. In the main, they provided an outlet for the sale of continental fine art, but also provided exhibition venues for the local artists. Two of the main dealers were Cottier and Co. and Alexander Reid. Cottier is of special interest in the study of Japonisme in Glasgow, because as a painter and follower of the Aesthetic movement, it is likely that he would have dealt in Japanese art and art objects. Alexander Reid (1854 - 1928) also played a part in the encouragment of an interest in Japan by sponsoring the visit of the Glasgow Boys, E.A.Hornel and George Henry, to Japan. He may have cultivated his own interest in Japan during the time he spent in Paris, where he became a friend of Vincent Van Gogh and his brother, both of whom had a deep enthusiasm for Japanese prints. Paris was at that time an important centre of Japonisme in Europe and its trade in Japanese art can be seen to have influenced many other artists besides Van Gogh. These include Degas, Toulouse Lautrec and other impressionist painters. Reid's links with France introduced Japanese inspired artistic devices to Glasgow, seen in the works of the Glasgow Boys and the Glasgow Stylists.

**Christopher Dresser**

Christopher Dresser's importance in the development in understanding of Japanese art in latter nineteenth century Britain has been discussed in chapter one. It is relevant then that Dresser lectured in Glasgow in 1882 on 'Japanese Art Workmanship' when opening a temporary exhibition of Asian art there. This exhibition included objects on loan from the South Kensington Museum, the Duke of Edinburgh's Collection and articles deposited by the Japanese government at tha city museum **( 12, p. 256 ).** In this lecture, Dresser advocated the serious study of the art of Japan and identified the two religions - Shintoism and Buddhism - as being influential in its development. He expanded on this theme in his book Japan, Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufacturers, published in 1882, a copy of which was held in the Glasgow School of Art Library and which can be seen to have been an influential factor in the use of symbolism in the work of Jessie King and the other Stylists.

**Exchanges of Artists Between Scotland and Japan**

Although none of the Stylists appear to have travelled to Japan, their contempories in the painting movement, 'The Glasgow Boys', did so , helping to spread the enthusiasm for things Japanese on their return.

Two painters involved in the movement - which concentrated on painting subject matter drawn from life around them - were EA Hornel (1864 - 1933) and George Henry (1858 - 1943), Their interest in Japan culminated in a visit there in 1893, which lasted for eighteen months. Both artists wished to immerse themselves in the japanese way of life, rather than simply see the country as tourists. They were employed for some of the time by a Japanese house agent which gave them access to what might otherwise have been denied to Westerners. They further involved themselves with Japan by spending lengths of time apart from each other , which meant a greater necessity for each to communicate with Japanese people and artists. Their visit influenced their treatment of colour and line, and prompted a decorative approach to painting **(12, p. 259 ).** The trip was financed in part by the fine art dealer Alexander Reid, who gave Hornel a show in his Glasgow gallery in 1895 - sadly many of Henry's paintings were damaged on his return journey and no such exhibition was possible. Hornel also wrote a lecture which was delivered by John Keppie at the Glasgow Art Gallery on his experiences in Japan, and the effect of them on his work. Hornel lived and worked in Kirkcudbright, where Jessie King also lived and where , according to her colleague De Courcy Lewthwaite Dewar, she "got to know" him **(13, p. 124 ).**

Amongst other Japanese people who visited Glasgow was the artist and Art Nouveau designer Takeda Goichi (1872-1938). He studied and worked in Tokyo and in order to further his studies , travelled to London to attend art school. Shortly afterwards he moved to Glasgow where he was familiar with the work of the Glasgow Stylists. On his return to Tokyo, he was appointed a professor of design at the Kyoto High School of Crafts and the results of his visit to Glasgow can be seen in both his own design work and that of his students **(10, p. 157).** It seems highly likely that there was a mutual interchange of ideas beteen Takeda and the Glasgow Stylists.

**The International Exhibitions in Glasgow**

The desire in Glasgow for the exotic was partly met by the "Oriental" sections of the International Exhibitions held in Glasgow from 1888 to 1911.

The rapid growth of the city from a relativly small town in the late eighteenth century to a large industrial centre in the nineteenth, led to its being known eventually as the Second City of the Empire. With a population of one and a half million, the name was well deserved.

Goods being imported through the port in the early part of the nineteenth century included tobacco, sugar and, most importantly, cotton, which led to the development of textile and related industries such as chemical bleaching plants. Due to a decline in the textile industry in the 1830's , the city turned to heavy industry, mining coal and ironstone, and depended largely on exports to foreign markets for its profits. Later on, the city displayed its abilities in technical innovation in the development of a ship building industry, training its workers to the highest standards in the world.

The effect of the industrial expansion in Glasgow, as in the other industrial centres in Britain, was two-fold. It enhanced the image of the city as a prosperous and active one, but led to pollution, over crowding, horrific poverty and slum ghettoes.

As with London, the Great Exhibitions held in Glasgow were the absolute expression of the city's image of itself as a thriving industrial , cultural and cosmopolitan capital. with a nationalistic pride in Scotland was combined the imperialistic atmosphere pervading the whole of Britain.

Following the examples of the exhibitions held in London in 1851 and 1862, the profits made at the series of exhibitions held in Glasgow funded the building of the municipal art gallery, museum and school of art, and promoted the importance of the interaction between art and industry.

Like those held in London, Edinburgh and Manchester, the exhibitions in

Glasgow were designed to appeal to the taste of the growing middle class merchants and consumers, although actual sales of objects were forbidden during the exhibitions. Spurred on by Edinburgh's International Exhibition in 1886 and the Royal Jubilee Exhibition in Manchester in 1887, Glasgow outdid its rival cities with an exhibition in 1888 that proved to be the largest of its kind since the International Exhibition in London in 1862. Being a large industrial centre situated on a river, having sizeable middle-class population and an international trade network, Glasgow was an ideal host city for an international exhibition.

Part of its trade network included business with Japan - indeed, evidence of Japan's growing economic and military strength can be seen in Glasgow, where two ships were built for the Imperial Japanese Navy. The Chiyoda was built in 1890 and the Sazanami in 1898.

The taste for the 'Orient' is present in a number of ways in the exhibitions. The main building in the exhibition of 1888 was called the Eastern Palace, and the architect James Sellars won a prize for its Oriental style and suitability for its purpose. An Oriental flavour to the architecture can be seen in both the exhibits for India and Japan and in the refreshment stands. Other exhibits included Oriental artefacts in the decoration of their stands.

In the later exhibitions, the change from 'Orientalism' in the exhibits to a greater influence of Japonisme is evident. In the exhibitions of 1901 an 1911, the Japanese contributution became more prominant, both in size and quality. In 1901, the Japanese exhibit was housed in Kelingrove Mansion, which had been painted all white for this purpose and was situated in a prestigious position near to the main Industrial Hall. Here was housed a large collection of Japanese artefacts which "had a strong attaction for many contemporary artists and designers" **(22, p. 40 ).** The mansion was surrounded by Japanese gardens , where a statue of Brittania had been covered over by a large black sun symbolizing the Imperial nation of Japan. In 1911, one of the most imposing structures was the Japanese teahouse erected on the banks of the Kelvin river.

The building was designed in the form of a large pagoda decked out with

Japanese flags and must have created an impressive sight, particularly when combined with one of the other highllights in mid-Summer; a display by six hundred and fifty Japanese sailors from two of admiral Togo's war ships, perhaps those which were built in the city's shipyards.

The Glasgow School of Art played a relatively prestigious role in the exhibitions, and appropriately so as it had received funding from the profits made at the first exhibition in 1888. Fra Newberry took responsibility for the sculpture section in that exhibition and organised a collection of fifty years of British and French sculpture, and students and staff exhibited in both the fine art and decorative sections. Jessie King exhibited in both the 1901 and 1911 exhibitions, formerly as a student and latterly as a tutor and practising designer.

**Summary**

In this chapter, the opportunities for the Glasgow Stylists to have come into contact with Japanese art have been discussed. There seems to have been a particularly strong relationship between Glasgow and Japan during the period in question as exemplified by the nature of the points of contact between them. These included trading connections, Japanese displays at the international exhibitions in Glasgow, exchanges of art and artists between Glasgow and Japan , and visiting lecturers to the city such as Christopher Dresser, Professor Max Mueller and James MacNeill Whistler. The Glasgow School of Art held copies of : Christopher Dresser's Japan, Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufactures , Morse's Japanese Homes and their Surroundings and Siegfried Bing's Artistic Japan **( 21, p. 16 ).**

Although the earlier international exhibitions in Glasgow appear to have been Orientalist in their approach to the Asian exhibits, the later ones attempted a more developed understanding of Asian art and culture, perhaps as a result of the citys' increased contact with Japan. Significantly, Jessie King played a more active role in these later exhibitions, therefore falling under a 'Japoniste' influence rather than an 'Orientalist' one.

