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The life, work and times of Edmund Dulac, artist and book illustrator

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Ali Baba departed for the town
from Stories from the Arabian
Nights, 1907, watercolour
8 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 12 in. British Museum,
London.

THE LIFE, WORK AND TIMES
OF
EDMUND DULAC,
ARTIST AND BOOK ILLUSTRATOR
by
Helen Mary Susan Radcliffe.

A Master's thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of
Master of Arts
of the

Loughborough University of Technology

May 1977

Supervisor : Professor P. Havard-Williams

Department of Library and
Information Studies



To Mother Father and Mary -
my own fairy godmother

ERRATA

Facing page 3

This is not the same 16 Aubrey Walk where Dulac lived - the numbering of the houses was changed around 1920. Dulac's old address no longer exists as a recognisable building.

Facing page 69

This watercolour has been wrongly named 'The Call of the Fairies', and remains untitled - as it is in the British Museum collection.

I am indebted to Colin White for the above information.

Susan Radcliffe

June 1977

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to thank the staff of the Department of Prints and Drawings, at the Victoria and Albert Museum for making facilities readily available for photography of the Dulac watercolours; Reginald Williams, of the Department of Prints and Drawings, at the British Museum, for making my visit so profitable; the excellent Photographic Service of the British Museum for reproduction of Dulac watercolours.

For prompt and considerate reply to my letters, I wish to thank Hodder and Stoughton Limited; Messrs. Christie, Manson and Woods Limited; Messrs. Sotheby, Parke Bernet and Company; Bernard Quaritch Limited.

Thanks are also due to Professor P. Havard-Williams, my director of research, for his unceasingly professional advice; Geoffrey Wakeman, for letting me bend his ever attentive ear; Colin White, for granting me an interview and making my visit so pleasantly memorable; John Walton, for totally selfless hours of sympathy in moments of stress; lastly, a life-long companion, whose fidelity and competence in the photographic field will never reap their true reward.

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INTRODUCTION

As Colin White, in his biography, so rightly states, 'the number of people who know Dulac personally is diminishing, but the number who know about him is ever increasing'.¹ Until the appearance of the captivating insight into the enigma of Edmund Dulac, lovingly researched by the thorough Mr. White, no major work existed to tell his story. Suffering from a long line of mere comparisons with recognised artists of his day, Dulac's work and intriguing history have lain comparatively hidden.

This overall look at Dulac's life and work, in the context of the period in which he lived, attempts to place him more lucidly in the vast history of art and book illustration of the times. Needless to say, the scope of a work of this length is limited, and accent has been placed on gathering together hitherto disunited material, rather than exploring any single aspect in great detail. So little material exists which is entirely concerned with Dulac, that finding it is an experience close to ecstasy for any researcher. When I began this thesis, drawn to Dulac through the mystery within his work, I knew only the bare facts given in the skeletal biographies of general reference material. The purely chance acquaintance with Colin White and the opportunity to gaze upon original material, enabled me to put things into perspective. On reading Mr. White's book I saw the realisation of a dream. The portrait of a man, whose

life and character I had for a long time built up for myself, had come true.

The aim of this thesis is to obtain for Dulac further recognition of his worth, and correct any remaining impressions of doubt as to his distinctive originality, both in his work and in his ever-captivating life. Hopefully, it may provide the inspiration for research of a more intensive nature on this subject and others. Whatever the outcome, surely nothing is lost in the fight to gain recognition of passed times and people - an historic battle with nothing to gain but the victory of greater knowledge, without which no progress can be made. Dulac himself had learnt this lesson and was able to go forward, having first looked back :

Dulac does not recall a time when he did not paint, and although he began, like the immortal Aubrey Beardsley, as a musician, his holidays were spent copying Japanese prints which he first saw in a collection brought to Toulouse from the East, by a cultivated merchant.²

FOOTNOTES

1. Colin White, 1976 Edmund Dulac, London :
Studio Vista, p.197.
2. Martin Birnbaum, 1919 Introductions New York :
F.F.Sherman, pp.69 - 70.

CHAPTER ONE

EDMUND DULAC - HIS LIFE

Nothing has yet been written that provides such insight into the life of Edmund Dulac as Colin White's matchless biography.¹ I cannot recommend too highly this magnificent window, through which it is possible to catch a glimpse of some of the more private, and deeply personal moments in the life of the mysteriously unexplored Mr. Dulac. The following biographical chapter is a mere outline; made more interesting, I hope, by continual reference to, and quotations from material in Mr. White's book, at the end of which he sums up beautifully the whole apparent meaning behind a life which, having ended, appeared as a sad loss to all:

He was aware of the importance of recognizing one's limitations and then trying to overstep them a little. He never fought to attempt what his vision could not encompass. He had no Universal Message to convey in his art and was a miniaturist in both form and conception, but within these limits he was supreme. His inventiveness in half a century of work rarely failed him and his straining after perfection which in lesser men can be self-destructive, gave his pictures a rare distinction. He left no imitators. His life's work was devoted to making things properly, and for the honesty of his intention and the beauty of the results we must always be grateful. 2

Born on October 22, 1882, at Toulouse, Edmond Dulac, later in life, had strange things to recount concerning the moment of his birth - a moment whose details are usually lost to the majority in the mists of time and pain:

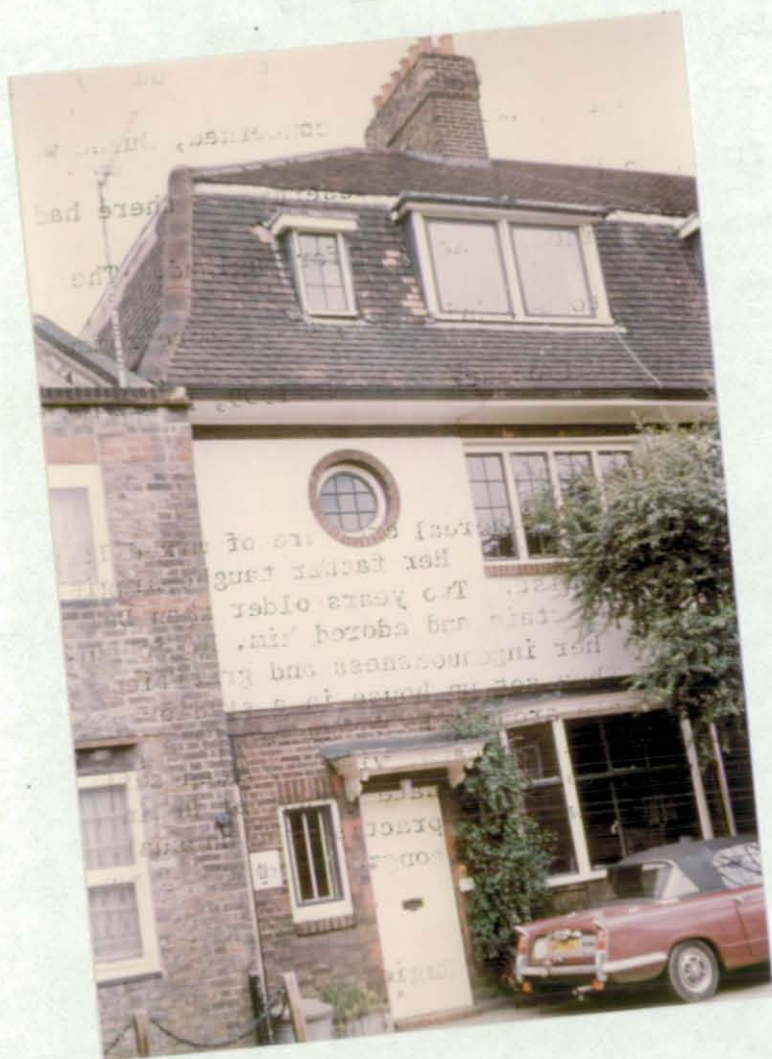
My grandfather was lying dead in the next room, and those who first smiled at me by the light of a lamp had tears in their eyes, save my mother who had not been told. My head was long and pointed at the back and the midwife rubbed it down with a handful of brandy. I did not cry. 3

Educated at Toulouse University, Dulac graduated as a Bachelor of Science and Philosophy and subsequently attended full-time art classes at the École des Beaux Arts. Here, Dulac became more and more an Anglophile, even changing the spelling of his name to Edmund. At this juncture, Colin White again treats us to one of the many, acutely personal insights into Dulac's character:

At twenty he was a little under average height, solidly built with black hair parted slightly off-centre and carefully pomaded down on either side of his oval face. He tried a moustache for a short time, wore a broad-brimmed hat tilted at what was considered to be the correct angle to impress the ladies, and with diligent practice in front of the mirror, trained himself, by the careless raising of his right eyebrow, to wear an air of surprised amusement, an accomplishment he retained throughout his life. 4

In 1903, having completed the course at the École, Dulac won a scholarship to the Académie Julien in Paris where he studied for three weeks only, under Jean-Paul Laurens. Unfortunately, Dulac found the course boring and inadequate and, feeling lonely in Paris, returned to Toulouse. Shortly afterwards, attempting to recover from it all on a holiday in Biarritz, Dulac met an attractive American lady to whom he was to be married later that same year. However, his marriage to Alice May de Marini was to prove unsuccessful, and she and Dulac soon parted, the latter returning to live with his parents.

By the autumn of 1904, Dulac had left for England, determined to explore the possibilities of work there as an illustrator, - he did not have to wait for very long. By the summer of 1905, having experienced success with his illustrations for J.M.Dent's edition of the Brontë sisters' novels, and, as a result, offered a place



16, Aubrey Walk, as
it is today, photograph

as a regular contributor to the Pall Mall Magazine Dulac decided to take rooms at 16a Aubrey Walk, Holland Park. This was to be his first permanent address in London, from where his increasingly active social and artistic life was to initially stem.

In 1908, having come on in leaps and bounds as far as illustrative success and acclaim were concerned, Dulac was sued by his wife, Alice, on the grounds of desertion - there had been no contact between them since Dulac left for England. The second marriage of Dulac was to be, initially, a far more romantic and, artistically, influential occurrence. In 1909, Dulac met Elsa Arnallice Bignardi:

a dark, graceful, ethereal creature of mixed Italian and German parentage. Her father taught singing and she was a violinist. Two years older than Dulac, she was shy and uncertain and adored him. He in turn, was fascinated by her ingenuousness and gratified by her attentions. They set up house in a studio-apartment at 26 Maida Vale around the treasures of a pianola, a French maid and two cats, with a garden sufficiently large not only to accommodate a cast of Rodin's 'Eve', but also to allow him to practise the unusual, and in his case, decidedly incongruous sport of revolver-shooting. 5

They married quietly at Marylebone Registry Office in April 1911. Ernest Brown, of the Leicester Galleries, was the witness, whom Dulac had met in 1906, when the Leicester Galleries had offered him a commission for a series of illustrations for stories from the Arabian Nights. There began an admirable working relationship, whereby the Leicester Galleries held annual private shows of Dulac's work from 1907 until 1918.

Through Elsa, Dulac developed an interest in spiritualism and he and his wife became visitors to séances. This interest in the occult became more enthusiastic and serious in Dulac's later years, though he was always to retain a certain scepticism. Yet



72, Ladbrooke Road,
photograph.

another passion in Dulac's life was that he held for dressing-up, a pastime for which he probably developed a taste whilst a member of the London Sketch Club, which he was persuaded to join on first settling in London:

In an old house off Oxford Street the members held weekly sessions of costume drawing or exercises in rapid sketching from memory on an agreed subject... The atmosphere was friendly and light-hearted, especially at the fancy dress Smoking Concerts which were held every six months. 6

For the latter, Dulac loved to design his own elaborate and often oriental costumes and displayed much talent in the art of make-up.

On 17 February 1912 Dulac saw the realisation of one of his most personal aspirations - his naturalisation as a British citizen. Following this, he and Elsa moved into 72 Ladbroke Road, one of a number of apartments equipped with studios in a venture by Edmund Davis, a patron of the arts. Dulac was to make many acquaintances through the Davises, whose home in Landsdowne Road became a regular social stop in the life of Edmund and Elsa.

The next major, social occurrence in Dulac's life was to be invited, by the Davises, to join them on their yacht for a Mediterranean cruise, which lasted from September 1 to October 17, 1913. Apart from occasional visits to his parents in Toulouse, Dulac had never travelled, in the true sense of the word. In the main, he objected to all the discomforts and inconveniences that number largely in travelling arrangements. However, on his friend's yacht, with all bothering details taken out of his hands, all his objections were overruled. As an autograph manuscript journal, written in French and English, exists to record for all time Dulac's personal impressions, in word and sketch form, of this memorable cruise,

I cannot help dedicating a large space of this chapter to quotations from its valuable pages - each one a memorable example of the very words and thoughts of a man whose inner feelings are only too seldom in evidence.

Sadly, the following quotations are taken from excerpts shown in a bookseller's catalogue,⁷ without which, I hasten to add, the coveted contents of the journal would have been unobtainable. The latter contains fifty-six leaves, eight of them containing only rough sketches, each tipped onto a larger sheet of cartridge paper, the whole bound in full green levant morocco. The daily entries record in great detail the costume of the various towns, the landscape, and the architecture:

Our party is now nearly complete with the arrival of the Jansons. The sailing boats in the evening are like little transparent gems. After dinner the spectacle is quite interesting with the moon above the town hanging over a row of light below which stretches to our boat its silver paths. The water on the horizon below the moon seems to curve and pour into the town in a metallic shimmer. We leave at 9 for Corfu.

This morning we visit the rest of that extraordinary place (Delos) where one is nearer the ancient world than anywhere else and which is so little visited. We visit the merchant quarter and several rich houses all with their delicate little courtyards with the two underground cisterns opening up in two wells one or two still preserved... We leave this wonderful place where the sentimental traveller is quite free from the vicinity of modern civilization and can in all liberty give himself up to the memories of a graceful past.

The morning finds us in Malta in a most magnificent harbour full of little peninsulas and fortifications. The sight of some Indian looking balconies begins to make one feel dazed. The immensity of the place with its forts rising in the silvery light, the quaint boats which are not gondolas, the guttural language which is not arabic, as one enters the town the dream begins, there is an uncomfortable hindoo look about the houses which rise on either side of steep impossible streets ... it is a maze of towns, harbours, and all that looks

italian, hindoo, spanish, medieval venetian and english without being quite any of these things.

On his return from the cruise, Dulac's work reflected those influences which had most affected him during his time abroad. This work included contributions to the fund-raising Gift Books, a phenomenon of the war years which, though criticised on various levels, proved very successful fund-raisers. In total agreement with Colin White, by far the best of these Gift Books was Dulac's own, compiled in 1915 for the Daily Telegraph. Indeed, Dulac was the only artist to be allotted a book of his own and, as Colin White so rightly says, 'it showed how much the cachet of his name was expected to promote sales'.⁸ The book, entitled Edmund Dulac's Picture-Book for the French Red Cross, and published for the Daily Telegraph by Hodder and Stoughton, contained a portrait photograph of Dulac by E.O. Hoppé, with, underneath, in a facsimile of his own handwriting, an appeal on behalf of the fund which read:

If any reader of my Picture Book would like to make a Direct contribution to the French Red Cross, I should be very proud to receive and acknowledge it. France, bled of treasure and supplies is giving all she can.

Can you not spare something towards this work of mercy and healing among our most gallant Allies?.