It seems then that there was ample opportunity for valuable contact between the

Glasgow Stylists and the art of Japan, and European art on which Japonisme had a strong influence. It was this contact that resulted in their adoption of symbolic and technical elements of Japanese Art in the creation of the Glasgow Style.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## JESSIE M. KING : A CASE STUDY

## Introduction

This study uses the work of Jessie King as an example of the influence of Japanese art on the Glasgow Stylists. The first section gives an outline biography of the artist, which serves as a context for the later discussion of her work. The remainder of the chapter discusses The Light of Asia drawings as an early indication of the influence of Japan on her work, and her use of symbolism, compositional devics and style of line. The discussion will demonstrate, in particular, the strong re-emergence of Japanese influence on her later work.

## Biography

Jessie Marion King can be said to be one of the most important illustrators of the early part of this century as she contributed the main body of commercially successful illustrative work for commercial bodies emanating from Scotalnd during the period in question. She was born the youngest daughter of the Rev. James Waters king and his wife Mary Ann King nee Anderson on the 20th March in 1875. Her father was minister of the church at New Kilpatrick at Bearsden, near Glasgow. The family of four girls and one boy lived in "The Manse", a three storey house built around 1835, near the churchyard. Bearsden at this time was largely a middle class community of about five thousand people, and was about twenty minutes from Glasgow. The house was surrounded by woodland,which was probably the basis for many of Jessie's later fairyland scenes. The Manse was a disciplined household with religious attendance compulsory. First of all Jessie attended a small school with other children from many social backgrounds to learn the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic and then went on to attend the local parish school which was maintained by the church. Here her teachers noticed her drawing ability and encouraged her to consider applying to the Glasgow School of Art to receive a professional training . Her parents were against the idea; art was not a suitable career for the daughter of a church minister to pursue. It was most certainly an accomplishment to be able to draw and paint but Glasgow was overcrowded and would be a hostile city for their youngest daughter.. However, Jessie was eventually to be allowed to apply for the diploma course at the school of Art with the intention of becoming an art teacher.

At the age of sixteen, after submitting a portfolio of work, she was accepted into a foundation course in anatomy at Queen Margaret College. She was allowed to attend largely because her elder sister, Peggy, was already attending a 'respectable' teaching course there. The following year, in 1892, Jessie registered as a full time student at the Glasgow School of Art, where she studied under Francis Newberry at a time when Glasgow was central to the artistic development of Britain. Her contemporaries included Charles Rennie Macintosh, Herbert MacNair and Margaret and Frances MacDonald.. King was recognised as having a unique talent in the areas of book decoration and illustration and was actively encouraged by the Head of the School to concentrate on them. She won many awards and medals in student competitions.

In 1894, her younger brother died of TB. After the death of their son, the Kings attempted to have another child in the hope that it would be a boy, but both Mary Anne King and the baby died in childbirth in 1896. This huge disruption of the King household was not allowed to affect Jessie's education, and she returned to the School of Art to complete her education. She received commissions while still in college. She married E.A. Taylor in 1908, a designer in his own right, working in the areas of furniture design and stained glass. They set-up house in Salford, Manchester where Ernest Taylor was then working. Their only child, Merle Taylor was born in 1909, and the following year Jessie and Ernest moved to Paris, leaving the baby with Jessie's old nurse Mary McNab in Salford. Ernest had been appointed Paris correspondent for The Studio and the two of them founded a small private art school there called The Shealing Atelier. Ernest and Jessie continued to live in Paris ,returning home regularly, until the outbreak of the first world war, when the Atelier closed. They then returned home to Kircudbright. They both continued to work there until Jessie's death in 1949, and Ernest's death in 1951.

**The Light of Asia drawings as an early indication of the influence of Japan on the work of Jessie King.**

In her final year in the Glasgow School of Art, King was awarded a silver medal in the National Competition for a series of eight illustrations of various scenes from the poem The light of Asia written by Sir Edwin Arnold. The poem tells the story of how Prince Siddartha became Buddha. All eight of the drawings were shallow in perspective and horizontal in format (**40, p. 22**). Jessie King chose to use slender, unshaded figures drawn mostly in profile. The outlined treatment of the figures is reflected in the other vertical elements in the drawings, with the use of bushes and trees to create a loose frame. Each drawing shows a horizontal bank of cloud made up of individual pen-lines (fig. 14).

The stylized lancet-shaped leaves which are seen in the series were popular with many of the Glasgow stylists and are similar to those of the Bodi tree, under which Buddha received his enlightenment. She drew halos around many of the figures, concentrating particularly on those of Buddha, which were made-up of different elements in each drawing. In one, she uses lotus blossoms, the traditional throne of the Buddha, in another she uses swallows, another favourite motif in Japanese art. According to White this was an attempt to signify a life-force, and the harmony between living things (**40, p. 24**).

Three of the eight drawings were reproduced in The Studio in 1898, and Gleeson White, the editor of the magazine was impressed by the sincerity of the drawings. He noted the dignified treatment of the subject matter, the stylised treatment of the figures and the quality of line (**42, pp. 278 - 280**).

These drawings contained many elements which King was to use in a more developed form in her career as an illustrator, and are a good indication of some of the Japanese factors which influenced her. These include the various motifs she used and their meanings, the stress on vertical elements in the composition and the quality of line. These elements are further discussed in the context of her later career.


**Fig.14** King, Jessie, Siddartha Laid The Bird's Neck Beside His Own Cheek (from The Light of Asia by Sir Edwin Arnold), 1898,

**Symbolism and Jessie King**

Through a discussion of specific illustrations and paintings, the aim of this section is to establish whether or not the use of symbolism in the work of Jessie King and the other Glasgow Stylists can be attributed to their interest in Japanese art and whether or not they had an understanding of Japanese symbolism.

The rapid pace of change in fin-de-siecle Europe and the consequent feelings of unrest and alienation experienced by society initiated a spiritualist and symbolist aesthetic, which remains a striking documentation of the search for individualism in a developing consumer society. The shift towards symbolism was universal within the arts, having its basis in the literature of Baudelaire, Mallmarmé and Huysmans and spreading into the paintings of Gustave Moreau and Puvis de Chavannes, the music of Wagner and the graphic works of Aubrey Beardsley and others. In the context of this overall movement, the Glasgow Stylists made symbolism an inherent part of their work.

In an article in The Studio in August 1902, Walter R. Watson wrote of Jessie King's preoccupation with the spiritual and symbolic aspects of nature and life **( 39, p. 90 ).** More recent accounts of her work have ignored this aspect and have perceived only the more superficial elements which made her one of the most commercially successful illustrators of her day **(17, p.97).** However, the type of symbolism which she uses is central to the individuality of her work and should not be dismissed as if it were of secondary importance. There seems to be a tendency to assume that because her work was so commercially viable that it was lacking in depth. An attempt to understand the symbolism in her illustrations will show beyond doubt that this is not the case.

The name which the four earned when they first exhibited - the Spook School- indicates the kind of grotesque imagery they utilised. Their world was one of Celtic mists and emaciated figures. In contrast with this is King's softer inner vision. Both, however, had their roots in a belief in the psychic - again part of a rising interest in the supernatural all over Europe and America. Jessie King is alleged to have had a 'psychic experience' as a young girl. She claimed that she had been singled out as a communicant between another world and this - and it

was this that gave her an insight into the land of dreams and fairytales and which allowed her to draw them in such great detail **(40, p. 18 )**. This should be judged against the backdrop of the time in which it is set, bearing in mind that the recently formed Society for Psychical Research was generally very active.

Fra Newberry appears to have encouraged the Stylists' interests in mysticism and symbolism and quoted the Symbolist painter Carloz Schwabe (1866 - 1926) as "a very special influence on them" **( 13, p. 105 )** . Schwabe was an artist very much involved with the Salon de la Rose & Croix, an alternative salon to the established one in Paris. The paintings exhibited there were fundamentally symbolist, and anti-classical. The rules laid out by their leader, Sar Péladan, include one which stated that under no circumstances would a work which was "merely picturesque orientalism" be exhibited, indicating their regard for the depth of meaning in Eastern art **( 24, p. 111 )**. The Newberrys owned a copy of Le Reve, illustrated by Carloz Schwabe and Lue Métivet, with which the Stylists were familiar. Jessie King must have been particularly so as she designed and made an embossed leather cover for their copy. There was also at some point a group of Rosecrucians in Glasgow. Later on Jean Delville, the Belgian Symbolist painter, was appointed painting and drawing tutor at the School of Art at the same time that Jessie King was employed there. Jan Toorop is also quoted as an influence on the Stylists - who were familiar with his works as they had been reproduced in The Studio, along with illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley. There seems to have been a definite interest displayed by the Stylists in Symbolist art.

Much of the symbolism employed by Jessie King and the other Glasgow Stylists stemmed from their convictions about the inextricable links between nature and life and therefore nature and art. It was in the art of Japan that they found a fascinating supply of ancient symbols which they could adapt to construct a new visual language. Their understanding of these symbols was strengthened to some extent by the teachings of Christopher Dresser who in his book urged Japan: Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufacturers , urged students to look at Japanese drawings. There was a copy of this in the Glasgow School of Art library. Both he and Max Mueller, the leading specialist in Far Eastern philosophy at the time, lectured in Glasgow.

The symbols which are most associated with the Stylists are the rose, the butterfly, the swallow and circular motifs, particularly halos. These will now be discussed with a view to establishing their origins.

**The Rose**

Perhaps the most recognisable motif of the Glasgow style is the cabbage rose which is applied to metalwork, illustration, stained glass, furniture, fabric and jewelery designs. The rose appears again and again in Jessie King's fantastic illustrations as hair decorations, as a pattern on cloacks and dresses of her heroines or joined together to create new forms. Beardsley attached great importance to the rose as a symbol of feminity and this lent an air of decadence to this ancient symbol which the Glasgow Stylists subsequently adopted. Christianity perceived the rose as a symbol for the Virgin Mary, but it had been used as a symbol of love and feminity long before that. In antiquity, the rose was a symbol of Aphrodite and of Venus. Beardsley makes several references to it as such in his unpublished novel Venus and Tannhauser. He uses this motif as a passport to the underworld which he delighted in depicting. The rose that Jessie King uses is certainly feminine and can also be seen to act as a passport to a different realm. However it is more elaborately drawn than those of Beardsley and the Stylists, and does not seem to carry the same type of sexual connotations as it does in their work.

King uses the rose to express a gentle, powerful feminity more akin to the ancient Eastern view of the rose as a blossom of the world tree, a female tree symbolising life and immortality which is closer to the Christian idea of it as a symbol of the Mother of Christ, or to the Great Mother in India called the Holy Rose. On the cover of the binding for The Story of Rosalynde King (fig 15) includes an immense rose tree as the central motif and structural device of the design. The highly stylized tree is circular in shape and springs from a long sinewy vertical. Contained within the circular pattern of the leaves is a smaller circular shape in which is pictured a woman in flowing robes, presumably Rosalynde. King's interpretation of her is obviously as a figure representing life and immortality, the attributes of the Eastern world tree. A similar meaning for the rose can be seen in Margaret McDonald's The Heart of the Rose (fig. 16).

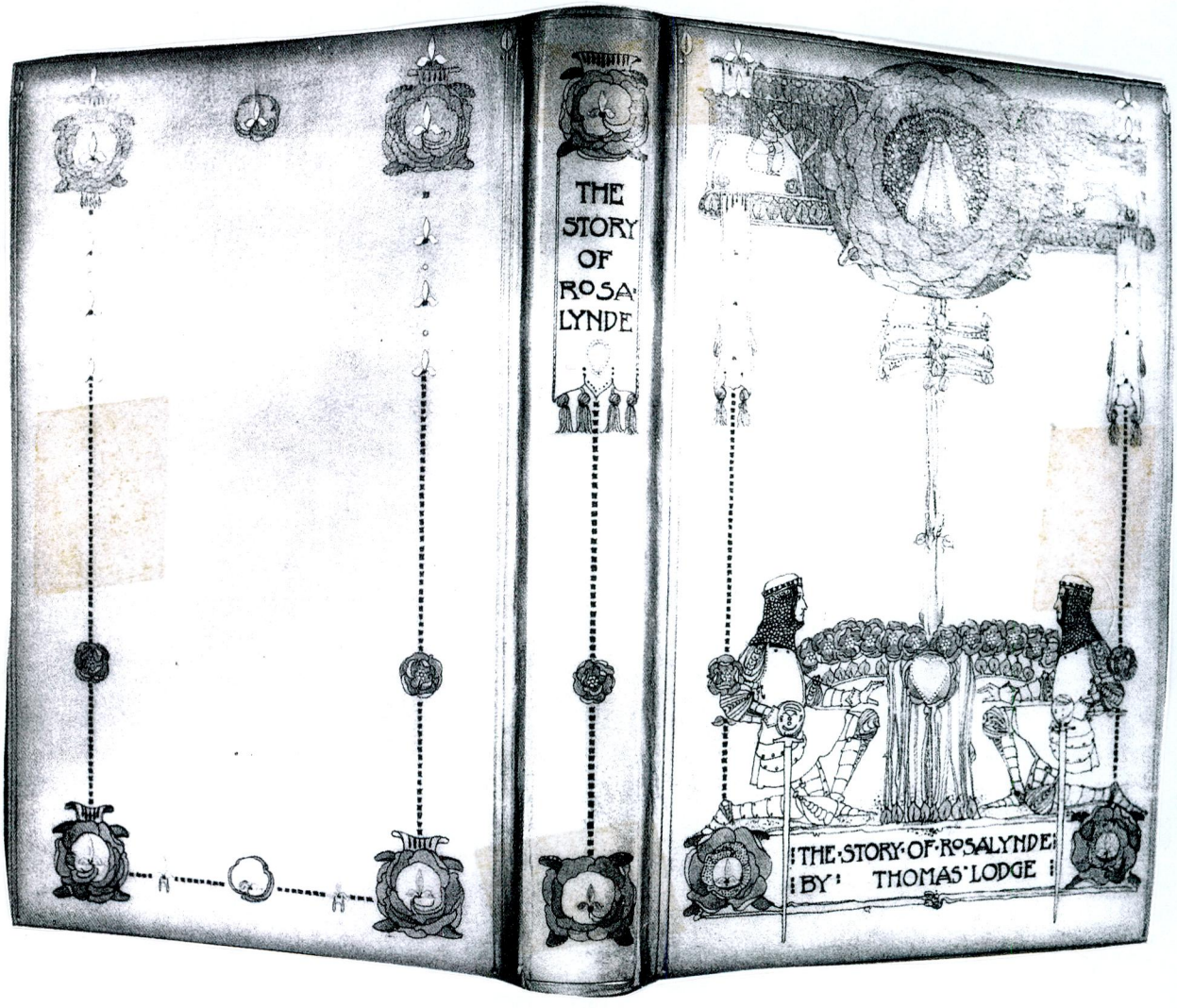



**Fig.15** King, Jessie, Vellucent Binding for The Story of Rosalynde, 1902

**Fig.16** MacDonald, Margaret, The Heart of the Rose, 1902,

Here the rose is seen as a symbol of life and motherhood. Two cloaked women stand, one of them holding a baby wrapped in swaddling, the folds creating the petals of the rose. The rose is seen in conjunction with the new life of the baby 'the heart of the rose'. This was painted some time around the birth of Frances MacDonald's son, Sylvan, perhaps identifying the woman holding the child as Frances and the second figure as Margaret MacDonald.

In Japanese iconography various trees symbolise masculinity as opposed to feminity. For example, the use of bamboo as a symbol of yang, the male principle. Mackintosh drew two highly symbolic images of the tree. These are The Tree of Personal Effort and The Tree of Influence (fig. 17 and 18). Both combine circular and rectilinear forms but are more stylised than the rose-tree in King's work. This extreme of stylisation makes them inaccessible, but their titles - which are written in the Japanese vertical fashion rather than a European horizontal fashion -leave one in no doubt as to the importance of the tree in the symbolism of the Glasgow style. King uses single trees and groups of trees as structural devices in her later work in the same way as Japanese print artists. This is discussed in the following chapter.

**The Butterfly**

Other symbolic motifs which frequently occur in Jessie King's illustrations, and which again can be seen to be drawn from the Japanese spiritualistic view of nature, include butterflies and swallows. King employs them in the same way that Beardsley uses the rose - as a key to a journey to another world. The appearance of swallows and butterflies indicates to us that she has brought us into another realm. In its sensitivity, Jessie King's ideal world is closer to that of Japanese Buddhism and Shintoism as described by Dresser in Japan: Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufacturers **( 3, p. 210 ).** In Japanese art, the butterfly, often shown with the peony, is considered to be the embodiment of a dead person's soul and a symbol of luck. A butterfly at a Japanese wedding ceremony traditionally represents the couple entering the magic garden, the realm of dreams. King's design for the vellucent binding of The Holy Graal (fig. 19) depicts a knight and a lady holding the sacred chalice. The knight looks adoringly at his lady, who wears a fully blooming rose in her hair and is

**Fig. 18** Mackintosh, Charles Rennie, The Tree of Influence, 1895,

**Fig. 17** Mackintosh, Charles Rennie, The Tree of Personal Effort, 1895,


**Fig.19** King, Jessie, Vellucent Binding for The Holy Graal, 1903

attended by an elaborately drawn butterfly. Jessie King has shown the couple about to enter the magic garden, accompanied by the butterfly.

**The Swallow**

Flights of birds are a recurring motif in the work of the Stylists and are particularly important in a discussion of symbolism in the work of King. The swallow is common both to her work and Japanese art. Dresser discusses the symbolism of the swallow in Japan in his book (3, p. 331). The depiction of a flight of swallows signifies all that is good in life; they are the heralds of Summer and in other cultures the attendants of Venus and Isis. Frances MacDonald shows them in her painting 'Bows,Beads and Birds' (fig. 20). The first two figures, Bows and Beads, seem to be overly concerned with their appearance and with the fripperies of bows and beads. The third figure is removed from the other two, although still forming part of the group. She is pale and ethereal and is surrounded by the swallows of happiness. This can be construed as a statement on the happiness to be attained through closeness to Nature.