[signed] Edmund Dulac.⁹

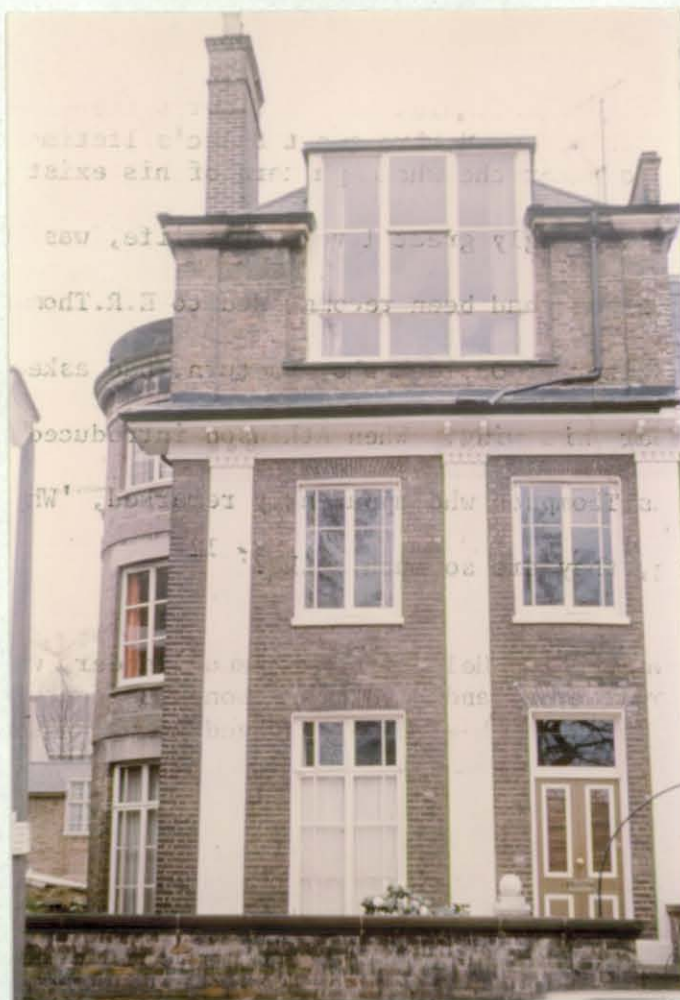
Later that same year Dulac, as Mr. White so carefully reports, had an accident in which he nearly lost the use of his right eye:

While playing with his cat Ching, he was clawed across the eyeball and for two weeks had to be kept bandaged and in total darkness. Both physically and psychologically this was extremely depressing. ¹⁰

As if this were not enough, round about this time, Elsa had started with upsets of a nervous variety and these worries, together with those of a financial nature, produced an anxiety in Dulac concerning the future.

In March 1917 Dulac again ventured into the world of spiritualism. Accompanied by Dennison Ross - Professor of Persian at the School of Oriental Studies, who shared a mutual interest in Persian art with Dulac - and W.B.Yeats - one of Dulac's closest friends met by way of the Davises - Dulac went along to assess the powers of a David Calder Wilson. They went on the recommendation of the Ghost Club to watch Wilson carry out experiments on a machine he had invented to concentrate 'Odylic Force'. Afterwards, each of the three investigators wrote his report - Dulac was suitably uncertain and sceptical about the whole matter. By June and July of that year London saw its heaviest bomb raids, carried out in daylight. Their path, over Holland Park, totally unnerved Edmund and Elsa and they made immediate plans to vacate London. Offered accommodation in Dewlands, a cottage in the grounds of a large house at Cranleigh, Surrey, which had originally belonged to Mrs.Davis' sister, they retreated to the country. Though they were safe, they were both also acutely depressed and, despite the fact that they were almost surrounded by friends, Elsa's nervous condition did not improve. It even became necessary for her mother to look after her as she suffered from daytime hallucinations in addition to nightmares. However, as soon as the Armistice was declared, Dulac and Elsa, who was still suffering, returned to Ladbroke Road.

During 1919 Dulac contributed weekly cartoons to the newspaper Outlook - a period during which he formed close relationships with two people who were to create great, influential impressions on the rest of his life.



Front view of 117,
Ladbroke Road, showing
the large studio window
on the top floor,
photograph.

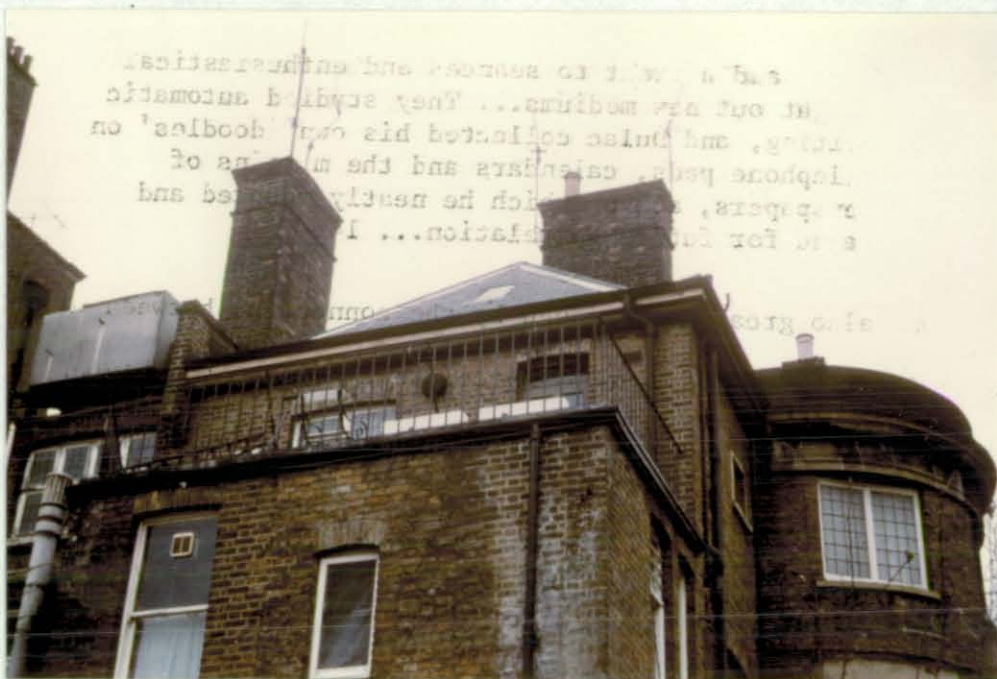
One was Frederick Mc.Curdy Atkinson who was, as Colin White says:

a tall quiet Irishman whose outward reserve hid the scholarship and sense of fun that lay beneath. He was a product of Trinity College, Dublin, where he had taken a brilliant degree in History, and he had become a publisher's reader, first for Heinemann, then Collins and lastly Harrap... Dulac met him through Yeats at a meeting of the Poets' Club, of which Atkinson was secretary. Both Dulac and he talked well, each finding stimulus in the other's ideas, and their friendship lasted throughout Dulac's lifetime, and came to alter the whole pattern of his existence. 11

The second, and seemingly great love of his life, was Helen Beauclerk, whose work had been recommended to E.R.Thompson before he had become editor of Outlook who, in turn, had asked Atkinson to take her under his wing. When Atkinson introduced his protégée to Dulac, it was Thompson who apparently remarked, 'Why did you do such a thing, they are so much alike?' 12

At twenty-five Helen was tall and slender, with the oval face, and high cheek bones, accentuated by dark hair, which already belonged to princesses in Dulac's illustrations. She dressed simply and elegantly, reinforcing her natural dignity and giving an impression of unapproachability which was, in fact, a cover for an intrinsic shyness. Dulac was captivated by her intelligence and excited by their mutual interests ... She became a frequent visitor to the Dulacs' home in Ladbroke Road. Dulac cast her horoscope in April 1919 and saw the deep insecurity behind the calm exterior, admiring the intelligent awareness of this uncertainty and the desire for help Their association strengthened as they found their personalities to be complementary. Helen's coolness and poise balanced Dulac's fastidiousness and occasional irascibility, while their deep curiosity about man's artistic potential, and their mutual desire for total knowledge produced a firm bond between them. 13

During the autumn of that same year, the Dulacs moved into a large studio opposite, at 117 Ladbroke Road, renting the upper two floors. Dulac grew very fond of his new studio where many additions, made by his own hand, were greatly in evidence - the most extraordinary probably being the imitation, oriental



The verandah at the
rear of 117 Ladbroke
Road, upon which Dulac
built his tea-house,
photograph.

tea-house which he built onto the verandah.

Throughout 1920 Dulac exchanged correspondence with Yeats, with whom he continued to pursue his interest in the occult, a field upon which he leant strongly in the hope of finding an answer to the matrimonial and financial strain under which he was then living. As Colin White so accurately tells us, this interest was becoming somewhat of an obsession:

Yeats and he went to séances and enthusiastically sought out new mediums... They studied automatic writing, and Dulac collected his own 'doodles' on telephone pads, calendars and the margins of newspapers, all of which he neatly mounted and dated for future correlation... 14

Dulac was also greatly intrigued by the connection between madness and genius, influenced here by Marcel Réja's book, L'Art Chez les Fous, in which he also found harmony between his own oriental style and children's art - both being a concentration on one detail at a time. Dulac expanded his views on this subject the following year, in an introduction to a book of paintings entitled, Christmas : Pictures by Children,¹⁵ - a selection of work done by children in the schools directed by Professor Cižek of Vienna. The pictures, endpapers and cover of the book are all original lithographs, the young artists - girls of fourteen to sixteen years of age - having drawn them on the stone themselves. Here are a few, enlightening words taken from Dulac's introduction:

We have all been brought up with the superstition, that efficiency in drawing and painting is the privilege of a few adults, that it can only be achieved after a long and arduous struggle, and by no means only revealed to an intellectual oligarchy. From time to time, however, the performance of some extraordinary child seems to throw a doubt on this belief and starts us wondering whether in face of such achievements, the result of a few tender years' work, the long efforts of maturity are not so much waste of misplaced energy...

Life, some will have it, is a never ending attempt at solving the sempiternal problems that have faced man since his first contact with realities; by seeking his knowledge through them, he evolved Science; when he stretched his activities beyond contingencies in an endeavour to organise the forces hidden behind his consciousness, Art was born, - Art, which was at the beginning Magic, and has remained Magic.

The Artist put at man's disposal a tangible world of unrealities by means of the most illusory elements things that have no existence outside our senses - colour, lines, sound - and made him master if he wished of a world that he could conjure up at will. Through Art man becomes a child again, that is, his consciousness is lulled back into that sleep full of wonders from which he was tragically awakened by the phenomenon of the real world, and whose phantasmagoria lingered through his younger years

Professor Cizek has successfully demonstrated with his methods that the scope of these unspoiled memory reflexes can be enlarged, and that because a child is taught to paint, he need not necessarily have in view Art as an end and a profession. Understood in that manner, it ought merely to form part of every child's education; it should not consist any more in the drudgery of drawing plaster casts or stuffed animals, but should aim at preserving the freshness and spontaneity of the subconscious machine that is still at our disposal in the lumber room of our childhood.

This would help us to develop a greater sense of balance between objective and subjective worlds, to lose the fear engendered by the paralysing respect for our own habits, and we might be able instead of taking our cue from the puzzling contingencies that surround us, to time realities to the rhythm within ourselves, and realise perhaps the perfect harmony described by the Chinese philosopher when he said :

"Last night, I dreamt I was a butterfly,
and now I am awake, I do not know whether
I am a man who dreamt he was a butterfly,
or a butterfly dreaming he is a man".

At this point may be mentioned Dulac's interest in music - wide and largely oriental. Under the section marked 'recreations' in volume 1951-1960 of Who Was Who, 'making bamboo flutes' was included. To go into this fascinating topic further we must again turn to the inimitable Mr.White:

Dulac's interest in music was wide but not deep. Eastern music, which was linear, attracted him more than Western ... A photograph taken of him ... [after 1921] ... showed him surrounded by oriental musical instruments, a sitar, a group of bamboo flutes, a Chinese sheng, a round Chinese yueh-chin or moon guitar, and a Japanese samisen... The late Eugène Goossens once described visiting Dulac and finding him cross-legged on the floor with a plug up one nostril to let a steady stream of air be emitted from the other, producing 'faint unearthly sounds' from a Polynesian nose flute he had made.¹⁶

Before the end of 1923 Dulac and Elsa had parted, 'an increasing awareness of the differences in their temperament and the realization on Dulac's part that Elsa was no longer able to provide the stimulus and intellectual conflict that he needed, convinced him that a normal relationship between them was no longer possible'.¹⁹ Helen Beauclerk, on the other hand, was able to provide these things and, subsequent to the separation, she moved into Ladbroke Road.

By 1934, having come through various ups and downs of work accepted and rejected, plus being told to work more quickly on his illustrations for the newspaper world, it is interesting to find Dulac expressing some thoughts on the secret of happiness. In letters to Jean de Bosschère, Flemish poet and book illustrator, whom Dulac had met by accident and befriended, he revealed some of his innermost thoughts on the subject of happiness and its apparent, secret source:

'I am certainly looking for a recipe', wrote Dulac, 'but for the life of me I do not know how to do it. You are the only one who believes in the impossible. For four years all my efforts have been directed towards repairing bit by bit my little house that has been seriously shaken by a brainstorm and overwork - that is to say too much uncongenial work - to earn a living - (over-work, when one likes what one does, never does any harm) - a serious loss of money, etc. was bringing nervous troubles, hypersensitivity, indigestion, neuralgia and the vicious circle which is



Front view of 64,
Marlborough Place,
sharing the top two
floors, photograph.

difficult to break, a hideous nightmare in which shadows float around me at moments when the atmospheric pressure is low. For a long time I did nothing, now I am ready to fill in the holes'. 18

On the outbreak of war, Dulac and Helen left for Morcombelake, Dorset, having closed the studio at Ladbroke Road. They moved in with Helen's mother in her cottage, which became both home and studio for them for more than six years. Morcombelake, a tiny village on the outskirts of Bridport, was peaceful but also possibly dull after London. Helen, who loved the countryside, understood Edmund's unsettled feelings, in addition to the constant financial worry, and tried to overcome them, somewhat, by her unselfish devotions to Dulac. Nevertheless, in a mood of almost total despair after the fall of France, Dulac made his will. This mood was greatly alleviated by Dulac's participation in work for Free France, during which he made occasional visits to London, staying with Atkinson in his lodgings.

At the end of the war, when Helen and Edmund returned to London, they found the studio at Ladbroke Road flooded and uninhabitable after years of neglect. They were happily offered accommodation by an American artist and friend, Henry Winslow - Edmund Davis having died at the beginning of the war - and gladly accepted the two top floors of his house at 64, Marlborough Place, St. John's Wood. They returned to live in London in December 1944, staying in temporary accommodation, with friends of Atkinson's in Radnor Place while their belongings were being brought out of storage and the new home prepared. Here, as opposed to the studio at Ladbroke Road, the atmosphere and surroundings appear to have been of a cosier nature. As Helen confided in a letter to a mutual friend:

'In front of the north window ... he has his drawing table, his large drawing board on the left above the radiator and stacks and stacks of little drawers in front. Behind and above him on the north wall are two splendid cupboards with books. Apart from a new carpet the furniture is the same as at Ladbroke Road but looking much prettier here with the white wood, or rather the yellow, against the white walls and on the superb carpet (one of the great extravagancies of the removal) it looks richer and more harmonious. On the walls Edmund has only wanted to put pictures which are fresh and gay, nothing heavy or of the "sumptuous" kind. I am becoming a good housewife. Formerly at Ladbroke Road there was no way of doing this, even with two maids it was far too big and difficult to keep clean.' 19

Gradually accepting that his health was not all that it had been, we find Dulac actually confiding in a letter to George Macy, founder of the Limited Editions Club of New York,

'My doctor tells me ... that I am suffering from nervous fatigue, no wonder! What with the general sense of insecurity, the difficulties of daily life, the monotonous and scanty supply of food, only those blessed with "food-proof" digestion and nerves of steel can survive happily.' 20

In April 1949, whilst working, Dulac, at the age of sixty-seven, had a heart attack and was rushed to the London Hospital : his recovery being slow but successful. Ill for four months, work was laid aside until September when, working more slowly than usual, he continued to draw with habitual perfection. In April 1953, the month before his death, he could still be found working hard on the watercolours for Milton's Comus, sadly never to be completed:

A little out of character for an Anglo-Frenchman of almost seventy, Dulac still indulged in his passion for flamenco dancing. But it was unwise of him, especially being unaccustomed to athletic pursuits and with a history of coronary disease to attempt, as he did one evening, a display of his prowess to a friend. Shortly afterwards he complained of feeling ill; another heart attack was diagnosed and he was immediately taken to hospital. A further attack followed and Dulac died on 25 May 1953. 21

His funeral was simple, the only mourners being Helen and Atkinson. He was cremated - his own wish.