In the three book covers, which King designed for the Routledge Prize series (fig. 21 ), flights of swallows provide a unifying motif throughout the series. The designs were intended to indicate the different age groups which the books were suitable for and depicted three stages of maturity of a young girl. The first shows a child suspended in mid-air and supported by swallows, butterflies and rose briars. In the second, the swallows form a diagonal behind the older girl, one of them alighting on her hand. The third - the last stage of maturity -shows a young woman in a long dress in front of a rose-tree which then becomes a halo of swallows around her head. The rose tree symbolizes perhaps physical maturity, the nimbus of swallows indicating her mental and spiritual maturity and her harmony with nature. This is reminiscent of King's use of natural motifs in her drawings for The Light of Asia which depict the story of Buddha's enlightenment.

In the section of his book which deals with the Buddhist and Shintoist relationship with Nature, Dresser marvels at the harmony between the Japanese people and small creatures as indicated by butterflies and small birds alighting

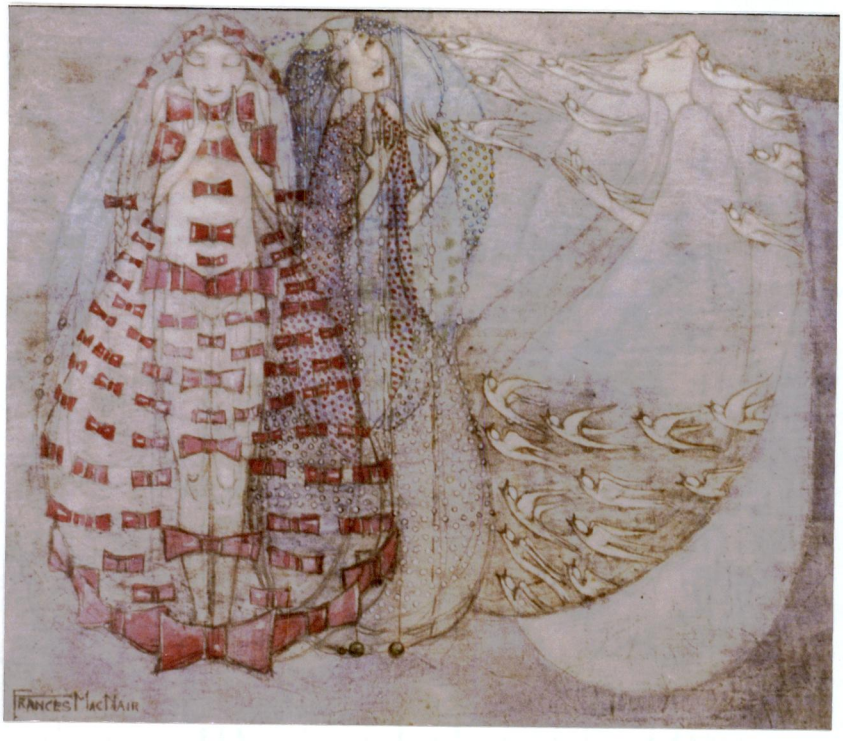



**Fig.20** MacDonald, Frances, Bows,Beads and Birds, c. 1905,

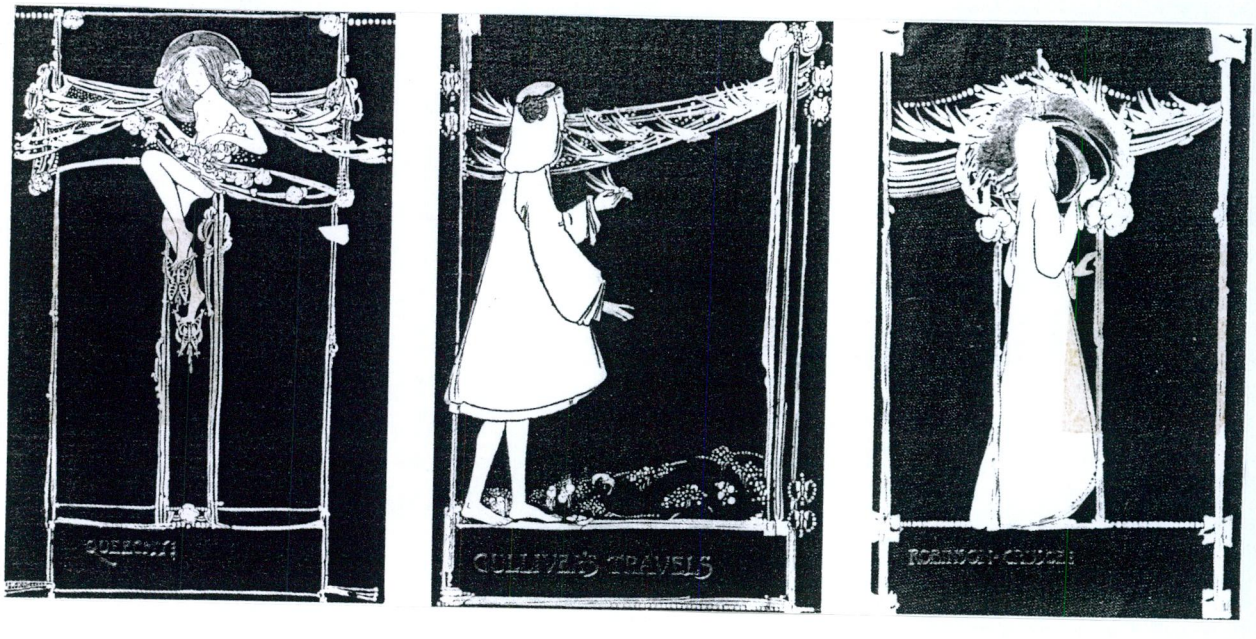



**Fig.21** King,Jessie, Three Covers for the Routledge Prize Series, 1902

on children's hands without fear of violence ( 3, p. 207 ) . The second cover in the Routledge series stresses this type of relationship with Nature. King shows the reverse of this harmony in one of the illustrations for The Fisherman's Soul in A House of Pomegranates . The illustration depicts the part of Oscar Wilde's story where the fisherman attempts to sell his soul to the beautiful young witch who has fallen in love with him. Much to her distaste, he must sell his soul in order to join his true love, the soulless mermaid. King shows the witch as a beautiful young woman with bright red hair and holding a spray of hemlock, which is mentioned in the text and which is often associated with black magic. At first, one cannot help but be disappointed in the somewhat 'pretty' representation of the witch. On closer inspection, however, the woman who at first seemed to lack an aura of evil, is clutching a small dead swallow bound tightly by ropes. The realization that this is the strangling of happiness, as represented by swallows in her other illustrations, leaves us in no doubt of King's understanding of this Japanese symbol.

The Stylists often employ a circle in the composition of their watercolours and illustrations. The circle as a symbol is most well developed in the Far East where it signifies the limitless boundaries of time and space, the eternal wheel of life ( 4p. 295 ). As previously mentioned, the Stylists combined the symbolism of the circle with the symbolism of the rose tree in their representations of life and immortality. The Mon designs of Japan - heraldic crests which would have been familiar to the Stylists through Dresser's book and other sources - combine different motifs within a circular format. Two of the symbols which Dresser associates with Japan are the red sun on the national flag and the circle divided by an S-shaped line, the symbol of the male and female principles. These are the male 'yang' associated with the sun, daytime and rationality and the female 'yin' associated with the moon, night time and emotion. In Margaret MacDonald's design for a stained glass window entitled Summer (fig. 23), a female figure is being held and kissed by a male figure contained within the large yellow sun behind her. In (figs.17 and 18 ), MackIntosh seems to attach negative attributes to the sun, perhaps making some comment on male 'cowardice' and 'indifference'. In King's illustration of the witch in (fig. 22 )despite the text and the colour of the sky indicating that the event occurs during the daytime, a crescent moon is included within a larger circle to the right of the picture,


**Fig.22** King, Jessie, In Her Hand She Had A Spray of Wilde Hemlock (from A House of Pomegranates by Oscar Wilde), 1915,

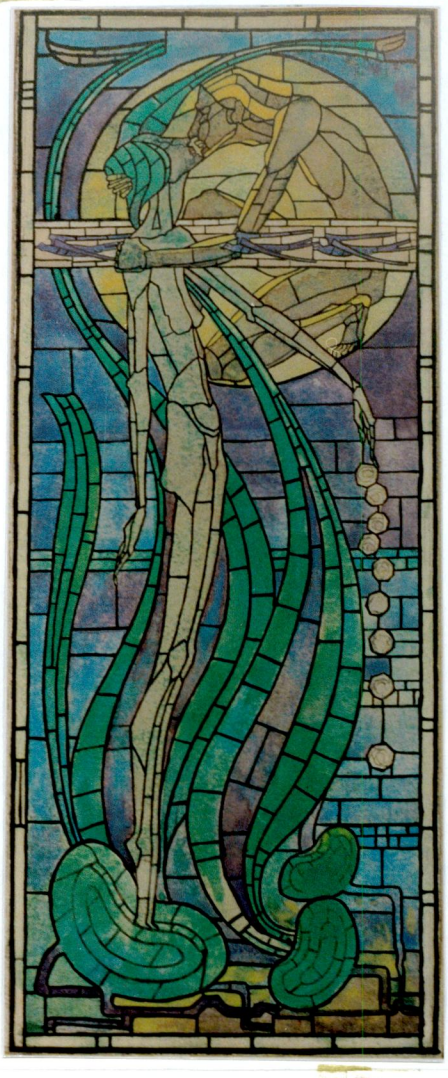


**Fig.23** MacDonald, Margaret, Summer (design for stained glass window), c. 1894,

signifying to us that the fisherman has entered into the realm of the witch, the domain of darkness, danger and emotion.

Perhaps the most individual use of a symbolic circular motif in the work of the Stylists is Jessie King's abiding use of a halo encircling her figures' heads. The use of a halo or nimbus can be seen early in her career in the drawings for The Light of Asia where she uses it to indicate Buddha's harmony with Nature and in her designs for the Routledge book bindings, mentioned above. Dresser includes a substantial section on the nimbus in Buddhism and its relationship to the Christian halo in Japan: Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufacturers. He quotes Griffis in saying that "almost everything that is distinctive in the Roman form of Christianity is to be found in Buddhism - images, pictures, lights" and so on **( 3, p. 330 ).** Dresser adds the nimbus to the list, and argues that Buddhism is at least six centuries older than Christianity. He explains the nimbus as a manifestation of divine essence and describes the linear halo of the great Dai-Butz - a huge statue of Buddha - in Kyoto and the more flamboyant 'vescia piscis' seen on other Buddhist statues. He suggests that the divine disc of Buddhism and Christianity has its origins in fire-worship, hence the symbol of the red sun on the Japanese flag. It is a manifestation of the human ,as well as the divine ,soul. With her work as evidence, it would seem that Jessie King was aware of Dresser's interpretation, which would have given her a deeper insight into the Buddhist exhibits at the great Exhibitions and in the art dealers shops in Glasgow. In her work she shows the halo as a decorative grouping of motifs and a plain disc of flat colour, in keeping with the overall simplification of her style. However, the nimbus loses none of its symbolism. In the illustrations for The Fisherman and His Soul , neither the witch (fig 22) nor the mermaid (fig 13) are shown with the discs as, according to Wilde, they are both soulless yet in fig. 24 she indicates the soul of the fisherman by including the appropriate halo of stars.

It is clear from the study of their illustrations and paintings that Jessie King and the Stylists employed symbolism in their work, in the expression of their spiritual outlook on life and NAture and that this symbolism was derived from Japanese iconography. Their specific use of the symbols proves their understanding of them.. It seems likely that this understanding may have been


**Fig.24** King, Jessie, And Lo The City Lay At My Feet (from A House of Pomegranates by Oscar Wilde), 1915,

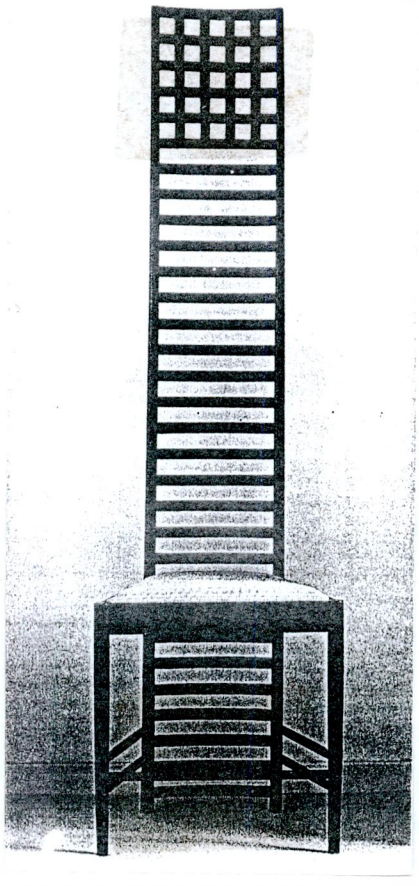


**Fig.25** Mackintosh, Charles Rennie, Ladder Back Chair from Windy Hill House, 1901

directly influenced by Christopher Dresser's interpretations of Japanese symbolism in his book Japan: Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufacturers. considered at that time to be one of the most 'progressive' studies written on Japan.

**Technical Devices**

The aim of this section is to establish whether or not King's use of compositional devices in her work can be attributed to the influence of Japanese art. In particular her use of vertical elements, compositional devices and line will be discussed.

**Vertical Elements**

Vertical elements are a striking feature in two-dimensional Japanese art and can be said to stem from both the dominance of vertical and grid like elements in traditional Japanese architecture and the religious beliefs of Shintoism, Zen Buddhism and Taoism in nature - particularly in the symbolism of the tree or of the bamboo **( 44, p228 )**. Presumably, it is because of the artist's attempts to depict his/her surroundings, and because of the symbolism of the tree in Japan that the single or group of verticals became important. Hence, it came to be used as a way of depicting depth or as a way to divide the picture area into sections.

The Glasgow Stylists seem to have recognised this and adapted it for use in their own work. Perhaps one of the most familiar characteristics of the Glasgow Style is the use of grid-like structures in the architectural and interior design work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. The ladder back chair in fig. 25 and the porch window in fig. 26, both designed for the house 'Windyhill', are clear examples of this influence. Although he had not had first-hand experience of Japanese architecture, Mackintosh is thought to have owned a copy of Morse's Japanese Homes and their Surroundings , one of the more serious studies of Japanese architecture published at the time. This use of trellis structures in his work can be said to have been derived from the traditional 'shoji' and 'fusuma' walls of Japanese houses, which are based on a trellised frame of closely joined flattened strips (fig. 27).