In conjunction with the Leicester Galleries, Helen arranged a Memorial Exhibition which opened in December of the year of Dulac's death. R.H.Wilenski, art critic and friend, wrote the foreword to the catalogue, included in which are some illuminating reflections upon the private life of a man who was at once distant and yet endearingly familiar to his public:

'I knew him well for many years and often watched him work. In his later studios, the chairs, tables, cupboards, radio case, adjustable lamps and so on were all made from his own designs; the walls were hung with Chinese paintings and Japanese prints showing Europeans in 1860 clothes; he used Japanese brushes, kept his colours in small, lidded ivory pots and always put his tint on boldly using blotting paper to reduce it when required. If a flaw occurred he always scrapped the drawing though he had worked on it for days. For he aimed, within his limits, at perfection, and within those limits, he habitually attained it'. 22

In an obituary in The Times on June 3 1953, R.H.Wilenski spoke again of Dulac and allowed us, once more, to see briefly into his private moments:

By the death of Edmund Dulac we lose a man in love with craftsmanship, a keenly intelligent artist who defied the camera by sheer precision and delicacy of hand. When you went into his studio, if he was not at work on one of his several well-known professional activities, you would find him making a nose flute or binding a book or cutting an intricate stencil or modelling a rose in gesso for a tiny locket as a present for a friend. And since in all this he was rare in his generation, the art historians of the future must keep him a separate place.

FOOTNOTES

1. Colin White, 1976. Edmund Dulac London: Studio Vista.
2. ibid, p.197.
3. ibid, p.8.
4. ibid, p.15.
5. ibid, p.42.
6. ibid, pp.20-21.
7. Bernard Quaritch, 1976. Catalogue of Press Books and Modern First Editions No. 960. London. Item 192.
8. White, op.cit. p.74.
9. Edmund Dulac 1915. Picture-Book for the French Red Cross. London : Hodder and Stoughton. Plate facing p.128.
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16. White, op.cit. p.111.
17. ibid, p.115.
18. ibid, p.161.
19. ibid, p.185.
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21. ibid, p.192.
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CHAPTER TWO

ARTISTIC BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCES

'Edmund Dulac was an interesting case of artistic development affected, if not determined by early impressions'.¹ The first works of art of any kind that he saw as a child belonged in the collection of his maternal uncle, an importer from the Far East:

His maternal uncle, Francis Rieu, was an importer of 'fancy goods' from the East; inexpensive 'objets d'art' which included some of the attractive Japanese woodblock prints then fashionable. 2

This early contact with the art of the Orient was to influence his work throughout his life. Doubtless, Dulac started with a natural instinct for two-dimensional design, but it is hard to believe that early acquaintance with the Orientals did not give him confidence in its possibilities, especially as there is little evidence in his work of direct imitation in the way of style.

...Dulac was a consummate decorator. He had an eclectic thirst for the art of the past and incorporated his knowledge into a remarkable vocabulary of design forms. His work had a cosmopolitan air, new in English illustration, but it found a large audience. 3

Although his sumptuous colour sense was indulged in a succession of full-colour process plate books, his less frequent line drawings showed him as a competent draughtsman. His somewhat fantastic style has been accredited with multifarious influences, and I agree with Frank Rutter in his Studio article of 1908, when he stated that he found it impossible to trace a talent so fresh and personal.

If we must talk of influences, perhaps it is best to start not at the beginning, but with Arthur Rackham, as he and Dulac

were the two best known artists of their time. In 1908, Rackham's success was beginning to attract competitors, amongst them was Dulac, whose drawings for the Tempest followed Rackham's Dream drawings at the Leicester Galleries that same year.

Rackham's junior by fifteen years, Dulac had no doubt been influenced by him, but his art was in contrast to Rackham's in several respects. Dulac's inspiration was primarily oriental .. while Rackham belonged to the Western, even nordic world. Dulac's emphasis lay in colour harmonies, while Rackham's was in line 4

Rackham clearly thought first of all in line, and only secondly in colour, so that the majority of his plates may indeed be described, and not unkindly - as Gettings,⁵ in his biography, notes - as 'coloured line drawings'. Illustrations by both Rackham and Dulac were used to raise money for charity during the First World War. Each contributed to Princess Mary's Gift Book, as one example, but probably the most interesting example of this special kind of 'gift' book is Edmund Dulac's Picture Book for the French Red Cross (Hodder and Stoughton, 1916). This was a selection of stories and illustrations, mainly from earlier gift books, in a form that was treasured in many families. It included Cinderella and two stories from the Arabian Nights, with drawings that strongly recall Persian miniatures.

As the twentieth century advanced, and with it the popular acceptance of the three- and four-colour halftone process, the 'gift' book - in a sense, the 'coffee-table' book for children - experienced a resurgence. Arthur Rackham was the most successful English artist in this field. The 'gift' books were of more consequence to children than other gifts: they were heavy and thick, with beautifully blocked covers, they often had a coloured illustration mounted on the front cover, and gilded heads, ornamental headbands and coloured endpapers.

Inside, there would be colour plates tipped on to cartridge mounts and protected with tissue. These books were precious objects and handled accordingly. Among those illustrated by Rackham were Rip Van Winkle, 1905, followed by Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens, 1906, and Alice in Wonderland, 1907.

There has been much criticism of the so-called 'gift' or 'fine art' book. For many years no publishing season was complete without half-a-dozen of these exotic extravagances until, as a result of over-production, the public became sated and the publishers exhausted their own market. David Bland in his work The Illustration of Books ⁶ describes these extravagances as 'more distinguished by their opulent appearance than by any bookish quality'. The 'gift' book is different from the 'édition-de-luxe' and has now gone out of fashion. It tends to use four-colour reproductions of paintings, printed on art paper and protected with tissues, and aims at a wider if less discriminating public. Its illustrators are often men who have made their reputations as painters. The 'gift' book is subjected to further denigration in Frank Eyre's British Children's Books in the Twentieth Century. His attitude to the whole subject is summed up in the following quotation :

The best illustrators of the day were drawn into a curiously sterile and uncreative by-way now almost forgotten, the 'fine art' or 'gift' book, and little creative work was done. ⁷

Eyre, in talking of the work of Rackham and Dulac, also puts forward a much shared view amongst critics, namely that the large number of volumes produced by Dulac and Rackham became collectors' pieces and were, in their original form, too sumptuous and expensive to

be considered as genuine children's books. Perhaps the wisest words on the subject of 'gift' books were uttered by Arthur Rackham himself when, writing in the American Junior Book of Authors (Horn Book, Inc., Boston, 1934) he said:

It must be insisted on that nothing less than the best that can be had, cost what it may (and it can hardly be cheap) is good enough for those early impressionable years when standards are formed for life. Any accepting, or even choosing, art or literature of a lower standard, as good enough for children, is a disastrous and costly mistake.

Talking of influences other than contemporary, it is necessary to refer back to the Edwardian age - a great era of book-illustration and one of notable developments in book design. The parallel influences of William Morris and Aubrey Beardsley were to be seen, the one in Dent's Illustrated Classics and in the elegantly mannered fairy-tales of Laurence Housman, the other in books from the Bodley Head. No greater contrast to Beardsley could be imagined than William Morris, despite the fact that it is Morris's influence that is obviously behind Beardsley's illustrations to the Morte d'Arthur, and not the more usual, ghost-like figure of Burne-Jones. Morris's book production was all done in the 'fin de siècle' period but shows no trace of Beardsley's decadence. Beardsley played with the manner of the eighteenth century, but Morris, when he was designing his books, lived in the fifteenth century. Morris was indeed a mediaevalist and, though his first typeface was based on the fine roman used by Nicholas Jenson in Venice in 1468, all his leanings were towards dark-textured, black-letter books. Morris's preoccupation with mediaevalism might seem a curious point of departure for modern book design, yet he was really at the beginning of the diverging lines of development in twentieth-century design. Morris contributed much

to the decorative arts; for printing, he established the belief in standards of quality in workmanship, and in the use of good materials. He aimed at perfection. He stated that he was determined to obtain the very best types, inks and papers as well as the best of illustrations and decorations. His illustrations were always cut on the wood to be printed by the same methods as the type. Morris's insistence on quality in workmanship, design and materials provided the qualities which were the basis of the revival of fine printing in England and America, in much of the continent of Europe, and particularly in Germany.

Perhaps one of the best ways to begin to understand William Morris is to listen a little to Holbrook Jackson:

William Morris had the imagination to see life in the form of design and the skill to express this sense of design in the materials of his art. That is the keynote of his genius and of his teaching. You can best understand his poetry, his romances, his stained glass and tapestries and chintzes, the books of the Kelmscott Press, as well as his Socialism, by an appeal to design - not an appeal merely to the technical relationship of lines and spaces and colours in patterns, or of rhymes and rhythms in a poem, but design as the relationship of idea and action, the relationship of art and purpose. William Morris always had at the back of his mind the dream of a Perfect State. Always busy in the visible world, he was still busier in the Utopia of his fancy. The beautiful things he made were imported to this world from that Utopia, and their very importation was an act of propaganda Everything he created was a lure to Utopia, an invitation to follow him into a new world. 8

However, Morris's influence, widespread as it was, belonged chiefly to the field of typography more than illustration. As to the latter, Morris was fighting the inevitable trend towards photomechanical printing.

On the contrary, Beardsley's work was significant for being intended for reproduction in this medium. Beardsley's correspondence,⁹

especially with his publishers John Lane and Leonard Smithers, shows him to have been astute in the commercial handling of his work and knowledgeable in the various methods of reproduction available to him. Several references are to be found to the Swan Electric Engraving Company and Carl Hentschel, both of whom seem to have enjoyed a certain degree of familiarity with Beardsley.

Nevertheless, it was not only in his approach to the photomechanical methods of reproduction that Beardsley differed from William Morris. Beardsley's work itself was the antithesis of everything Morris believed in.

Leaving aside the prodigious elements in the life and work of Aubrey Beardsley, his youth and early death, the sudden ripening of uninstructed genius, and the brilliant productiveness of those last six disease-ridden years, his best drawings stand out from the general level of British art with such sheer audacity as to compel attention. It may be true that more than half of this distinction is comprised of the insolence of originality or of mere difference, but even then his novelties and differences are so remarkable as to be things in themselves Aubrey Beardsley was all mannerism; his genius all whim. That is the explanation of its suddenness; its surprise. 10

In 1890 Beardsley was only eighteen years of age and an insurance clerk. In 1898 he died of tuberculosis in the France he loved, whence came the whole vocabulary of decadence by which he and his work were haunted. In the intervening years, driven by the intensity common to consumptives, he completed over one thousand drawings, each for some definite purpose. He was a townsman "always worked indoors, without models and by artificial, generally candle light".¹¹ His designs for the Morte d'Arthur, done in 1893, are in the Pre-Raphaelite manner, but this influence soon waned and gave way to the Japanese print, as his drawings for Oscar Wilde's Salome show.

This in time yielded to the illustrators of the eighteenth century, who inspired him to perhaps his greatest work - his design for Pope's The Rape of the Lock, and for his own erotic romance Under the Hill, which appeared in The Savoy magazine. In these he invented an entirely original technique in black and white and achieved a triumphant mastery over the limitations of the line-block as a reproductive medium.

Beardsley is best known as the art nouveau illustrator par excellence:

The air of decadence in Beardsley's work is an essential part of the aesthetics of art nouveau, itself essentially a cult of the precious. The precious quality can be seen at its best in many fine art nouveau book bindings, but if art nouveau had nothing but this to offer, its influence would not have lasted. Beardsley's sinuous line, his massing of areas of black and white, his choice of subjects, rarefied as hothouse orchids and with a lurking sense of eroticism is the epitome of art nouveau. The most interesting of his qualities as a designer is this use of white space, an ethereal quality which is a component of art nouveau. 12

The period of art nouveau took quite a different form in Britain from the sinuous line of continental art nouveau. It has been said¹³ that the British variety was concerned primarily with the arrangement of empty spaces, the Continental with their filling - somewhat of an over-simplification, but one which nevertheless contains some truth. It is from the art nouveau point of view that we can best trace Beardsley's influence upon Dulac. As the influences of the Orient are present in Dulac's colouring, so are the influences of art nouveau visible in his use of space:

Edmund Dulac ... gives his fairy tale pictures an oriental richness; all bear the marks of art nouveau in the details of their forms and compositions, though none can be said to adhere to it wholeheartedly. 14

Art nouveau was essentially new art and in no way historical. Its origins, only too often explained, were largely oriental, the

influences springing from the Japanese prints of Utamaro, Hiroshige, Hokusai and others that were, in the 1890's, appearing on the bookstalls and in the art shops of Paris, Munich and London. These Japanese paintings were executed by the artists of the Ukiyo-e¹⁵ school, the name being originally a Buddhist term: Ukiyo meaning the floating world, where "floating" has connotations of transience and lack of substance - the world of everyday life, especially of pleasure, theatre, dancing, love, festivals. In the Buddhist sense, the term was used to refer to the illusory and undesirable state of affairs in this world of ceaseless reincarnation, which could be transcended through faith in the saving power of the Buddha.

Ukiyo-e, pictures of the floating world, is the name given to the distinct style of painting, and of the book illustrations and prints derived from the paintings, which grew up to record and give visual identity to this new urban culture. Ukiyo-e proper seems to begin around 1600, reaching its first full flowering in the Genroku period, (1688-1703). The enhanced standard of living of the urban mercantile class had been accompanied by an increase in literacy. It is in the illustrations to the popular novels and guides to the brothels, volumes of poetry and sex-manuals which were produced to satisfy this market, that the Ukiyo-e print has its origins. However, the paintings of the Ukiyo-e school, for all that they were, by aristocratic standards, plebeian were available only to the wealthier plebeians. To follow the development of the Ukiyo-e print is an experience not to be missed: from the bold, black lines of Moronobu at the end of the seventeenth century, through the perfection of polychrome printing and its first full

exploitation by Harunobu in the mid-eighteenth century, to the quasi-Western delicacy of colour and ferocity of feeling in the late nineteenth century Yoshitoshi.

Mention may also be made, at this stage, of the technique¹⁶ behind a Ukiyo-e woodcut picture - a curious tradition in a world all its own. Knowledge of the woodcut medium reached Japan, with Buddhism, from China, probably in the eighth century. The Ukiyo-e woodcut picture was a co-operative endeavour, with the publisher usually as the prime mover. The artist produced a line drawing on a very thin paper. This was pasted down on a block, usually of cherry or pear wood, cut with the grain. A team of engravers were engaged in the block cutting - the most skilled would cut round the lines of the drawing, destroying it in the process. The resulting line-block was passed to the printer, who struck off a few proofs; these were returned to the artist, who indicated the areas to be printed in colour. Further blocks, sometimes up to ten in number, were then prepared, one for each colour. The blocks were then passed to the printers, also a team. The line image was printed with sumi, an ink made from soot and glue, the colours from a mixture of pigments and rice paste.

The printing was done without a press: the block was covered with pigment brushed on, the paper, lined up carefully, placed on top and the image transferred by means of a special tool, the baren. The baren is a circular pad, made up of a coil of twisted bamboo sheath cord, and covered with a sheath also made from the outer skin of the bamboo. The paper chiefly used was a variety called hoshō. This, made from the fibres of the bark of

the paper mulberry - was soft in texture, allowing a good penetration of the pigment, and yet was sufficiently strong to resist the rubbing of the baren.

One of the first Western artists to take a serious interest in this oriental art was James McNeill Whistler, who incorporated in his paintings and in the typography of his books the qualities he found in Japanese prints. He was soon followed by French painters such as Gauguin, Bonnard and Lautrec, and by the poster artists, among whom was Alphonse Mucha. In art nouveau posters, the designs are flat, essentially two-dimensional and without perspective; and the white paper is as important as the flat colours.

Mucha, whose delicately sensuous style epitomises the urbane grace of French art nouveau, was a Czech, born in 1860 in the remote Moravian town of Ivancice, who died, after being questioned by the Gestapo, in Prague in 1939. When he was twenty-eight, he came to Paris to study, as Dulac was briefly to do, at the Académie Julien:

His very solid females, strongly outlined like the leading of a stained glass window, move through a web of febrile tendrils. 17

In spite of his origins, Alphonse Mucha was as much France's contribution to art nouveau as Beardsley was England's.

Yet another connection between Aubrey Beardsley and Dulac, besides that of art nouveau, is on the more intimate level of an appearance Dulac seems to have made in Beardsley's household. Malcolm Easton¹⁸ mentions this probable occurrence in connection with the subject of W.B. Yeats' famous poem, Upon a Dying Lady, which obviously refers to Beardsley's sister Mabel. The following, relevant extract concerns the question of dolls and drawings brought to Mabel by 'certain artists':

Bring where our Beauty lies
A new modelled doll, or drawing,
With a friend's or an enemy's
Features, or maybe showing
Her features when a tress
Of dull red hair was flowing
Over some silken dress
Cut in the Turkish fashion,
Or, it may be, like a boy's,
We have given the world our passion,
We have naught for death but toys.