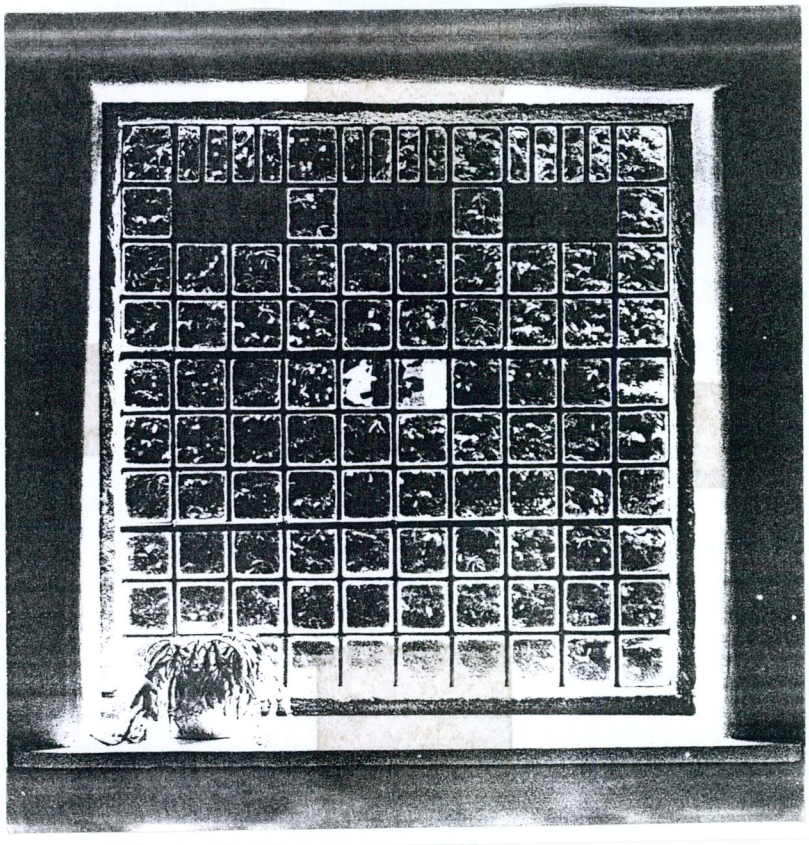


**Fig.26** Mackintosh, Charles Rennie, Porch Window from Windy Hill House, 1901

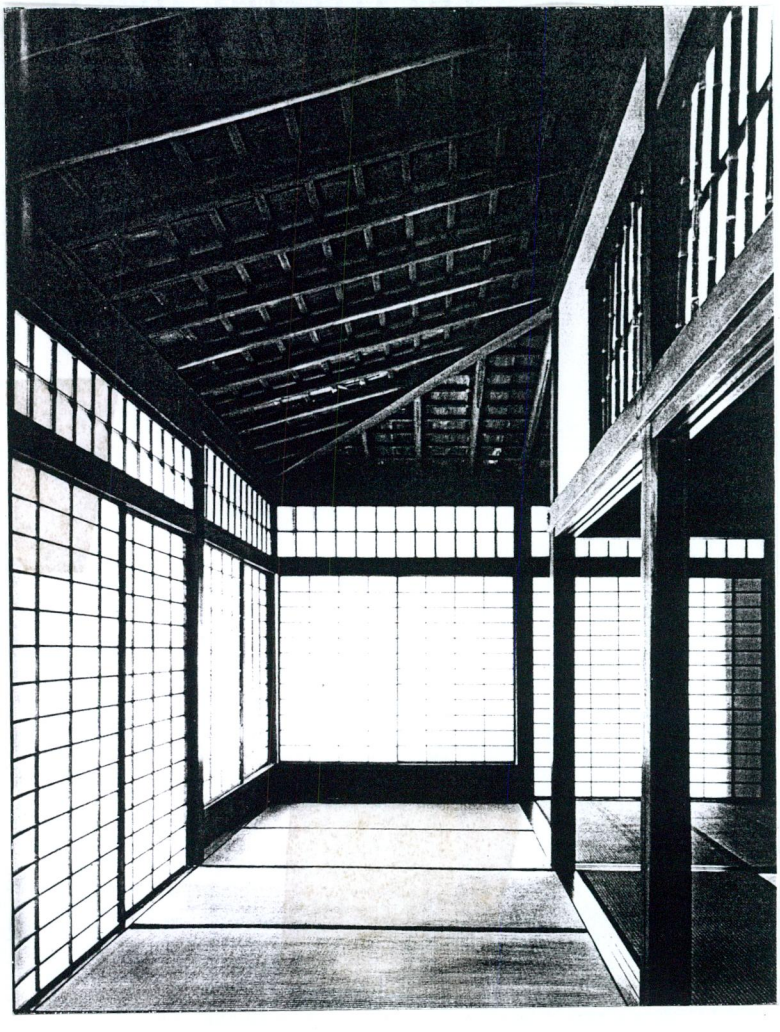


**Fig.27** Detail of walled room, seventeenth century, Japan

However, it is in the illustrations of Jessie King that we see a marked use of the Japanese vertical as used in two-dimensional Japanese art. Single and groups of verticals are a prominent individualistic feature of her work and it is possible to identify this characteristic as stemming from a Japanese source by comparing specific illustrations that utilise this technical device with corresponding Japanese prints.

Many of the illustrations for A Carol- Good King Wenceslas feature a group of trees as a noticeable feature. The illustrations are contained within a grid structure, somewhat like those used in the illustrations for The Holy Graal, bordered on either side by vertical panels of abstracted geometrical shapes, birds, animals, fruit and other Christmas themes, and echoing the vertical of the trees in many ways.

In fig.28, we see a man doubled over picking up logs in the foreground. Just behind him, a group of trees forms a barrier between the man and the mountain in the distance. A deliberately placed gap in the trees emphasises the summit of the mountain. A striking resemblance can be seen between Jessie King's illustration and the Japanese print in fig. 28 from Thirty Six Views of Mount Fuji by Hokusai. In this print we see a group of people coming from what looks like a city or a temple in the distance. The travellers are progressing along a road in the foreground of the print. One of them is bending down to look at something while a gap in the trees behind him draws our attention to the subject of the series of the prints, Mount Fuji. The trees seem to be leaning towards the mountain peak and their branches meet just above it.

In both images the curtain of trees behind the figures emphasises the disctance between the foreground and background, in a way which is similar to the effect achieved in King's work, where the background is reminiscent of a stage backdrop and the foreground is thrust further forward. While the group of trees differentiates between background and foreground, the deliberate gap between them draws our attention to the background, and in so doing unifies the two areas. In both cases the verticals accentuate the feeling of a procession or journey, somewhat like a scene in a stage play, which will exit the pictorial


**Fig.28** King, Jessie, When A Poor man Came In Sight (from A Carol - Good King Wenceslas) 1919,

**Fig.29** Hokusai, Travellers On The Tokaido Road At Hodogaya (from the series Thirty Six Views Of Mount Fuji), c. 1834,

area at any moment.

The illustrations for A House of Pomegranates also contain many references to the Japanese use of a single vertical. In fig. 30 King depicts a young female dancer, wearing a grey dress decorated with circular motifs. She is surrounded by a circle of flying swallows which, along with a halo and a delicate film of gauze over her face and wrapped around her body, lends an air of the supernatural. Compared to the women of Ingres' Le Bain Turc, (fig. 2) King's dancer seems to be self-engrossed and devoid of sexuality. However, there is still some use of exoticism reminiscent of the Chinoiserie of the seventeenth and eighteeenth centuries which pervades Wilde's descriptions of the magic lands which the fisherman's soul describes to the fisherman.

Strong diagonals - the edge of the 'Oriental' carpet starting in the lower right hand corner and finishing about a third of the way up the left hand side - and equally strong verticals in the form of ornamented columns in the foreground provide a structure for the composition of the illustration. The post on the left is the more prominent one and seems to anchor the other elements of the image. The columns also function as a method of indicating depth, one overlapping the musician seated in the background and the other being subtly overlapped by the dancer's veils. The dancer is thus emphasised by being placed between the two veticals, similar to the framing of the mountain in fig.s 28 and 29. This type of grid can be seen throughout A House of Pomegranates and is also used on the front cover design. A corresponding Japanese print (fig. 31 ) shows the same use of diagonal and vertical lines to define space. The diagonals of the floor run upwards from right to left and are echoed by the top of the sliding walls. A single diagonal post runs vertically, cutting through the diagonals and anchoring the various elements of the drawing. A girl dressed in a kimono stands directly behind the pole which obstructs her face. She is holding the pole with her left arm, so interrupting the vertical and subtly defining the three dimensional space. King's use of these devices shows the growing awareness of the Japanese approach to perspective.


**Fig.30** King, Jessie, Her Face Was Veiled( (from House of Pomegranates by Oscar Wilde), 1915,


**Fig.31** Japanese Woodblock Print

**Composite Formats**

Siegfried Wichman refers to the dynamic relationships between shapes as used by Japanese print artists as 'Composite Formats', and defines this as the Japanese did "the contest of framed pictures"**(44, p.224)**. Shapes were simplified and arranged to create tensions between them, thus enlivening the composition of the print. The shapes were often overlapped or truncated. Sometimes, the Japanese use of the device is symbolic: to place a portrait within a circle and to then position the circle within a rectangular format is an indication of the heroic status of the sitter **(44, p226)**.

In fig. 32 the Japanese print artist Kunisada depicts a mother feeding her baby in a bed which is protected by a large semi-circular mosquito net. On the left, part of a rectangular shaped object - possibly a screen - overlaps with the net. The only object shown in the space above the net is a rectangular picture of a temple intended to indicate the season **(26, p332)**. The print as a whole is rectangular in format and in it we can see the 'contest of framed pictures'.

King's use of this device can be seen in fig. 33, from A House of Pomegranates . She shows a rectangular door set in a square wall. Placed asymmetrically in front of the door, about to enter, is a slender woman whose robes and gesture form an oval. Her simplification and positioning of the shapes is similar to that of Japanese artists, such as Kunisada, and is one of the stronger features of her later work. She may also have understood the symbolism of the treatment of portraiture in this manner. In the text, Wilde hints at the importance of the woman in the story, while not revealing her identity . She was not, as White supposes, the heroine of the story but obviously had some other importance. King indicates this by her positioning of the figure within the door **(40, p93)**.

The use of this device is echoed on the back cover (fig.34) where King shows a simplified figure in a similar position to the woman in fig. 33. An oval figure overlaps with a rectangular door, a circular halo overlaps the door and all three shapes are contained within a rectangular frame. George Henry - a Glasgow artist who had visited Japan and was influenced by the high level of design in Japanese images , also used this technique, although perhaps not as obviously as

**Fig.32** Kunisada, Mother Feeding An Infant (from the series Edo's Pride), c. 1818,

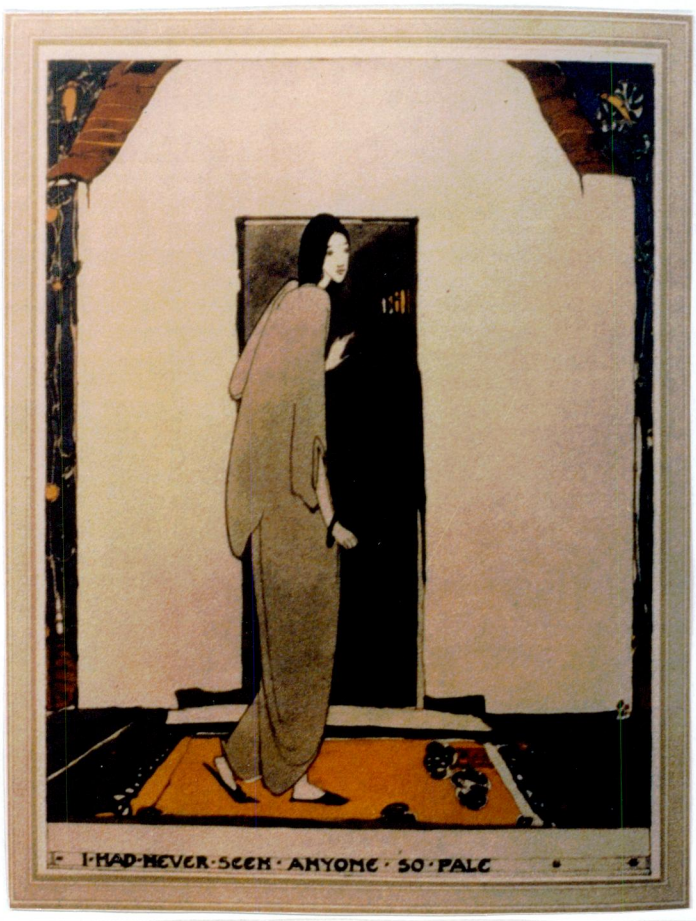



**Fig.33** King, Jessie, I Have Never Seen Anyone So Pale (from A House of Pomegranates by Oscar Wilde), 1915,

**Fig.34** King, Jessie, Back Cover from A House of Pomegranates by Oscar Wilde, 1915

King. Fig. 35 shows Henry's depiction of a Japanese lady holding a semi-circular fan, truncated by the edge of the pictorial area - the relationship between the shape of the figure, the fan and the overall shape of the painting is treated similarly to King's illustration (fig.33) and Kunisada's print (fig. 32).

The slender figure, wearing a loosely draped grey robe, looks over her shoulder at us and lifts her hand as if to open the door. The paleness of her skin is accentuated by the blackness of her hair and this , coupled with the robe, makes her look most Japanese. However, this is the most obvious explanation of the Japanese look of King's figure. In fig. 36 Utamaro depicts three females figures. The figure on the far right is dressed in a loose, grey kimono and glances over her right shoulder at us. Her posture, the position of her feet and the gesture of her hands is almost identical to King's drawing. One can only speculate that King had seen this print either in Glasgow or Paris and had incorporated aspects of it into her drawing for A House of Pomegranates.

**Line**

The influence of Japanese art on line and form in late nineteenth century Europe has been mentioned previously. Aubrey Beardsley's use of a cleaner, more confident line moving away from naturalistic representation towards a more decorative use of the two dimensional surface is well documented. His use of a delicate and well clarified line, and a variety of pen strokes to denote different textures can perhaps be said to have been influenced by Japanese art and in turn to have influenced King's early work **(40, p19).** However, it is in her later work that her use of line underwent a significant change in style, and that we can perhaps see the direct influence of Japanese art on this use of line.

The inside covers which she designed for A House of Pomegranates (fig. 37) show this new departure in her work. She uses a rougher, stronger line to depict two black haired girls somewhat like the figure in fig. 33, in a garden full of tulips where they are attended by swallows. The image is framed by diagonal branches heavy with pomegranates. The overall effect is somewhat like a leaded window or a woodcut. If King's drawing is compared to the fabric dyers stencils - Katagami (fig. 38) - of Japan, the similarity in the use of a repetitive pattern and

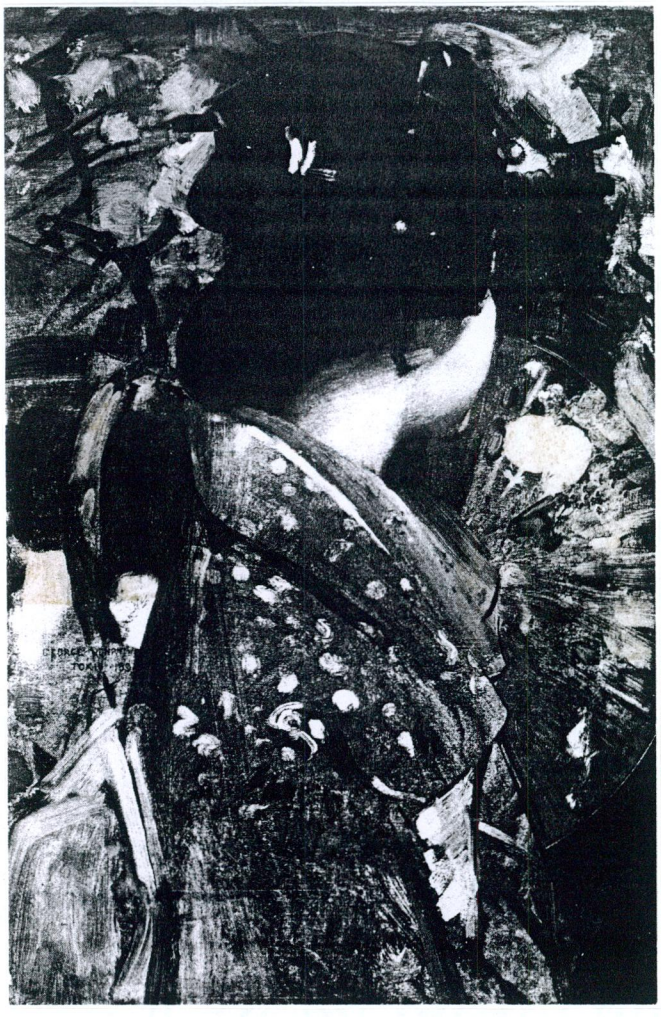


**Fig.35**

Henry, George, Japanese Lady With A Fan, 1894,

**Fig.36** Utamaro, Charms Of Flowers Of The Four Seasons, c. 1780,

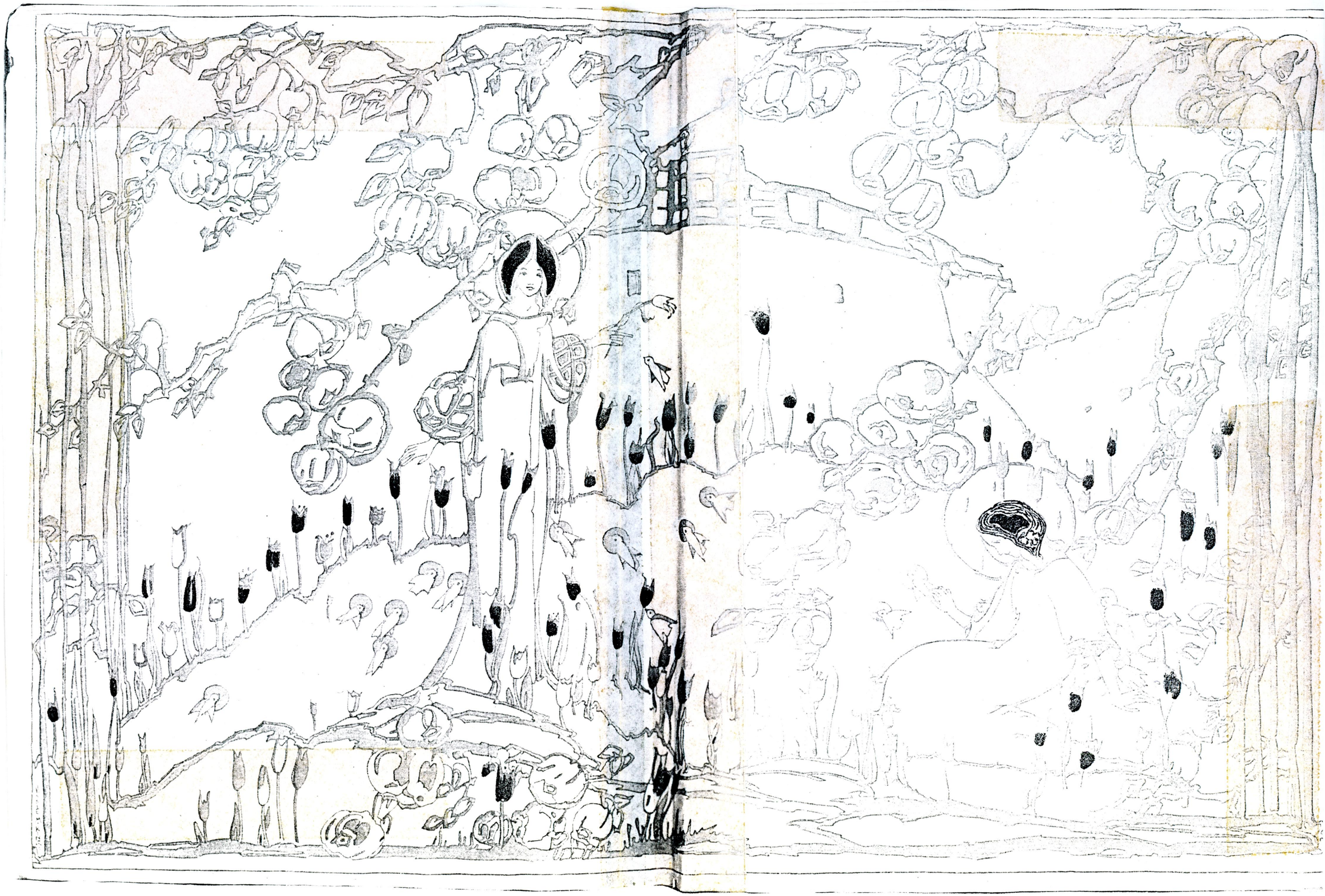


**Fig.37** King, Jessie, Inside Covers from A House of Pomegranates by Oscar Wilde, 1915,

**Fig.38 a** Katagami ( Japanese dyers stencils), Pine Branches (detail), Meiji Period,

**Fig 38 b** Katagami (Japanese dyers stencils), Clematis (detail), Meiji Period,

heavy line is striking.

**Summary**

In this chapter the work of Jessie King was used as an example of the influence of Japanese art on the Glasgow Stylists. This was traced from her early work using The Light of Asia drawings as an example, through to the work she produced in later life. In particular, her use of symbolism, compositional devices and alteration in the quality of her line (i.e. texture and style) has been used to demonstrate this influence.