Edmund Dulac is one of the artists whose name immediately springs to mind. Indeed, Dulac was the very man, especially if it were a question of a drawing in the Turkish or any other Eastern fashion: at that moment he must have been working on his embellishments for Princess Badoura, and he had already had published the extravagantly decorated Stories from the Arabian Nights, [and Ali Baba.] In addition, Dulac had a talent for caricature, and his caricature dolls soon won acclaim. Whilst contributing to the magazine Outlook, he attended a staff luncheon at which he revealed this remarkable gift to the assembled company:

The coffee stage had been reached when Dulac quietly produced from his pocket two small dolls and placed them on the table, setting to partners, as it were. One represented a famous art critic, and the other a lady equally well known in the musical world. Without a word said about their identity the company roared in immediate and delighted recognition. 19

Similar to Beardsley in the innovation sense was Léon Bakst who, alongside other designers of Diaghilev's Russian Ballets, seems to have been all too familiar with Beardsley's work:

In terms of popular fame and international influence the illustrations for 'Salome' probably represent the peak of Beardsley's career: the type of female figure he here favours is the 'Beardsley woman' (who became for a year or two a fashionable type in life as well as in art); the sumptuous, vaguely oriental trappings seized the imagination of Europe and beyond

(as Ricketts remarked ... Bakst and other of Diaghilev's Russian designers were early familiar with Beardsley's illustrations). 20

Léon Bakst was one of the most sensational designers of the century - grandiose, sensual, overwhelming, and a crucial influence on the Diaghilev ballet. Charles Spencer, Bakst's first comprehensive biographer,²¹ has had some enlightening comments to make concerning the man who became one of the most pervasive of influences:

Léon Bakst was not a handsome man. Short and plump, with carrotty red hair, short-sighted eyes, aided by pince-nez, his contemporaries found him comic and faintly pathetic [He] was a complex and difficult man, a manic-depressive, dying on December 27, 1924, alone, in a locked studio in Paris, the windows shut, the blinds drawn. 22

Bakst's idiosyncratic behaviour, however, and to a large extent his mode of life, had their root-cause in his poverty-stricken childhood and unhappy parentage:

The desertion by his mother was the central experience of Bakst's life; his future attitude to women stems from this trauma. Bakst's one effort at marriage ended disastrously after a year; and significantly his son, André, was conceived some years after the divorce. Henceforth, his active sexual life was with women whose reputation made it impossible for them to be compared, let alone equated, with his mother. The types of woman he sought out are precisely those he depicted in his erotic stage costumes - brilliantly fantasied as the lascivious Egyptian Queen Cleopatra, the murderous Queen Tamara, the houris of 'Schéhérazade', with their exposed breasts, half-revealed sexual organs, limbs provocatively caressed by transparent gauzes, enhanced by gestures of abandon and ecstasy.

Dulac, who had seen the London production of Diaghilev's Cleopatra in 1911, was greatly attracted by Bakst's use of colour in his designs. For Cleopatra the imagination of this spectacular designer was allowed to run wild in an orgy of ideas, the first of

which was announced without any hesitation:

"There will be a huge temple on the banks of the Nile; columns; a sultry day; the scent of the East and a great many lovely women with beautiful bodies". 24

Cleopatra was Bakst's first venture in what was to prove an outrageous partnership with Diaghilev; it was also a totally successful production for the Ballets Russes, with which they were launched in 1909. Bakst's success was assured in a production, for which he, himself, devised one of the most sensational and instantly transporting entrances:

After a long ritual procession of musicians and dancers, six slaves enter, bearing on their shoulders a chest of ebony and gold. A negro dancer circles it, provocatively touching the box, which is placed in the centre of the Temple. From it the slaves lift a mummified figure, swathed in veils, which is placed upright on high ivory pattens (those curious sandals worn by Japanese and Venetian courtesans). The figure is then manipulated so that the veils unwind - first red decorated with lotuses and silver crocodiles, then green with dynastic embroideries, golden filigree followed by brilliant orange ... and so on until the 12th veil of deep indigo. 25

Martin Birnbaum was one of those fortunate enough to be present at the opening and, writing in 1919, he had his own personal and deeply rooted impressions to recall:

The settings were built upon extremely simple lines, - a vast Egyptian hall surrounded by massive columns between which you caught glimpses of the glistening sapphire Nile. The prevailing color was a brilliant orange, and the great stones, which seemed to have absorbed the golden sunlight, suggested deserts of glittering powdered sand outside... As the story unfolded, we saw groups of sleek Syrians in silver, gaudy Jewesses with headdresses of pearls and rubies, sveite Egyptian dancers in golden tissues, Dionysian priestesses, corybantes and black serviteurs, whose extraordinary costumes were always in keeping with their respective characters. 26

For their second season, of 1910, Daighilev insisted on original ballets for his company. It was decided to use Rimsky-Korsakov's symphonic poem Schéhérazade as a basis for the next production; a story whose designs, for both stage and book, were to bring about fame of an everlasting nature for both Bakst and Dulac. The one was inspired to unscalable heights of excess in a décor that was, in texture, close to flesh; the other, master of his own jewelled domain, claimed his rightful place as the only true illuminator of Schéhérazade's fantasies. Martin Burnbaum again felt it necessary to put into words his praise of, what will always be regarded as, Bakst's masterpiece of theatrical design:

In this magnificent prelude to the Arabian Nights, Bakst was his amazing oriental self. The ancient Persians themselves could not have found fault with his marvelous setting ... Emerald, indigo and geranium, the leopard's spots and the scales of the serpent, black, rose, vermilion and triumphant orange, were all shrieking to be heard, and shrieking in harmony. It was an orgy of color to the last possible tension... The effect of the colors was enforced and exalted by the voluptuous movements of the dancers and the astonishing music which Rimsky-Korsakov had written for this miracle of joint creation... Haughty sultans embraced their false sultanas, grinning eunuchs, like gorgeous speckled birds, dangled golden keys while their doom was impending, powerful exultant lovers, black as ebony, whirled the frenzied women about, to the tunes of baleful Hindu musicians ... It was a fascinating dream of brutal sensuality, of regal jealousy. 27.

It might be added that Bakst's ordinary nude life studies are tame academic essays, but once he is allowed to partly clothe, or rather unclothe, the body, the almost violent contortions and the adorned colour become elements in an erotic fantasy. Pornography in the ordinary sense was not one of Bakst's subjects: his eroticism expressed itself in transparently draped ladies of the harem.

Bakst's influence was enormous, to the point of revolutionism: his vibrant colours penetrated everywhere. Looking back on the epoch, J.B. Priestley recalls, "women of fashion, between 1911 and 1913, haunted by Bakst's designs, insisted upon a Russian-cum-Oriental style in their clothes". Paul Poiret, the great couturier of the day, was not one to escape the wash of the wave:

Paul Poiret was the greatest single catalyst of the Art Deco period. He revolutionised women's dress with his dazzling collection of Eastern style costumes, inspired by Diaghilev's ballet Russe. A society which for years had been dressed in layer upon layer of heavy clothing, underlaid by lethal corsets, fell like carrion crows upon the fluid, slim fitting, brilliantly coloured garments. 28

The greatest single influence on Bakst himself, according to the thorough research done by Charles Spencer, was the painter Mikhail Vrubel, "a mad, anguished, genius in the mould of Van Gogh, whose work, unfortunately is hardly known in the West."²⁹ His work, as that of Bakst, was depicted in oriental splendour, reflected largely, in the case of Bakst, in his use of colour. In Britain, yet another artist whose work was influenced by the East (in addition to Dulac) was William Heath Robinson.

The two met at the London Sketch Club, the beginning of a friendship during which their work was to rub shoulders on more than one occasion:

Heath Robinson had adopted Dulac's placing of a small isolated object at the front of the picture, and both he and Dulac were aware of the delicacy of tonal range now possible with the new colour process and in new lighting-effects ... both men used the same water-colour technique of blotting out the appropriate moistened areas to achieve their highlights. 30

In return, the endpapers of Dulac's Lyrics Pathetic and Humorous from A-Z, of 1906, owed quite a large amount of their humour to Heath Robinson's peculiarly droll characters. The latter artist produced some of his best work for books in the 'gift' class, the first of which, Twelfth Night, he illustrated for Hodder and Stoughton in 1908. That same year, Arthur Rackham illustrated A Midsummer Night's Dream and Dulac The Tempest. Heath Robinson, writing of his experience, displays yet another connection with Dulac, in his approach to the task of book-illustration:

"The work was a joy to me from beginning to end ... I tried to preserve the atmosphere of the play as I felt it. The philosophic clown appealed to me all through the work and I endeavoured to insinuate something of his philosophy into the drawings. The art of the book illustrator, as I understand it, did not consist solely in literally illustrating the incidents. His relationship to the work he was treating was much the same as that freer one adopted by a musical composer to his subject. 31

Thus far, a great deal has been said about those influenced by the art of the Orient, little concerning that art itself. There is, perhaps, place for considerable expansion of this most frequently mentioned yet rarely detailed theme. Eastern art comprises a great many styles: the art of the Far East, in this case Japan, proved to be a major influence on Dulac in various ways throughout his life. As early as 1899, he designed the cover for a programme using his knowledge of Japanese prints - a knowledge he had gained amongst the Eastern art collections of his uncle. These same Japanese colour woodcuts were to play a large part in the career of Heath Robinson.

The work of the Japanese artists, whose woodblock prints reached Paris in considerable numbers in the latter half of the nineteenth century, presented a new vision to European painters. The

interest in nature shown by the Japanese was paralleled by the Impressionists, but the Japanese simplified and formalised their landscapes, in contrast to the Impressionists who were intent on capturing the momentary vision of light, of trees in motion, water sparkling, figures bending. On the other hand, the essence of the Japanese realism was two-dimensional. It was the Japanese prints of Hiroshige, Utamaro and Hokusai which played such an important role in the development of Heath Robinson as an artist. The most exciting elements in the woodcuts of Hokusai and Hiroshige being their lack of any familiar perspective, the high viewpoint, the lack of symmetry in their composition and the frequent diagonal force in their designs - just those qualities which Dulac was seen to adopt:

Dulac, in the style of some Japanese artists, placed his figures high in the background, using the foreground space to cause a deliberate visual irritation at the apparent imbalance. 32

Another factor, particularly in the work of Utamaro, was the white space surrounding his figures. Beardsley, an influence on both Heath Robinson and Dulac, seized on the use of space and made great and successful use of it. David Bland, writing about the nineteenth century, gives his own résumé on the Japanese influence:

Now [the last decade of the nineteenth century] Japan had recently opened her doors to Western commerce and Japanese decoration was a heady draught for the late Victorian designers. The Japanese fan became a stock ornament and the craze even affected advertisement layout and display types But the impact of the Japanese colour print was more beneficial. Although Japan was almost in medieval condition she had derived the art of colour printing from wood from China where printing from wooden blocks had been practised as early as the 6th or 7th centuries. The best Japanese colour prints show a delicacy of colour, a beauty of detail and a perfection of register that can hardly be surpassed by any process whatever. 33

Besides the art of Japan, Dulac had been greatly influenced by Middle Eastern art, especially that of Persia.



Close-up of The Prince leading
the lady to the tomb out
of the First Calendar, No.
17 (as inscribed in pencil),
from Sinbad the Sailor and
Other Stories from the Arabian
Nights, 1914, watercolour
12½ x 10 in. Victoria and
Albert Museum, London.
The first book-illustration
work after his cruise with
the Davises, Dulac here
gives vent to his new
enthusiasm for the art of
Persia, and the new, eastern
colours.

This was infinitely more pronounced directly after his cruise with the Davises in 1913. He seemed disillusioned by the non-eastern places but excited by the colour, clothes and people of those eastern scenes that served to prove true his illustrations to the Arabian Nights. These new colours, together with his new excitement over Persian miniatures, became part of a range of influences that were to show in Dulac's work for some considerable time:

Influenced by the bright, enamel-like colours of Persian miniatures Dulac began using tangerine and carmine which, with strong black to offset them, contrasted well with the large pastel areas where the colour had been mixed with Chinese white. He also imitated the Persian use of the high vantage point, choosing a position slightly below the highest unit in the picture, so the perspective could be manipulated both above and below He also introduced another of his observations from the cruise, in the eyebrows of slave girls, lengthened by paint to meet in the mid-line. 34

Indeed, Dulac had always shown a predilection for the East in other interests apart from art. Here, we may refer to Martin Birnbaum's account of some of the more personal moments in Dulac's life, when he displayed his preference for the Orient:

Dulac is always trying to convince himself and his friends that ... he is actually descended from those mysterious Saracens who overran the ancient centre of Languedoc, several centuries ago. Perhaps his theory is correct. It offers, at any rate, a simple explanation for the fact that besides being English and French, his art is of Persia, India or China as the occasion demands, as well as for the cleverness with which he can seriously impersonate an oriental gentleman, and for the uncanny way in which his pet chow and Siamese cat understand him. 35

As in the case of many of his contemporaries, Dulac was possibly over-educated in the history of art. In order that we may understand a little better the background to his work, it is necessary

to acquaint ourselves with some of the history of Eastern art - especially that of Persia and India.

Throughout her long and eventful history, art was Persia's greatest resource, her most characteristic and permanent contribution. Its most essential quality is its relevance to life, its oneness with the texture of human experience - illuminating the humble and the commonplace, exalting the royal and the divine. From early times, although art was inborn and taken for granted, yet the Persians consciously placed a high value on beauty. A widespread and expert appreciation sustained the highest level of quality through many centuries. Royal patronage, enthusiastic and generous, was never lacking - beauty was always and in all things accorded high status. At one with life, the arts were also united one with another. Craft borrowed from craft; designer and poet shared common themes and exchanged mutual inspiration. They were engaged on a common task which absorbed them totally, with little thought for individual pride or glory. Signatures on Persian art being scarce, the works were anonymous and therefore gained in sincerity, devotion and authority.

In subject and manner the range of Persian art was vast. The miniature, as a form, was worshipped, yet those works of power and monumentality were also expertly executed. Indeed, there seems to have been no style or mood that the Persians did not successfully master. Persian designers were, as those of no other culture, adept in stimulating and controlling an intricate, complex mass of motives. Simultaneously they showed special skill in the reduction of an image to its simplest terms. They were recognised masters of the expressive silhouette.

It must be said that no art in the world is so outrageously misrepresented by monochrome reproduction as the art of Islamic Persia color is nine-tenths of a Persian miniature, and the difference between a miniature and the photographic reproduction of it is the difference between a real herbaceous border and the photograph of a herbaceous border. 36

The sixteenth century was the pinnacle of classical painting in Persia. The Shahs of the Safavid dynasty created for themselves a life-style of unequalled beauty and luxury, and the artists who served them captured it all - lovers and warriors, hawks and gazelles, palaces, fountains and gardens - in miniatures of exquisite detail. Aided by techniques still unknown to us, they applied lapis lazuli, malachite, silver and gold to their small paintings giving them a purity and intensity of tone that has rarely been equalled.

For a Persian artist of the sixteenth century, the peak of worldly success was recognition at the Shah's court and membership in the royal workshop. During the Safavid rule in Persia, even the most humbly born could rise to great heights. Reaching the heights of imperial artist gave a painter freedom of access to the imperial court, where the position of artists, as all things in Safavid Persia, depended upon the Shah's good will. The training of a painter began early and was extremely thorough. In addition to mastering the essential social graces, - such as Persian literature, horsemanship, courtly etiquette and the like - he had to learn to make brushes from kitten or baby squirrel hairs perfectly balanced and tied into quill handles; to grade and pulverise pigments; to prepare binding media; to use gold and silver paint, and much more. Far more important were lessons in drawing, a fundamental requirement for all painters.

Moreover, since Persian painting is probably unrivaled in world art for the purity and intensity of its colour, apprentices had to discover the properties of each hue both separately and in conjunction with all the rest.

Close observation of Safavid manuscripts shows that aspiring young artists contributed to them in minor ways, such as laying in flat areas of colour. As their skills developed more demanding passages were assigned. It must have seemed a long wait before these novices became masters, able to take all the credit for the sum total of work that went into all miniatures.

Art history and politics are in many ways inseparable: the development of Safavid painting is shown to be consistent with the success of Shah Isma'il as a warrior and statesman. By 1514, Shah Isma'il had brought together eastern and western Persia, through survival and careful waging of campaigns, and had settled at Tabriz, where he remained for ten years until just before his death at the age of thirty-eight.

As is to be expected, the styles of Shah Isma'il's artists reflected the unification of east and west. The leading painter of eastern art was the renowned Bihzad, court artist to Sultan Husayn Mirza of Herat, the last of the Timurid rulers and one of Persia's most imaginative and discerning patrons. In partnership with his brilliant minister of state, he inspired artists, writers and musicians to truly classical heights; witness a description of one of Bihzad's miniatures exemplifying this peak:

Painted with infinite fineness, in subtly harmonious color, it describes the disturbing moment when Yusuf (Joseph of the Bible) was trapped by Zulaykha (Potiphar's wife) in a boudoir decorated with erotically tempting pictures. With saintly chastity, the beautiful young man escaped from his would-be seducer's apartment, shown as a mazelike structure of staircases and closed doors. Bihzad's genius dramatized the tale while also lavishing upon it a jeweler's dream of rich ornament. In spite of all this finery, the composition is spatially as logical and consistent as an architect's ground plan ... [In contrast to drawings in the style of the Turkman School, which instantaneously reach out and grasp the human mind] Bihzad's painting can only be comprehended by sustained contemplation. 37

When, in 1524, Shah Isma'il died while on pilgrimage to Ardabil, Prince Tahmasp, his ten year-old son, took over the post. While Safavid Persia was by no means secure at this time, the boy Shah found comfort in his books and pictures. Already an accomplished calligrapher, his training as a painter was being furthered under the guidance of the great Sultan Muhammad. This relationship happily lasted long enough to see the production of the justly renowned Khamsa of Nizami which, when finished, saw the complete fusion of Turkman and Timurid strains. David Bland has some suitably laudable comments to make on this most magnificent of Persian works:

It is a collection of five metrical romances which formed a favourite vehicle for illustrations during this period - Bihzad had already illustrated it in a much smaller format. This is a large book executed at Tabriz in the middle of the [sixteenth] century. It has several fine frontispieces which were a feature of Persian books but what is more unusual is the remarkable marginal decoration that surrounds the text pages as well as the miniatures ... The Persian borders are two-dimensional in flat gold on a creamy background which gives the effect of a subdued pattern... The unity of the book is enhanced because the border does not distract the eye, and in addition there are other devices to tie the text to the pictures. 38

By 1556, the nephew of Shah Tahmasp, Ibrahim Mirza, began a new phase of inspiration for artists. Ibrahim's success, both politically and artistically, seemed to wax and wane according to Shah Tahmasp's moods. Ibrahim managed to regain status before his uncle died in 1576, but a year later, after his murder, the first phase of Safavid painting was seen to end. Persian book illustration declined in the late seventeenth century, due partly to the habitual imitation of European models, partly to the decline in patronage.

In the consideration of the art of India, there is less direct evidence of any positive influence in Dulac's work. Here, it is more a case of a vague Indian mood showing itself in some of his works, along with adaptations of Indian features and artistic technique:

Apart from the traditional portrayal of the Hindu gods, Dulac's one direct acknowledgement of Indian art in his figures was the emphasis he placed on the large profile eye heavily made up with kohl and the deeply curved, sweeping eyebrow that were common in Indian miniatures after the seventeenth century. 39

Even Martin Birnbaum, usually loquacious on the subject of Oriental art, seems to have had little to say on the subject of India as an artistic influence on Dulac's work. We find only a single reference in conjunction with Dulac's caricature of Ricketts and Shannon portrayed as mediaeval saints, in which Birnbaum praises Dulac as he "has so cleverly mingled the spirit of Indian Art and English humor". 40

Knowledge of Indian art is somewhat limited, but the area in which we might best find some connections with Dulac's work - namely that of the Mughal period - is relatively well-known.

This acknowledgement of its very existence was due, mainly, to official encouragement under the Emperor Humāyūn, the second Mughal emperor.

The brilliance of Mughal painting is enhanced by new pigments - ultramarine, kermes (a red dye obtained from the bodies of the female coccus insect), and Indian yellow peori from the urine of stalled cattle - and by burnishing with an agate. Detail is effected by means of fine brush strokes.

Mughal painting would seem at first acquaintance to represent a fundamental departure from Indian tradition, so obvious are its many contrasts with the Buddhist and Hindu art of earlier ages. In fact, it is the work of the court painters of the members of an invading dynasty, from which its name derives. It arose with apparent suddenness in the sixteenth century, reached its peak in the early and middle years of the seventeenth, and then steadily declined until the break-up of the Mughal Empire in the middle of the eighteenth century. It is a specialised form of painting, directed firstly to the illustration of fine books - which were only at the time being produced in any numbers in India, the palm leaf being replaced by paper for manuscripts.

The founder of the Mughal dynasty, Bābur, was a Turkish prince, with the prestige of a direct descendant of Tamerlane, and the tastes of a cultivated Persian gentleman. He had visited Herat at a time when the city was the acknowledged world centre of Islamic literary and artistic life, when Bihzād, greatest of all Persian painters, was at his peak. As his memoirs testify, Bābur was interested in painting, but neither he nor his son, Humāyūn, ruled long enough in India to leave a lasting personal impress.

Akbar, probably the greatest of all his line, came to rule in 1556. His painters had wide opportunities of practising their art; the Emperor himself had taken drawing lessons in his youth and had collected an enormous library of Persian manuscripts, many illustrated. His calligraphers, miniaturists and other craftsmen were employed in copying and adorning both the Persian classics and those of India, as well as on chronicles of the reign of the Emperor and his ancestors. In the great illustrated chronicles of Akbar's reign the whole life of the ruler, his court and his armies is truthfully and vividly portrayed. The animal painting especially affords many charming proofs of that intimate sympathy with animal life which characterises the Indian outlook.

Akbar's chronicler notes, significantly that the pictures of his master's artists were worthy of a place beside the wonderful works of the European painters, who attained world-wide fame. Before the middle of the reign, European painting began to have visible effects on the court artists in modelling and perspective, in landscape backgrounds and the drawing of the folds of drapery. The skies, instead of being golden or pure lapis blue, as in Persia, sometimes show brilliant sunset and cloud effects. Real horses replace the fantastic creatures of Persian convention. Human figures may be stiff and lifeless, but the faces often come alive. Drawn now more and more in profile, in contrast with the three-quarter profile faces which the Persian artist, with his love of graceful curves, preferred, they display in their careful drawing a close study of personality. Many of the paintings of Akbar's period were signed, but apart from a very few they do not reveal distinct individual traits, the painters merging their individuality in a common manner. This remains true for the most part of later work also, though that of a few painters can be identified with some

In the reign of Jehāngīr (1605-1627), Akbar's successor, Mughal painting reached its greatest height of accomplishment. Some of the intense movement is missing, the bustle and hurry which the mainly narrative purpose of the miniatures of the preceding reign had evoked. Nevertheless, the painters are much more practised in technique, even if less daring. Although the Emperor was profoundly affected by the beauty of the natural world and thus patronised many bird and animal studies, it is in portraiture that the painters of this reign above all excelled. Indeed, it was through portraiture, no doubt, that the Mughal miniature became, partly at least, emancipated from the manuscript.

The essence of Mughal painting is probably best summarised thus:

It is a mistake, though an understandable one, to regard Mughal painting merely as a foreign importation, without roots or permanence. It is, incontestably, a synthesis. It arose through the teaching of Persian artists, but the pupils did not paint like Persians. It borrowed even more freely from Europe than from Persia, but it remained true in essence to Indian traditional ideals, which asserted themselves more and more till the foreign borrowings became little more than reminiscences. 41

Having walked down the long corridor that connects the various compartments of Dulac's art and its many influences, it is necessary to reflect for a moment, possibly with the aid of some of Dulac's own thoughts on the matter. Speaking on the advance which his art was seen to make after its initial success, Dulac had some sober thoughts to express:

"The development should have been even more rapid," Dulac tells us, "but all the drawings for a particular book must be more or less in the same spirit and at the same level, and the nature of such work does not allow progress to go beyond the step forward made with the first illustration of a series." 42

In contrast to this statement, Martin Birnbaum expresses his astonishment at the overwhelming advances Dulac made in the illustrations of just one book, namely Fairy Tales of the Allied Nations (1916), touching on the subject of influences:

... Each story means a new racial tradition and a wholly different inspiration, and the result is a unique commentary on the artist's resourcefulness and wonderful power of assimilation. In each painting he magically develops what appears superficially to be a new style, peculiarly appropriate to the nationality of the particular story, but ever remaining Dulac's own. It would be too much to expect to find him guiltless of the charge of borrowing, but the critics who are not satisfied unless they are tracing influences, will be faced here by a novel problem. 43

To obtain an accurate picture of the artistry of Edmund Dulac, it is best to turn yet again to an account made by one of his contemporaries. R.H.Wilenski, on the occasion of Dulac's memorial exhibition, had a few words to say on this man's place in the art of his time:

Edmund Dulac is a collector's artist. His illustrated books, the water-colour and gouache drawings made for them and the outline studies of details on transparent paper are all collector's pieces; so too are his stamps and playing cards, his letters written with exquisite penmanship, his occasional paintings in oil or tempera, his caricatures of social-artistic persons and those museum pieces, the caricature wax dolls, Sir Thomas Beecham ... George Moore ... Sir Claude Phillips and some others. There is moreover a rarity value attaching to many of these things already, as few drawings in his late manner are now in this country ... and only the drawings for his three last books ... and some selected from other periods were in his studio when he died.

At first glance he seems an artist unrelated to his period - the influence of Cubism, for example, hardly appears in his work ... and there are no signs of Expressionism or Surrealism. But he has a period place in the long, still unfinished struggle of the artists to keep their end up against the camera and the movies...

He was also of his period in his wide acquaintance with Western and Oriental painting - indeed, like all artists of this century, he was lamentably over-educated in the history of art. But he was able to keep his knowledge sorted and to make eclectic use, especially in his later period, of decorative motifs garnered from it and adapt them to the particular task in hand. 44

Having spent some considerable time in talking of influences, it is important to remember that Dulac was, and is an influence in himself. Amongst his contemporaries, two artists whose work has hitherto not been mentioned, and who both have obviously been influenced by Dulac, are Warwick Goble and William M. Timlin. Warwick Goble, whose work Mr. White mentions in conjunction with Dulac's illustrations for Fairy Tales of the Allied Nations, was born in London and worked for some time, as did Dulac, on the staff of the Pall Mall Gazette. His work favoured material mostly in the world of fairies, including tales from Japan and Bengal. He died in 1943. William M. Timlin, popular as a painter of fanciful watercolours, readily acknowledged the especial influence of Dulac in his work. Timlin, a successful architect who designed Johannesburg's Colosseum Theatre, later became a landscape painter in oils. His unfinished work, the illustrations for the book, The Building of a Fairy City, is a typical example of his style of romantic fantasy - a most delicate and captivating work. He died in the same year as Goble.

Dulac's influence is again shown in the work of several of the younger generation of today's illustrators, thus making a contribution to the revival of the illustrated book. However, those wishing to repeat his subtle textures will be faced with some difficulty, owing to the lack of availability of the hand-made papers that he used.

One of today's artists who is currently enjoying unbelievable success, is the 'Tiger Lady' herself, Nicola Bayley. Hailed as the brightest thing to happen to children's book illustration since Beatrix Potter, she paints delicate miniature watercolour fantasies featuring animals in human roles. She is known as the 'Tiger Lady' having The Tyger Voyage as one of her latest illustrative successes - somewhat of a joint venture with Richard Adams as storyteller:

Visiting Nicola Bayley is rather like walking into the world of Victorian children's books. First, one has to find a gate in a wall, off an odd little private road in Hampstead. Through the gate is a dark garden path leading to a rambling old house, overgrown with ivy. Right at the top of the house is a huge studio with dark brown beams and gigantic gothic windows. Here Nicola Bayley lives and works. It used to be the studio of Arthur Rackham ... At the bottom of the huge window that looks out towards Primrose Hill, Nicola Bayley has carefully ranged a series of magic lantern slides showing an elephant, a tiger and other exotic beasts. 45

Talking at a newspaper interview she readily acknowledges Edmund Dulac as one of her major influences:

She wishes she had something extraordinary to tell, but she was barely out of art school when the book trade pounced on her talent for illustrating, and she's been working into the small hours ever since ... She says that if she buys any children's books they are usually Victorian, though if we're talking of influences the term has to take in Rackham and Dulac who ... have some part of their being in this century. 46

One of the most fascinating things about Nicola Bayley's work is its perfectly detailed, miniature form. This is achieved with the simplest of tools, a suitable accompaniment to the most refreshingly modest of outlooks:

The tools of her trade are refreshingly basic, just a battered old Winsor and Newton water-colour box and a jam jar of assorted sable brushes. Mahler on the record player helps speed it all along. 47

The stippled look of her pictures is achieved by dotting on the paint by a brush in thousands of tiny dabs. However, there is a good reason for the miniature form of her work - the strange effect of an accident during her second year at the Royal College of Art:

Her constant companion, a man she knew from St. Martin's, had a serious car smash. She withdrew into herself and became very private... She pulled a curtain about her desk and drew very tiny, with the feeling that she wanted no one to see what she was doing.

Since then, she says, the smaller the better with everything. The tyger seems the exception proving the rule, though its just possible, looking at her tyger, to discern that it has the soul of a well-nourished cat. 48

An artist very much of today's world and yet linked irrevocably with Dulac's period, is Helen Ganly. This very modern painter, in a style as far from Victorian art as Nicola Bayley is near, is the grand-daughter of Charles Robinson and the great-niece of William Heath Robinson. Though her family was full of artists and her talent obvious, she was never pushed towards the art world: 7

The other side of a bronze chenille curtain in the gloom of an old clothes shop, stairs rush sharply up to the room Helen Ganly swears was once a brothel but is now her studio. A bald bulb hangs above a table littered with paint and paraphernalia; water-colours nudge each other along the walls, pictures are stacked on the floor boards, some, shyly, lean face to the wall. 49

A compulsive painter from the age of four, Helen Ganly was lecturer and tutor at Ruskin School of Drawing for ten years, before a clash between factions of the staff ended in a termination of her contract. On the insistence of a friend, she went the round of the London Galleries and finally landed a one-woman show.

Her work is usually figurative and always closely related to events in her life; often she works in series. A stay in hospital meant a run of hospital scenes; a visit to the circus resulted in studies of acts ... There may also, she says, be influences she is less conscious of: a summer reading existentialists spawned large non-figurative works at variance with her general approach. 50

Sharing, as she does, with Dulac, a place 'in the long, still unfinished struggle of the artists to keep their end up against the camera and the movies,'⁵¹ Helen Ganly is closer to Dulac in her art than would at first appear. Indeed, reading again his comments on the refreshingly uncontrived paintings of children, in his introduction to the collection Christmas : Pictures by Children, it is easy to see how much he would approve her style: her ability to portray, in her own subtle way, precisely what her mind records. Her facility for retaining ideas for long periods of time and then turning them into living pictures; her appreciation of self-discipline in her work, together with her dry sense of humour and joyous way of struggling through the hardest of times, would, one feels, please him:

Her painting comes in "tremendous bursts" ... she has learned to keep an idea in cold storage until she has the breathing space to work it out in watercolours or acrylics. She squirrels away ideas - drawings and word sketches - in notebooks. Yes, she has to be fairly organised but she accuses herself of needing a bit more discipline. Among the palettes and pencils, near the fox fur she's liberated from the downstairs stock, there's the brittle skeleton of a frog. "We found it in the garden, I'm going to draw it some time. It's a kind of discipline for me to draw something dispassionate. And you can't get much more dispassionate than drawing a dead frog". 52

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER THREE

ILLUSTRATIVE TECHNIQUE

Before entering upon the history of the production of Dulac's illustrations and those of his day, perhaps it is best, for once, to let the man speak for himself. In a set of short articles published by the art magazine Studio, certain artists were invited to tell something of the technique underlying one of their illustrations. Dulac chose The Sleeping Beauty.