It has been shown that King's use of symbols proves her depth of understanding of them. It seems likely that this understanding may have been directly influenced by Christopher Dresser's interpretations of Japanese symbolism.

It would also seem that there can be no doubt that King's use of compositional devices which balances verticals and diagonals and defines the depth of the picture was strongly influenced by a knowledge of Japanese prints and an understanding of the artistic devices employed by Japanese print artists. It can be seen in her work that shapes were simplified and arranged to create tensions between them in order to enliven her compositions as was the established practice in 'the contest of framed pictures ' in Japanese art.

Finally, while King's early use of line may be said to have been influenced by Japanese style through the mediation of Aubrey Beardsley, it is in her later work that her use of line underwent a significant change and the direct influence of Japanese art can be seen.

# CONCLUSION

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the beginning of a new phase in the influence of Japanese art on the art and design of Europe. As the influence of Japanese art on the Glasgow Stylists had not been clearly demonstrated, this study undertook that task using the work of Jessie M. King as a specific example. As a result of this study the following conclusions have been reached.

The growing desire for beauty in the everyday in Britain, and the renaissance of decorative and applied art there, found in the art of Japan a pre-existing source of inspiration which corresponded to the aims of British artists and designers. The presumed similarities in culture between medieval England and contemporary Japan allowed leading designers of late nineteenth century Britain to attempt a better understanding than their predecessors of Japanese art. This understanding had grown from the condescending and sometimes degrading Chinoiserie and Orientalist art to the adoption of the perceived principles of Japanese art. Designers attitudes were changing and there was a situation emerging where they were attempting to understand a different approach to design, as supplied by the art of Japan.

The Glasgow Stylists were part of this development. Their aims included the integration of beauty into everyday life through the use of technology, and the art of Japan provided them with a formal language which suited this aim.

The opportunities for the Glasgow Stylists to have come into contact with Japanese art have been discussed. There seems to have been a particularly strong relationship between Glasgow and Japan during, the period in question, as exemplified by the nature of the points of contact between them. These included trading connections, Japanese displays at the international exhibitions in Glasgow, exchanges of art and artists between Glasgow and Japan and visiting lecturers to the city such as Christopher Dresser, Professor Max Mueller and James Mac Neill Whistler. The Glasgow School of Art held copies of : Christopher Dresser's Japan, its Architecture, Art and Art Manufactures , Morse's Japanese Homes and their Surroundings and Siegfried Bing's Artistic Japan. This contact resulted in their adoption of symbolic and technical elements of Japanese Art in the creation of the Glasgow Style.

The work of Jessie King was used as an example of the influence of Japanese art on the Glasgow Stylists. This was traced from her early work using The Light of Asia drawings as an example through to the work she produced in later life. In particular, her use of symbolism, compositional devices and alteration in the quality of line used (i.e. texture and style) have been used to demonstrate this influence.

It has been shown that King's use of symbols proves her depth of understanding of them. It seems likely that this understanding may have been directly influenced by Christopher Dresser's interpretations of Japanese symbolism. It would also seem that there can be no doubt that King's use of compositional and other technical devices was strongly influenced by a knowledge of Japanese prints and an understanding of the artistic devices employed by Japanese print artists.

This thesis therefore demonstrates that there was a strong and significant Japanese influence on the Glasgow Stylists as typified by the work of the illustrator Jessie Marion King.

It can be suggested that this influence is of particular significance now, as Art Nouveau and Art Deco provided a large part of the basis for modern design. At a time when many designers, once again, seem to be drawing on historical and a variety of ethnic design styles in a superficial manner, a study of this period may provide designers with a model for greater integrity in their work.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Primary Sources**


1. **ANONYMOUS**, " A Carol : Good King Wenceslas ", Supplement to The Studio, Christmas, 1919.

2. **BARBICAN ART GALLERY**, Exhibition entitled Japan and Britain : An Aesthetic Dialogue 1850 - 1930, London, 1991.

3. **DRESSER**, Christopher, Japan : Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufacturers, London, 1882.

4. **EVANS**, Sebastian, The High History of the Holy Graal, London, Temple Classiscs, 1898.

5. **ROYAL ACADEMY of ART**, Exhibition entitled Hokusai, Royal Academy of Art, London, 1991.

6. **WILDE**, Oscar, A House of Pomegranates, London, Methuen, 1915.


**Secondary Sources**


7. **AMAYA**, Mario, Art Nouveau, London, The Herbert Press, 1985.

8. **ANESAKI**, Masaharu, Buddhist Art and its Relation to Buddhist Ideals, New York, Hacker Art Books Inc., 1978.

9. **AUTHOR NOT GIVEN**, " Jessie M. King : Scottish Book Illustrator ", Scottish Book Collector, vol. 1, 1987, pp. 7 - 10.

10. **BARBICAN ART GALLERY**, Japan and Britain : An Aesthetic Dialogue 1850 - 1930, London, Barbican Art Gallery and Lund-Humphries, 1991.

11. **BILLCLIFFE**, Roger, Mackintosh Watercolours, New York, Taplinger Publishing Co., 1978.

12. **BILLCLIFFE**, Roger, The Glasgow Boys, London, John Murray Ltd, 1985.

13. **BURKHAUSER**, Jude (Ed.), The Glasgow Girls : Women in Art and Design 1890 - 1920, Edinburgh, Canongate Publishing Ltd, 1990.

14. **EADIE**, William, Movements of Modernity: The Case of Glasgow and Art Nouveau, New York, Routledge, 1991.

15. **HALEN**, Widar, Christopher Dresser, Oxford, Phaidon, 1990.

16. **HONOUR**, Hugh, Chinoiserie: The Vision Cathay, London, John Murray Ltd., 1961.

17. **HORNETT**, Edward, Five Centuries of English Book Illustration, Aldershot, Gower Publishing Company, 1988.

18. **IENAGA**, Saburo, Japanese Art : A Cultural Appreciation, New York and Tokyo, Weatherhill, 1979.

**19. IMPEY**, Oliver R., Chinoiserie : The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration, New York, Scribners, 1977.

**20. JACKSON**, Holbrook, The 1890s, London, Century Hutchison Ltd, 1990.

**21. JONES**, Anthony, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, London, Studio Editions Ltd., 1990.

**22.. KINCHIN**, Juliette and Perilla, Glasgows Great Exhibitions, Edinburgh, Wendlebury and White Cockade, 1988.

**23. LEE**, Sherman E., The Genius of Japanese Design, New York, Kodansha International, 1981.

**24. LUCIE-SMITH**, Edward, Symbolist Art, London, Thames and Hudson, 1972.

**25. MACKINTOSH**, Alaister, Symbolism in Art Nouveau, London, Thames & Hudson, 1975.

**26. NEUER**, Roni and YOSHIDA, Susugu, Ukiyo-e : 250 Years of Japanese Art, New York, Mayflower Books, 1978.

**27. PEVSNER**, Nikolaus, Pioneers of Modern Design from William Morris to Walter Gropius, Penguin, 1984.

**28. ROYAL ACADEMY of ART**, Hokusai, London and Munich, Royal Academy of Art and Prestel-Verlag, 1991.

**29. ROYAL ACADEMY of ART**, The Great Japan Exhibition, London, Royal Academy of Art and Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1981.

**30. SAID**, Edward W., Orientalism, London, Penguin,1987.

**31 SCHMUTZLER**, Robert, Art Nouveau, New York, Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1962.

**32. SPARKE**, Penny, Japanese design, London, Swallow Publishing, 1987.

**33. SPENCER**, Isobel, "Francis Newberry and the Glasgow Style", Apollo, October 1973, pp. 13 - 17.

**34. STEWERT**, Basil, A Guide to Japanese Prints and their Subject Matter, New York, Dover Publications, 1979.

**35. SULLIVAN**, Michael, The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art, London, Thames & Hudson, 1973.

**36. TAKAHASHI**, Seiichiro, Traditional Woodblock Prints of Japan, New York, Weatherhill, 1972.

**37. TSCHUDI-MADSEN**, Stephan, Sources of Art Nouveau, New York, Da Capo Press, 1976.

**38. WATANABE**, Toshio, High Victorian Japonisme, Bern, Peter Lang Publishers Inc., 1991.

**39. WATSON**, Walter, The Studio, vol 26, 1902, p. 90.

**40. WHITE**,Colin, The Enchanted World of Jessie M. King, Edinburgh, Canongate Publishing Ltd, 1989.

**41. WHITE**, Gleeson, The Studio, vol 11, 1897, p. 88 - 92.

**42. WHITE**, Gleeson, The Studio, vol 14, 1898, p. 230 - 232.

**43. WHITE**, Gleeson, The Studio, vol. 15 1899, p. 278 - 280, 114.

**44. WICHMANN**, Siegfried, Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on Western Art since 1858, London, Thames and Hudson, 1981.

**45. WORRINGER**, Wilhelm, Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967.

**46. YAMADA**, Chisaburoh F., (Ed.), Dialogue in Art : Japan and the West, A. Zwemmer Ltd, 1976.