Beauty:

... sheets and sheets of tracing paper, some putty, rubber, pencils: BB, B, H and sometimes HH. An idea for the composition is roughed out on a sheet of tracing paper with a B pencil; and another and another, the paper being turned over from time to time to see whether the design does not, by chance, look better from the other side. One could go on like that for ever; but one of the designs has to be chosen - it is generally the first. The figures are drawn to the required size separately, a dozen rough sketches or so for each, this time with the BB pencil, and traced over and over again until clean outlines emerge out of chaos. The background comes last and is dealt with in the same way. The process, so far, is secret, no one is allowed to witness its laborious steps, and the waste-paper basket in summer, the stove in winter, take care that no evidence of it shall remain.

The clean tracings are then superimposed and twisted about until some sort of satisfactory arrangement is obtained.

Now appears the Whatman board, hot-pressed; the figures and background are rubbed upon it in their proper order and grouping, and drawn over carefully with the H pencil.

All is ready for the final ceremony. The jars are cleaned and filled with fresh water, the brushes washed and the china pots uncovered. The Whatman board with its design is then hydropathically treated with a few pigments: not more than a blue, a green, two yellows, a crimson, a red, two reddish browns, raw umber and Chinese white, lots of Chinese white. And that is one way of doing a water-colour drawing.¹

Explicit though this account seems, an aura of mystery still surrounds the production of a Dulac illustration. As with almost everything concerning this man, the element of the intangible keeps us holding on. However, the carefully thorough Colin White has managed to bring to light some of Dulac's modestly protected techniques which, though helping us to understand this man and his art a little better, nevertheless detract only marginally from his irresistible mystique.

In 1907, with the publication of Dulac's Arabian Nights, it was evident that textures meant a great deal to him:

He could capture magnificently the veining and slight translucency of a marble floor and occasionally borrowed a technical trick from photography and over-damped his paper, so as to blur the foreground and bring the eye into apparent focus on the action mid-stage; similarly he would bring out highlights with great delicacy, as in a forehead glistening with perspiration, achieved by dabbing the wet colour with a sponge or blotting paper and a damp brush.²

By 1909, in an illustration named The Entomologist's Dream, Dulac was already using a new method in his backgrounds:

For the first time Dulac used a method of enhancing the richness of the background by lightly scribbling with a coarse crayon in a complementary colour ...³ over the painted surface; an effective technique.

On the subject of Dulac's skies there is something that needs to be said in way of explanation of their construction:

Dulac built up his skies from layers of related colours dabbed on with a large brush, lightly blotting each section before applying the next, to produce a soft, mottled surface resembling shot silk.⁴

Influenced more and more by Persian art, Dulac adopted the oriental technique of having a number of simultaneous viewpoints within one illustration - this eliminated the habitual, photographic effect:

He reduced depth by tilting his floors forwards and reinforced his picture plane by making both his background and foreground colours equally strong, drawing foreshortened frontal views of adjacent surfaces with distant objects painted the same size as nearer ones, and stylized the objects themselves with strong patterns. 5

Edmund Dulac was an artist behind whose art there was a lot of hard work and thoroughness. 'He used a mounted lens for his line work, and right up to the end of his life was capable of painting the minutest petulance of a lower lip without any loss of ability'.⁶ All this was veiled in modesty, a quality in his character that, along with the feeling of warmth that emanates from his work, serves to bring him closer to our hearts:

He had always been modest about his art and rarely spoke of it in company. To him a full life was one in which an attempt was made to accomplish everything; to know everything that had contributed to the civilization of man, and if sometimes he was impatient with the world it was merely an overflow of the impatience within himself and a reflection of an inner urge to worry a task to its limits. Time was always the enemy. The range of his interests was limitless, as was revealed in his conversation. Through his own curiosity he aroused curiosity in others, and those who saw behind the erudition, found kindness and generosity, and understood this man and loved him. 7

To obtain a full comprehension of the art of Edmund Dulac it is necessary to understand the technique whereby his, and the illustrations of others, were reproduced for publication. Here, no barrier of mystery exists, everything is clearly laid out in history - it only remains for us to explore.

Coincidental with the work of Edmund Dulac and Arthur Rackham was the arrival of the colour halftone. The resulting books of these two artists are significant, as the first illustrated with coloured process plates to be collected for their plates.

Martin Hardie wrote in English Coloured Books⁸ 'It can be understood that a collector may treasure an aquatint, a chromo-lithograph, a coloured wood-engraving - but a process plate, never'. This statement, in 1905, was greatly to underestimate the success of Rackham's Rip Van Winkle published in the same year - one of the spate of lavishly produced, process plate illustrated books to command high prices amongst collectors.

Wood-engraving continued to provide for the ever-increasing demand for relief plates of illustrations, mechanically produced, which could be printed in the same forms and on the same presses as type, until 1880 or thereabouts. Soon after this date wood-engraving was practically wiped out by the new industry of photo-engraving. The development of photography as a practical process after the middle of the nineteenth century provided a new way of making pictures, and, what is more, a completely different kind of picture. There was no other way of obtaining pictures so quickly and no other way of making them so factually accurate. Also, later in the history of the process, there arose the possibility of obtaining unlimited numbers of copies of each picture. Nevertheless, photographs could not be printed together with type, and if they were bound into books they had to be mounted and were awkward and bulky, and gave no guarantee of permanence. A number of ingenious men interested themselves in the possibilities of devising means whereby photographs could be printed on a letterpress machine.

Intaglio printing plates were the first to be made successfully by photographic means. In 1827 Nicephore Niépce, the colleague of Louis Daguerre in the development of photography,

successfully produced a portrait of Cardinal d'Amboise on a plate etched in intaglio. In 1839, Mungo Ponton contributed a discovery of great importance when he found that bichromate of potash in combination with albumen or some other colloid became hard and insoluble in water through exposure to light. Having figured largely in the discovery of the photographic negative, Fox Talbot was experimenting in the early 1850's to find a method of printing his negatives that would prove more permanent than calotypes. Although he was working along the right lines, he was unable to put his ideas into practice commercially. The light-sensitive material he used was bichromated gelatine, which he patented in 1852. From his reported accounts he apparently used a steel plate spread with bichromated gelatine, the object to be reproduced being placed over the treated steel in a photographic frame and exposed to light. The bichromate would harden and become insoluble where the light fell on it, the unexposed parts, remaining soluble, could be washed away with cold water and the plate etched with bichloride of platinum. Fox Talbot suggested using this method with a photographic negative and two pieces of black gauze or crêpe to print down a screen on to the plate, but seems only to have done this with a leaf, which, after etching and printing, 'when beheld by the eye at a certain distance appears uniformly shaded, but when examined closely is found to be covered with lines...' ⁹ He thought that better results would be obtained by using a sheet of glass covered with fine lines or dots and specks, the idea behind the later halftone screen. Talbot called this method 'photoglyphic engraving'. The problem of making a black ink give grey tones had

still not been solved, although Fox Talbot made a valuable contribution to the achievement of this aim with his suggestion of the use of gauzes or muslin as a screen to break up the image into dots. It was not until the 1880's that a satisfactory method was achieved by the use of the cross-line screen.

Experiments in photographic reproduction had led to a process by means of which line drawings could be reproduced on the printing machine without the intervention of the wood-engraver. Tone cannot be reproduced by this process - namely the zinc line-block, although it may be simulated by means of crayon, grained papers or mechanical tints. For this process the line or dot to be reproduced must be black and solid, preferably on a white ground. It is then photographed to the size required and the negative is printed on a sheet of zinc which has been coated with a sensitised emulsion. The transparent parts of the negative (corresponding to the black lines or dots) admit the light which hardens the emulsion where required; these parts are next covered with an acid-resist and the remaining emulsion is washed away. The plate is then etched in acid which eats away the unprotected zinc, leaving the design standing up in relief. By this method a drawing may be reproduced in any size and many artists prefer to draw for a slight reduction because thus a sharpening effect is achieved. However, it is easy to forget that in reducing the length of the lines one reduces their breadth as well, and a very fine line may be lost altogether. Enlarging is to be avoided since it coarsens a drawing. To reproduce in the same size is best, because then the original scale and weight of line are preserved. But faithful though a line-block may be, and excellently though it reproduced the meticulous designs of Beardsley, it can never quite capture the feeling of a free pen drawing because it is printed at one touch, whereas the drawing is made by the

continuous movement of the pen over paper. Lino-blocks can be used to print colours in exactly the same way as wood-blocks, but with the photographic process the colours can be separated from the finished drawing by means of filters. They must be flat colours and the same glossiness occurs as with wood-engravings when the inks overlap. This is a charmingly inexpensive way of illustrating a book which has often been used in children's literature.

For all their advantages, line-blocks still suffered from the same drawback as wood-engraving, in that they could not effectively portray tones. A practicable method of reproducing tones in relief printing, however, was eventually achieved by using dots small enough not to be readily detected by the human eye and infinitely variable in size. This method, the halftone process, had been suggested by Fox Talbot as early as 1852, but it was another thirty years before it was available commercially. In 1852, Talbot conceived the idea of a screen, using at first an open weave fabric to break up the picture. In 1879 Joseph Swan, in England, patented a screen ruled in one direction which was moved during the exposure to obtain a cross-ruled effect. In 1882, Georg Meisenbach, a German, patented a similar method, having produced his first successful halftone in the previous year. The perfection of the halftone process waited, however, on the development of a cross-ruled screen. Max Levy, of Philadelphia, made a ruling machine accurate enough for the ruling of satisfactory screens. In 1886 Ives, whose method of relief printing does not seem to have been employed in England, used two such screens at different angles, sealed face to face, thus producing the cross-ruled screen. The screen is a fine mesh of diagonal lines at right angles on glass. With its

aid anything that can be photographed may be reproduced by means of a halftone block. The original may be a painting or a photograph, or any other kind of picture.

The original is laid on the copyboard of a large camera which is mounted on a runway. The screen is set in place in front of the sensitive film. The image formed by the lens passes through the screen and is broken up by it into thousands of small points of light, which are strongest where the original is lightest in tone and weakest where it is dark. The result is that when the film is developed into a negative, the light areas of the original are represented by dark areas of negative pierced by tiny apertures of clear film, and where the original is darkest the negative is clear with only small black dots. The negative is now printed down to a zinc or copper plate coated with a sensitised emulsion-zinc is used for coarser screens and coarser papers. This plate is treated to convert the image into an acid resist. Etching may now be done by the older method or in powderless-etch machines. In the older method the plate is withdrawn from the acid bath at intervals and areas that are considered sufficiently etched are painted over with a resist to prevent further action; after which the plate is returned to the bath for another 'bite' : this operation is known as fine etching. The finished plate is mounted to bring it to type height and is then ready for the press.

Halftone illustrations do not normally contain either clear white or total black areas. The darkest areas still have minute dots of white to reduce the depth of the colour, and the lightest areas have a very fine screen of black dots; but the total impression is that of a photograph in continuous tone. Halftones vary one from

another: the reason for this is that they are made in different degrees, coarse to fine, through different qualities of screen, to suit different kinds of paper. For good quality, every dot must print, and if the screen is fine and the paper coarse, some of the dots are bound to fall on irregularities in the paper and misfire; besides which some of the fluff from the paper will get mixed up with the ink and clog the block. Thus, for a rough-surfaced paper a screen with lines comparatively widely spaced (50 to 60 lines to the inch) is used, and the dots are consequently hefty and able more or less to overcome paper irregularities if they happen to hit them; while for a block intended for printing on smooth paper a finer screen (100 to 175 lines to the inch) is used.

There is no doubt that a fine screen halftone properly printed on suitable paper is unsurpassed for sheer brilliance of result. Nevertheless, halftones have peculiar and special disadvantages. On occasion, the screen itself is a disadvantage, when, for example, the reproduction has to be examined through a magnifying glass. At this point, the halftone is incapable of yielding further detail - revealing only a formless arrangement of dots. Yet another disadvantage, and a more serious one, concerns the paper. For the picture to be well reproduced the screen must be fine, consequently the paper must be smooth. No paper made is sufficiently smooth in itself to do full justice to a fine-screen halftone block. The smoothest papers are the china clay coated 'art' papers, by no means ideal for book-making. They are heavy, unpleasantly glossy and easily damaged by sewing, glue and general handling. The degree of delicacy of the finished reproduction is determined by the number of lines to the inch on the screen. For rapid newsprint work a screen of between 45 and 80 lines to the inch is used. The dot pattern is distinct, and it may break up some of the image detail. A 150-screen gives greater

fidelity, but it will need an 'art' paper. The screen, therefore, although it makes the printing of continuous tone possible, is, nevertheless, the alien element in the picture.

To summarise, the tones of photographs, body colour, wash, or pencil drawings, usually merge gradually from dead black to white. Blockmakers call this 'continuous tone' and reproduce it in letterpress by the 'halftone' process. This 'half' is not the mere half-way between black and white; it covers every possible gradation. Thus there must be an essential difference between the kind of drawing an artist makes for line and for halftone reproduction. As far as the theory goes, however, halftone is merely an adaptation of the line-block principle. Continuous tone can be reduced to a series of graded dots: this is the principle behind the halftone screen.

To the halftone print single tints of colour may be applied. Indeed, almost all colour can be reproduced by the superimposing of three colours; yellow, blue green (cyan) and magenta (red). Many of Dulac's illustrations were made to be reproduced from just these three overlaid colours, a limitation which he turned to his advantage for greater interpretation of the subtlety of his originals. Trichromatism, or the 'three-colour' process is by far the most important development in the whole range of photographic illustration invented or evolved during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The general principle on which it is based is the accepted theory that any colour can be resolved into the three primary colours mentioned above, which form its component parts. Once this has been accepted, it remains only for the photographer to obtain three negatives, which, as it were, automatically dissect the original, making three distinct photographic records

of the reds, yellows, and blues which enter into the composition. This result is obtained by the use of transparent screens of coloured pigment or liquid, 'light filters', as they are technically termed, placed in front of the lens. These filters admit any two of the primary colours and absorb the other one. Three separate screens are employed, each with the lines ruled at a different angle, and when the negative records of the colour analysis are obtained, the three photographs are converted into printing surfaces, exactly as in the ordinary halftone process. On the metal printing surface the three separate colours are impressed in ink and transferred to paper. The block representing the yellow tones of the original is printed first with yellow ink, over this picture the block representing red is accurately registered and printed in red, while the final block representing blue is printed over the combination of the first two, with blue ink. The result is a complete picture containing all the shades of the original, no matter whether the original is a natural object, an oil-painting, or a water-colour. The usual practice is to print the second, third or fourth colours before the previous ones are quite dry. The great essential is accurate register, the placing of successive impressions from the four blocks exactly one over the other. The dots are made in such a way that they will fall not on top of each other but side by side, to give the illusion required.

Theoretically, the three-colour process is all-sufficient for the correct reproduction of a coloured original, but it must not be forgotten that the printer can ink the plates with colour which differs materially from what it ought to be, so that there is,

after all, no necessarily true reproduction. In addition, some colours and neutral shades are difficult to obtain from the three primaries - mauve and pure grey being examples. Where these colours are present in the original a further block is made by the engraver, usually to print black. This block strengthens the shadows, provides the greys and some other colours, and generally helps towards a richer quality in the reproduction. The eye is very sensitive to slight changes of hue such as may occur due to slight variations of one of three colours. The use of a black printing makes it easier to obtain neutral shadows and brightens the picture by making the dense shadows more intense.

The preparation of colour plates calls for considerable skill and care to ensure that each colour contributes its correct quota to the hues in the picture. Though in theory it should be possible to split any colour into its primaries by means of filters, in practice no perfect analysis can be made. The defects of colour analysis may be made good on the plate by delicate fine etching, but the tendency today is to reduce the need for fine etching as much as possible, or to abolish it altogether, by means of photographic manipulations of negatives and positives in the dark-room, and the use of photographic masks designed to correct tonal renderings. These masks are in effect weak positives or negatives on film, made through filters and printed down with the negatives to control the final colour values.

In the printer's hands each block is treated exactly as an ordinary halftone, except that it is printed in its proper colour. Only one colour can be printed at a time on an ordinary machine, so that for a three-colour reproduction the paper must go through the machine three times - a detail that contributes to the cost of the process.

As has already been stated, in printing the second and third colours care must be taken to obtain exact register on the colours preceding. It is the previously mentioned juxtaposition of the primary colours that produces the impression of complementary colours and neutral tints. This can be viewed with a magnifying-glass if an area of the reproduction is examined. If, for example, this area appears green, it will be found through the glass that it is composed of yellow and cyan dots in a rose pattern, with, perhaps, a few magenta ones interspersed here and there. Thus, the paper is a palette on which the printer mixes, not inks, but light rays; and the eye - a confirmed generaliser - is unable to distinguish, because of their minute size, one element from another, and cheerfully accepts them for the sum of their union.

Book publishers were not long in finding a use for the trichromatic process of graphic reproduction, and in the early 1900's a number of books appeared with halftone coloured plates in them. Many of these belonged to the 'gift-book' class. This term was usually used in the same disparaging way as 'coffee table', which is now applied to books that are clearly meant for looking at and not reading. In fact, many of these 'gift books' were pleasant books, intended to be read. They were well made, well bound in fine cloth, often with a coloured illustration plate-sunk on the front cover, surrounded by richly-blocked designs in gold and colours. Sometimes they had ornamental headbands and coloured or decorated endpapers. Inside, apart from the many monochrome illustrations, the coloured plates would be tipped on to cartridge paper or boards, often printed with wash lines round the pictures and covered with tissue. Most of these 'de luxe' colour-plate books were covetable acquisitions and, though most could well have pleased all ages, they were not built for lives in the nursery.

William Heath Robinson, who shared some techniques with Dulac, 'both men used the same watercolour technique of blotting out the appropriate moistened areas to achieve their highlights', produced some of his best work for the 'gift book' class. However, he had rather a biting comment to make about them, stopping only to pay tribute to his main rivals in the field:

In the first decade of the century, there began to appear that 'de luxe' series of books to which Arthur Rackham and Edmund Dulac made such fine contributions. The appearance of these books was partly due to the three-colour process of reproduction. Unfortunately this method could only be used on a certain kind of paper that was impossible for the rest of the book. Consequently the colour pictures had to be stuck in, making the book a scrap book. This was not true bookmaking, but they were nevertheless handsome volumes. 10

This was an attitude put forward by the Private Presses and other followers of the Arts and Crafts Movement, indeed, the same as that expressed by Martin Hardie in his work English Coloured Books - mentioned at the outset of this chapter. The implication was that any 'hand-done' illustration, no matter how insignificant, was a better thing than the results of the process camera.

Possibly, one of the best ways in which to sum up all the objections to the results of the process camera is to refer back to a quotation referred to in the chapter on artistic background and influences. Here, in discussing the misrepresentation of Persian art by monochrome reproduction, a quotation was taken from Arthur Upham Pope's Masterpieces of Persian Art, declaring that photographic reproduction of a Persian miniature was: 'the difference between a real herbaceous border and the photograph of a herbaceous border'.

Surely the same difference is at the root of all the evil spoken about process plates: they can never assume, with all the drawbacks discussed above, a facsimile of the original drawing. There are too many odds to be taken into consideration. However, this does not mean that illustrations of artistic value cannot result.

In the end, as with most things, it is a matter of individual taste as to whether or not they are to be accepted as collectors' items or dismal failures. They are surely too captivating to be lost in the never-never land that lies between.

As far as Dulac's personal technique is concerned, let it suffice to say that there are those, whose opinions are honoured by many, who have credited it with unsurpassable genius.

As R.H.Wilenski, in his foreword to the catalogue for the memorial exhibition of Dulac's drawings, so rightly says:

He made no attempt to compete with the camera in chiaroscuro vision - though with his precise and delicate craftsmanship, he could have painted still life pieces with flowers and insects and dewdrops on leaves like the early seventeenth century Flemings and Dutchmen (I have seen him paint the classic drops of water on his drawing board that visitors tried to wipe away); he left that aside as the camera's technique; and he defied the camera by linear procedures¹¹ and purely decorative colour outside the camera's powers.

Martin Birnbaum, one of the earliest Dulac enthusiasts in the United States, whose admiration for Dulac never deserted him, placed his praise for the man's technical abilities on record for all time:

Dulac had from the very beginning fine imaginative powers, and each group of drawings disclosed greater technical achievements and an unsurpassed versatility. The daintiest draughtsmanship, a delicious humor, an amazing feel for design, and a positive genius for rich radiant color as applied to the pages of a book, were all coupled with the power to grasp an author's meaning, and to embody it most happily with the glamor or piquancy which pertained to the various literary works themselves. Indeed, he has frequently added a vein of high poetry to the poetic originals. He should

however, be regarded not as an illustrator, but as an original painter, who uses line merely as an accessory, and each of these little iridescent miniatures which seem to be made of opal dust on mother of pearl, satisfies the demand which Delacroix made upon all paintings, - they are color feasts for the eye. 12

Possibly the most interesting words on technique worthy of quotation here are Dulac's own - they are certainly a most fitting note on which to end this chapter. Appearing in the introduction, written by Dulac, to a book of collected children's work, they sum up, beautifully Dulac's personal thoughts on artistic technique generally:

We forget that we had those treasures of imagination, open to our hands and eyes and that we have deliberately buried them under the burden of our growing consciousness, and all the while the child is there refusing to part with them and sometimes making them visible and tangible for us and as perfect as the sophisticated phantasies of those of more mature years. To our utter astonishment, he uses a technique which we associate with a training of many years, a fact most worthy of our notice, for it is evident that a very good knowledge of drawing can be acquired in an incredibly short space of time, and this may lead to an extension of the methods that have accomplished such good results not only in art, but in all branches of educational training: a different and better comprehension and use of all those different kinds of memories and associations of ideas.

We fail, in general, to realise that technique is based on memory, the regulating element of most subconscious phenomena. The artist, even in drawing from nature is reproducing forms that are memorised between the moment he looks at his model and the moment he puts pencil on paper. Whether the model is immediately in front of him or was, a day or a month before, the process is the same, and it should not be any more difficult to keep an impression of a form for many hours or even days than for the short space of time required in drawing from nature.

Now, the child has this faculty developed to an extraordinary degree, because his subconscious organism is still unimpaired and his mnemonic stimulants have not yet been completely replaced by conscious habits. The younger he is, the easier the process. 13

FOOTNOTES

1. Studio July - December 1933. Studio Prints and How they came into Being.
2. Colin White, 1976 Edmund Dulac London : Studio Vista p.28.
3. ibid, p.41.
4. ibid, p.61.
5. ibid, pp.69 and 72.
6. ibid, p.123.
7. ibid, p.194.
8. Martin Hardie, 1906 English Coloured Books London : Methuen and Co. p.294.
9. Journal of the Photographic Society May 1853 p.64.
10. John Lewis, 1973 Heath Robinson : artist and comic genius London: Constable, p.91.
11. R.H.Wilenski, 1953 Memorial Exhibition of Water Colours and Drawings by Edmund Dulac, 1882-1953 Catalogue Foreword.London : Leicester Galleries.
12. Martin Birnbaum, 1919 Introductions : painters, sculptors and graphic artists New York : F.F.Sherman p.71.
13. Christmas : Pictures by Children with an introduction by Edmund Dulac, 1922 London : J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd.

CHAPTER FOUR

A CERTAIN STYLE

Less than a decade after Victoria had died, the Futurists were doing their damndest to exorcise the sombre spirit her era had spread over the field of art and design. They worshipped all things mechanical and streamlined, kicked at the established order, and in fashion they boisterously demanded "hap-hap-hap-happy clothes".

That was 1910, and it was the harbinger of the Art Deco revolution, an eruption of new ideas and actions happening simultaneously in the field of fine art, decorative art, architecture and fashion. It was a period of radical stylistic change. Style comes about through audacity and confidence, and in the years stretching through to the Second World War these qualities were at a premium. 1

One of those styles, with which the atmosphere abounded, was Dulac's own. Even though he might borrow seemingly new styles from the very corners of the Orient, the creation was still his very own. This remained true even in the many nationalities and moods portrayed in his Fairy book, Fairy Tales of the Allied Nations :

Surely no other artist has, within the limits of a single volume, exhausted not only the hues of the rainbow, but so many regions of the earth.

Japan's rhythm and refinement, Serbia's barbaric patterns, the white snows and passionate ringing colors of Russia, French grace, languorous Italian beauty, Belgian quaintness, and wholesome English charm, are all to be found here. 2

Perfectionism played an intrinsic part in Dulac's work and he aimed constantly in that direction. His use of tracing-papers to build up his illustrations was a time-consuming method :

It stifled the original spontaneity but Dulac was a meticulous craftsman and the result, if perhaps less exciting, was a harmonious picture. 3

Nevertheless, it proved invaluable when he came to design

banknotes :

Dulac covered hundreds of pieces of tracing-paper with fine pencil-drawings of scrolls, curves and grids, wheeling and interlocking to produce a forgery-proof and interesting pattern with everything drawn to scale and measured to the last millimetre. 4

This use of tracing-papers and his continual careful attention to detail, brought about the formal balance in his compositions, which pleased him. It also served as further evidence, after examination of his work, that he was one of the few artists who understood the compromise between freedom of effect and the exigencies of close-at-hand examination. Such a perfectionist must, however, inevitably suffer, as Dulac occasionally did :

Such a perfectionist cannot be a happy man. He must suffer continual disappointment at finding the outside world unable to meet his standards, but Dulac always treated even the smallest commission as a challenge. 5

In addition to his many other talents, Dulac was a master of descriptive writing. One of the best examples of this facet of his art is the record he kept of his Mediterranean cruise with the Davises. Here lies supreme evidence of his ability to illustrate with words, to convey the reader, in no uncertain terms, to endless luscious scenes in the mystical East. His word-sketch of a sunset is particularly stimulating :

'The sea is shimmering like golden moiré,' he wrote, 'a slight mist on the horizon, ahead cerulean. Behind us the sun is being wrapped up in a changing cloth of gold, deep orange and light metallic green dropping purply incense. On the side the foam makes designs of molten lapis lazuli.' 6



The Call of the Fairies, c
1908, watercolour, $7\frac{1}{4}$ x $5\frac{1}{4}$ in.
British Museum, London.

Dulac's talent for story-telling in words was equalled only by his facility in illustration. An admirable example of a drawing full of meaning, is his watercolour, The Call of the Fairies, an independent illustration. Herein are contained several figures from various nursery rhymes and fairy stories, all enveloped in a floating never-never land of shimmering bubbles. Little Jack Horner sits busily eating outside the King's counting house, on which Jack, obviously an astute business-man, has placed a plaque advertising his skills as 'Builder and Contractor'. A perplexed Knave of Hearts is seen lurking behind some toadstools, whilst an imperious peacock stalks by - resplendent in true Dulac blue. In the background, the Old Woman in a Shoe is fully employed at her knitting, whilst Cinderella, seated on a toadstool in the foreground, is being greeted by a magnificent Prince. Amidst all the activity, three blind mice - ingeniously portrayed as wearing dark glasses, a patch and a blindfold - make their way determinedly off the nearest corner.

Dulac's method of illustration was to embrace the mood of a work, rather than just represent single scenes. Two of his contemporaries who undoubtedly shared this view were William Heath Robinson and Howard Pyle, the American artist and illustrator. Heath Robinson, whose views on book illustration were quoted in the chapter on artistic background, shared a number of artistic traits with Dulac. It may prove useful to reiterate his comments here :

The art of the book illustrator, as I understand it, did not consist solely in literally illustrating the incidents. His relationship to the work he was treating was much the same as that freer one adopted by a musical composer to his subject. 7

Howard Pyle, born in Wilmington, in the state of Delaware, in 1853, was acknowledgedly the most outstanding illustrator of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in America.

Influenced a great deal by his mother, it was she who introduced him to such books as the Arabian Nights, Grimm's Fairy Tales and Tanglewood Tales - stories he came to love so well. Indeed, it was his mother's love of pictures in such books that aroused his interest in illustration.

Pyle's theories of illustration are highly interesting and provocative, his arguments persuasive :

His central belief in regard to illustration was that the artist should illustrate the feeling the author conveys, rather than a precise incident or scene mentioned in the text. If the illustrator is confined to the mere depicting of an event he is restricted and hampered. The two arts, writing and illustrating should, in Pyle's words, 'round the circle instead of advancing in parallel lines upon which it is almost impossible to keep them abreast.' Pictorial art should represent some point of view that carries over the whole significance of a situation. It should convey an image of the meaning of the text. Therefore, in illustrating a book, it is preferable to choose for an illustration, some point descriptive of the text, but not necessarily mentioned in the text. 8

These sentiments could easily have been expressed by Dulac himself, so great a believer was he in the interpretative approach to illustration. In his decorations for Stories from the Arabian Nights, one illustration that admirably exemplifies this is, She gave orders for a rich banquet to be prepared. Here, as in many cases, Dulac has not followed the exact words of the passage, but has distilled the sense in order to provide a better overall embellishment. An assortment of slaves are pictured running down steps, carrying trays of food - the latter being burdens obviously too large and too heavy for their tiny bearers. The

atmosphere of speed and fright, on the part of the slaves, resulting in confusion and total chaos, is admirably conveyed in the heap of food and fallen slaves which covers the steps.

Howard Pyle was also a man who knew his own mind in relation to his career. As did Dulac, he spared himself least of all in the execution of his ideas and his pursuit of excellence. He also understood the importance of beauty and harmony in every detail of the make-up of a book - a gift he shared again with Dulac. Dying at the relatively early age of fifty-eight, Pyle is remembered as an originator, the individuality of whose ideas is to be determined in relation to the time in which he lived. A time when accepted theory was the reverse of his, when technique was the major emphasis, when schools advocated the drawing from models, and when illustration was considered to be a step-child of the fine arts, if indeed it belonged to the fine arts at all. In complete unity with Dulac are Pyle's thoughts on the role of the artist and the large part imagination plays in art :

Illustration is then something more than the skilful representation of a fact; it is rather an expression of an ideal. The expression of an ideal can be achieved only if pictures are creations of the imagination. Pyle did not minimise the need for mastery of technique, but he did place the development of the imagination first. He claimed that a man is not a creative artist because of clever technique or method. He is an artist only when he is able to sense the inner significance of things and to convey that significance to the minds of others. The quality of imagination cannot be given by one person to another; but where it exists, its development should be encouraged, rather than stifled by a hard incrustation of academic methods. His strong feeling on this point led him to distrust the methods of art instruction in art schools at home and abroad. It also led him to disapprove a too slavish use of models. Indeed, he claimed, or seems to claim, that in some pictures, the artist must be dependent completely on his imagination since it is impossible for a model to be posed in and to hold certain positions. 9

Dulac's thoughts on this subject are fully expressed in his introduction to Christmas : Pictures by Children, quoted at length in the chapter on artistic background. Here he praises the work of children in the context of their spontaneity and the display of vivid imagination.

In his own work, Lyrics Pathetic and Humorous from A - Z, a children's alphabet composed of limericks, Dulac displays his own vivid imagination combined with a cheerful sense of humour - an element in Dulac's work not greatly acknowledged. The usual paltry correspondence of sounds used in limericks is enhanced by Dulac's sophisticated vocabulary - a few examples of which would not come amiss :

R Was a rubicund rustic
 Who wrote a romantic acrostic
 In which roses and thrushes
 And rabbits and rushes
 To the rhyme gave a flavour agrestic.

A Was an Afghan Ameer.

B Was a burly burgrave.

The illustrative interpretation of some of the verses also displays Dulac's ability to make seemingly simple subjects interesting. Indeed, some of the illustrations provide such surprises in their devious contents that the reader is continually intrigued as to what he will find next. For example, whoever would guess that the following caption would suggest such a detailed illustration :

H Was a hard-headed hare
 Who had such a horrible scare
 As he opened one day
 In the most heedless way
 A hamper marked "handle with care"!

Here, hare is portrayed as dressed for shooting, suitably surrounded by all the accoutrements of the sport. Opening a hamper, we see him startled by its contents in the colourful form of a Jack-in-the-box.

Dulac's ability to identify with the Orient is shown in his illustration to the letter J - shades of an Oriental Miss Muffet perhaps?:

J Was a juvenile Jap
 Who met with a dreadful mishap
 For she bitterly cried
 When an insect she spied
 On her flower, just taking a nap.

In keeping with the intended readership of the younger members of society, Dulac takes the opportunity to offer a typically adult warning - against ruination of eyesight by reading in poorly-lit conditions :

O Was an obstinate owl
 Who might have been quite a nice fowl,
 But she spoilt her eye-sight
 Reading novels at night,
 Now she ogles at you with a scowl.

Rather a delightful touch is achieved here by Dulac in dressing the owl as an old lady, complete with pince-nez, shawl and bonnet. Librarianship obtains recognition in the addition of the caption - 'circulating library, please take one' - near a small pile of books. Finally, in keeping with the habitually ridiculous and meaningless rhymes used in limericks, Dulac includes such verses in his collection :

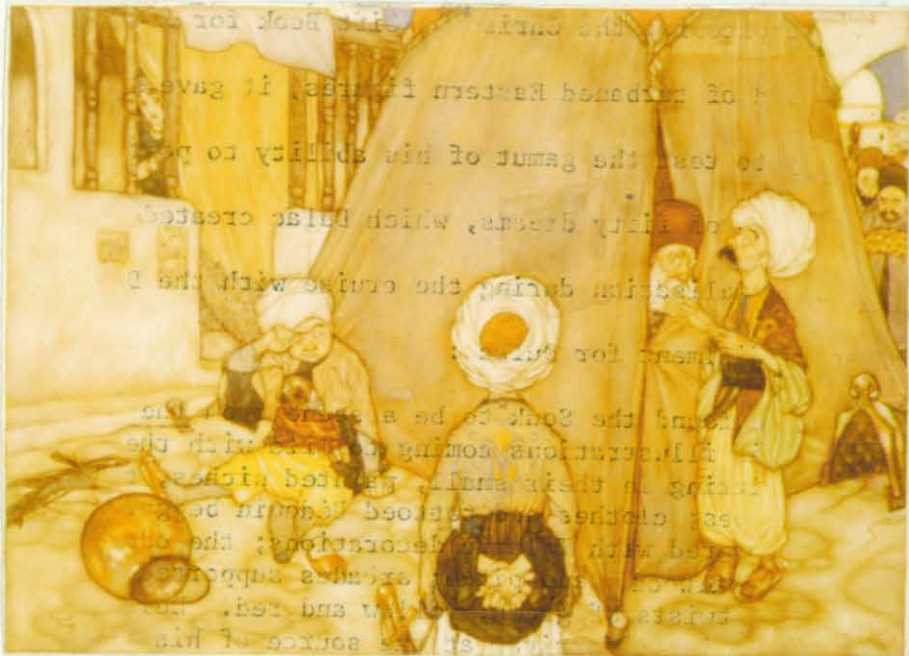
P Was a proud, pompous prince
 Who lived on plum-pudding and quince,
 Once he put by mistake
 In his pipe a pancake
 And has been very pale ever since.

One of the most descriptive titles applied to Dulac, and one especially indicative of his overall style, was that of 'dreamer of extraordinary dreams'.¹⁰ This was particularly applicable to his dream-like visions of the East, which, unlike ordinary dreams, he saw come true during his Mediterranean cruise. Many

aspects of Dulac's life could be compared to a dream - not least of all, the dream-like illusions he continually created in his art. Accordingly, in 1914, Dulac illustrated the fairy story by Queen Marie of Roumania, namely The Dreamer of Dreams.

Undoubtedly, the best example of his work for this book is contained in the frontispiece, Everything about her was white, glistening and shining - so aptly featured on the dust-jacket of Colin White's biography. Here, Dulac again shows his ability to instill so much meaning into such a seemingly simple, yet startingly enthralling illustration. The entire creation embodies admirably the atmosphere emanating from the relevant text :

Nearer and nearer she glided, her bare feet hardly touching the ground. She seemed shaped out of floating mists. All the splendour of the night, the dazzling brilliancy, the vast snow field, the glory of the moon, the myriad stars, all paled before the beauty of the woman that now approached. Everything about her was white, glistening and shining; so shining that the human eye could hardly bear the radiance. Her long white hair hung about her; a circle of glow-worms surrounded her forehead. Her head was bent, still gazing on that which she held in her hand. On either side marched one of the great bears like two guardians. Just as she neared the spot where Eric stood she once more bent to the snow, and with almost loving precaution raised something in her hand. As she did so her eyes met Eric's - they were beautiful eyes - large, dark, blazing like two burning coals. The young man felt a great emotion when they rested upon him, yet he knew directly that they were not the eyes he was seeking; but greatly did he long to know who the beautiful woman was, and what she was gathering in the snow. As if guessing his thoughts she spoke in a clear, soft voice, always keeping her eyes fixed on his, "Thou wouldst know who I am, O lonely wanderer? I am the queen of these vast regions of snow - my home is yonder, where none dare dwell - and on nights when the moon shines bright I come out of my castle of ice and wander over this desert of white, searching for the broken hearts that have been banished here. It is only when the moon shines bright that I can find them, for they are hidden so far and wide that in the dark nights I could not see them; and



Great was the astonishment
of the Vizier from Stories
from the Arabian Nights,
 1907, watercolour, 8½ x 12 in.
 British Museum, London.

in the day never can I wander about, - the night alone is made for me. See, I will show thee those I have found". And opening her hand, Eric perceived three little pulsing hearts, beating, beating like frightened birds - and each little heart was broken, and drops of blood stained the white fingers of the snow-maiden. 11

One set of dreams which came true with great success for Dulac were those he created for Stories from the Arabian Nights. His first venture in partnership with Hodder and Stoughton, it proved an admirable choice for the Christmas Gift Book for 1907. Overflowing with a myriad of turbaned Eastern figures, it gave Dulac ample opportunity to test the gamut of his ability to portray the mystical East.. The set of fifty dreams, which Dulac created for the Arabian Nights, saw realisation during the cruise with the Davises - a moment of great fulfillment for Dulac :

He found the Souk to be a scene from The Arabian Nights, his illustrations coming to life with the merchants sitting in their small, painted niches, the silks; shoes; clothes and tattooed Bedouin beggars; the walls covered with Islamic decorations; the odours of pepper, cedarwood, and pitch; arcades supported by columns in twists of green, yellow and red. Dulac experienced the joy of arrival at the source of his material and the satisfaction of recognizing the accuracy of his earlier work. 12

Approaching the work, as he did, with characteristic professionalism and seriousness, he nevertheless succeeded in achieving moments of great humour amidst his perfectly structured scenes. One such occasion is the illustration, Great was the astonishment of the Vizier and the Sultan's escort. Here, Dulac displays his powers of characterisation, coupled with his knowledge of physiognomy - a convincing double-act. Exemplified are his baggy-pantalooned Arabian figures, complete with exquisitely coiled turbans and perfectly stitched patches on their clothing. Their bulbous eyes, rosy-tipped noses and curly-toed slippers were to become a virtual Dulac trademark.



Close-up of "It is gold,
it is gold!" they cried,
from The Snow Queen in
Stories from Hans Andersen
1911, watercolour, 12½ x
10 in. Victoria and Albert
Museum, London.

Speaking of trademarks, there are several which seem to occur with increasing regularity when gazing through Dulac's work. One of the most striking and perhaps typical of his identification with the East, is the recurrence of his favoured little, black serving-boy - seemingly present on every conceivable occasion. He invariably wears an expression of detached naïveté, admirably conveyed in his habitual, wide-eyed gaze. Inevitably found coiffed in the most elegant of turbans, or the most spiralling of fezzes, his tiny feet encased in the curliest of curly-toed slippers - he lends a charm and mystique without which any illustration would feel undressed. Enigmatic, as is his creator, he appears in the most incongruous of locations, one of which is the illustration, Madame s'est piqué le doigt.

Whilst mention has been made of Dulac's use of Eastern headgear, in the shape of fezzes and turbans, expansion of the subject could be made to consider Dulac's seeming affinity towards headgear in general. Hats seem to be a major consideration in the clothing of his characters, none of whom are blessed with designs of which there is need to feel anything less than pride. Even the three villains pictured in the illustration, "It is gold, it is gold!" they cried, wear such magnificently feathered creations on their heads which make up, in every way, for their apparently shabby and yet perfectly patched clothes. In accordance with their frequency of use and their obvious limitations in design, one would expect the Dulac turban to become tedious in appearance. On the contrary, this master of fine detail contrives to make each coil of intricately wound cloth appear as fresh and as intriguing as its first day's wear. Additionally, those turbans worn in the



She found herself face to
face with a stately and
beautiful lady, from
Beauty and the Beast,
1910, watercolour, $12\frac{1}{2}$ x
 $10\frac{1}{8}$ in. Victoria and
Albert Museum, London.

Arabian Nights are not of the same design as those to be found in Beauty and the Beast - a much flatter and less typically Arabian variety. Indeed, even those used in the Arabian Nights differ from one wearer to another, increasingly imposing according to the magnificence of the wearer. Witness, for example, the splendour of that turban worn in the illustration, And taking her hand he led her to the apartments of the Queen Pirouze.

Whatever the headgear, it is inevitably adorned with some kind of feather - yet another obsession with Dulac. Dulac feathers come in many varieties, one of his favourites being those of the peacock, a bird whose appearance was mentioned in the illustration, The Call of the Fairies. It even features as one of the dishes carried by the tiny slaves in the illustration, She gave orders for a rich banquet to be prepared, from the Arabian Nights - a dish resplendent with magnificent, feathered 'eyes'. Even the figure of death is given peacock feathers to adorn his helmet in, Even Death himself listened to the song and said, 'Go on, little Nightingale, go on!' from The Nightingale in Stories from Hans Andersen. In the illustration She found herself face to face with a stately and beautiful lady, from Beauty and the Beast, the upward sweep of the ostrich feather in the lady's turban is reflected in the downward sweep of the plumes decorating the towered dome of the bed, and the flowing drapes of the bed-curtain. Feathers are often used to form contrasting shapes with which to catch the eye - plumage being of such a delicate nature to show admirably those elements of nature which are otherwise invisible. Thus is the breeze cleverly injected into such delightful compositions as Cadet Rouselle, where the spidery ostrich feathers on the hats of the two young ladies nod delightfully.

Yet another facet of Dulac's art which shows his individual style is animal portrayal. Here, his wide range of humanised figures provides further evidence of his distinctive originality. All the way from camels - the veritable ships of the desert - to the friendly reindeer of Lapland, they provide yet another gallery of characters upon which Dulac draws with skill. Always too individually portrayed to be listed as mere animals, they add charm, character and often humour to any illustration. An obvious feature of any desert scene, the camels featured in Dulac's Arabian Nights are invariably amusing beasts, endowed, as are all Dulac's animals, with such human characteristics. Sometimes pictured as seemingly laughing, they usually appear to be overcome with boredom - an attitude well-suited to their lanky physical appearance. At the opposite end of the scale is the compassionate and obliging reindeer in The Snow Queen, from Stories from Hans Andersen. In the illustration, Kissed her on the mouth, while big shining tears trickled down its face, Gerda is kissed goodbye by her kindly companion in a most moving and innocent scene. Included in this set of distinctive Dulac characters are many wonderfully plumed birds and fish of such amazing contrivance as to defy description; endowed as they are with such expressive powers.

In a completely separate category come creatures of myth and fancy. Here Dulac's work stands out from traditional creations as something into which deep thought and originality have been infused. Not mere frightening fantasies, these, but beings whose very existence can be believed. One of the most convincing portrayals, and one of great individuality, is that of the Genie in the tale of the Fisherman and the Genie from the Arabian Nights:

And there in its midst stood a mighty Genie, whose brows touched heaven while his feet rested upon ground. His head was like a dome, his hands were like flails and his legs like pine trees; his mouth was black as a cavern, his nostrils were like trumpets, his eyes blazed like torches, and his wings whirled round and over him like the simoom of the desert.

Here Dulac satisfyingly portrays the spirit of Mohammedan mythology - a creature formed of fire whose habitat is reputedly the mountains of Káf which encircle the world. Capable of assuming various shapes, he appears here in his most usual form of a man of enormous size and portentous hideousness. Suitably, as his abode could be likened to the eyrie of any bird of prey, he has been blessed with wings of a convincingly bird-like nature, magnificent in their feathered detail. His shaved head is decorated with a coloured headband which holds in place one black, curling lock of hair. His ears are pierced with dangling hoops and around his neck hangs an array of beads and medallions. Arms bearing twisted bands and rings on his fingers, he presents an initially startling yet curiously harmless picture. Dulac, whilst not observing the text in its minute detail, has created something considerably more arresting and thought-provoking than those wispy, unimaginable concoctions of other illustrators of myth and legend.

Although this has been a necessarily brief look at the hitherto unresearched complexities of Dulac's style, it is to be hoped that it has been able to provide some insight as to the existing depth of this aspect of Dulac's art. May it also prove an aid to stimulate the powers of imaginative sight when looking into a Dulac drawing. Into such painstaking creations did Edmund Dulac infuse his very being, and it is through these works of his art that we maintain contact with him and the message of perfectionism

and imagination he left behind. Despite his sense of annoyance at the lack of recognition of his abilities in the fields of landscape and portrait painting, one feels that Dulac would have agreed, nevertheless, with William Morris, when he said of the illustrated book :

[It] is not, perhaps, absolutely necessary to man's life, but it gives us such endless pleasure, and is so intimately connected with the other absolutely necessary art of imaginative literature that it must remain one of the very worthiest things towards the production of which reasonable men should strive. 13

FOOTNOTES

1. Angela Neustatter, 1976 (November 17) Deco Cards
The Guardian p.9.
2. Martin Birnbaum, 1919. Introductions New York :
F.F.Sherman, p.73.
3. Colin White, 1976 Edmund Dulac London : Studio Vista,
p.24.
4. ibid, p.182.
5. ibid, p.141.
6. ibid, p.64.
7. John Lewis, 1973, Heath Robinson : artist and
comic genius London : Constable, p.92.
8. Elizabeth Nesbitt 1968 Howard Pyle London :
The Bodley Head (Three Bodley Head Monographs),
p.180.
9. ibid, pp.180-181.
10. Colin White, op.cit. p.29.
11. Queen Marie of Roumania, 1915. The Dreamer of Dreams
London : Hodder and Stoughton, p.17.
12. Colin White, op.cit. p.65.
13. Philip James, 1947 English Book Illustration
1800 - 1900 London : Penguin, p.65.

CONCLUSION

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Dulac's life work was revealed in the Memorial Exhibition at the Leicester Galleries, in December of the year of his death, 1953. It was arranged by Helen Beauclerk and contained a representative rather than comprehensive collection of Dulac's work - a result of the short time available for preparation.

Dulac was the last of the great illustrators of the Golden Age to have seen the transition from process line-blocks via half-tone work and the tipped-in colour plates of the Gift Books to the lithographic processes of today. It was fitting that his work ended, as it had begun, with the illustrations of books. He had always been modest about his art and rarely spoke of it in company. To him a full life was one in which an attempt was made to accomplish everything; to know everything that had contributed to the civilisation of man, and if sometimes he was impatient with the world, it was merely an overflow of the impatience within himself and a reflection of an inner urge to worry a task to its limits. Time was always the enemy. 1

In order to obtain a full appreciation of the work of Dulac, it must always be remembered how extensive was the range of his output. Covering, as he did, almost every facet of fine art, his interests were limitless, and his achievements myriad. He spread his nets so wide that, taking into consideration the quality of his work, he appears as one possessed with supernatural powers. Truly a being worthy of the highest recognition, as Martin Birnbaum wrote in 1919:

... he has already done various things so successfully and poetically, that if he were to return to his native city, the judges of the famous Languedoc Floral Games, which take place in Toulouse each Spring and in which only poets contend, would surely award the sprig of golden amaranth to Edmund Dulac. 2

Towards the end of his life Dulac led a comparatively quiet existence, he and Helen making little effort to socialise. Always a private person, the lack of publicity on his death and the seemingly total absence of recognition of his work was strangely fitting, and yet grossly unjustified. Equally sad is the absence of any reminder of his presence at his studios, now completely split into separate apartments. As the up-to-date photographs show in the biographical chapter, it is still possible to view his abodes, save that in Maida Vale, which has disappeared under a shiny block of flats. Curious too, to imagine the presence of Dulac's oriental tea-house on a small verandah at the rear of 117, Ladbroke Road.

A curious man himself, the enigma that is Dulac - brought about by the sense of privacy surrounding the man and his work - still arouses curiosity in others. Though it will always be impossible to know him, through the kindness and generosity that were at the fount of his nature, we shall always experience a sense of acquaintance with this man. Additionally, the feeling of inner calm and serenity that pervades his work will always capture the attention of its viewers, a capture for which the victim will forever feel grateful.

FOOTNOTES

1. Colin White, 1976 Edmund Dulac, London :
Studio Vista, p.194.
2. Martin Birnbaum, 1919. Introductions, New York :
F.F.Sherman. p.77.

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