UNIVERSITY OF DERBY

'TOWARDS RETREAT': MODERNISM, CRAFTSMANSHIP AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE WORK OF GEOFFREY CLARKE

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Contents

Abstract

Currently, Geoffrey Clarke (*b* 1924) is best known for his work in iron, exhibited with the group of 'young' British sculptors at the 1952 Venice Biennale: Robert Adams, Kenneth Armitage, Reg Butler, Lynn Chadwick, Bernard Meadows, Eduardo Paolozzi, and William Turnbull. Through this group, which Read identified as 'participating in a general revival of the art of sculpture', Clarke touched the circle of the British avant-garde in the early 1950s, gaining prominence and a considerable degree of notoriety for his work. While Clarke's work in no way supported Read's interpretation of intent – that the new sculpture transmitted a collective guilt, an 'iconography of despair' – it did accord with Read in propounding art as a psychological construct, and in reflecting an awareness of the current interest in Jungian psychoanalysis.

Throughout his career, Clarke has repeatedly engaged with issues of British modernism (a definition of which will be one aim of this thesis). In the early 1960s he changed his medium to aluminium; developing his own, fast method of casting using expanded polystyrene, subjecting his sculpture to a process of increased abstraction and inviting comparison with Caro's sculpture and the formalist criticism of Greenberg. In the late 1960s he produced a series of landscape works which paralleled the work of Richard Long and other 'land' artists. Clarke also experimented in the early 1970s with the extension of sculpture from purely visual parameters, for instance using aroma as a constituent, or involving the active participation of the viewer.

This thesis seeks to address the current critical neglect of Clarke's work by contextualising his work in relation to that of other sculptors and by identifying those aspects which are innovative or particular. His work is thus considered from four viewpoints. 'Philosophy and Spirituality' considers the sources of the artist's beliefs. 'Symbolism and Form' traces the formation of Clarke's visual imagery and its application. 'Craftsmanship: Materials, Processes, Applications' examines Clarke's experimental approach to materials and his commitment to creating his own work. Finally, 'Architectural and Design Projects' discusses issues of collaboration and patronage and how the elements of spirituality, symbolism, craftsmanship and creative purpose function in the artist's work. Issues relating to notions of

modernism and postmodernism are discussed throughout the text and drawn together in the Conclusion, which also suggests reasons for the artist's critical neglect.

Abbreviations

AA	Architectural Association
CAI	Council for Art and Industry
CIAM	Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne
CoID	Council of Industrial Design
DIA	Design and Industries Association
DRU	Design Research Unit
ICA	Institute of Contemporary Arts
LPTB	London Public Transport Board
MARS	Modern Architecture Research Group
RA	Royal Academy of Arts
RCA	Royal College of Art
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects

Illustrations

LS	Sculpture	Appendix A
LG	Glass	Appendix B
LP	Prints	Appendix C

The illustrations to this thesis are presented in the form of three catalogues: Appendix A (Sculpture), Appendix B (Stained Glass) and Appendix C (Prints). References within the text of the thesis cite a catalogue number, which is formed of three elements. The initial letters indicate the cataloguer's initial (L) and the format of the work (S for sculpture, G for glass, P for prints). The following number identifies the individual work within that catalogue. Further information about the format of each catalogue appears in its introductory pages.

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Introduction

Overview of Clarke's Work

The work of Geoffrey Clarke (*b* 1924) has been considered most frequently in relation to the group of British sculptors with whom he exhibited at the 1952 Venice Biennale: Robert Adams, Kenneth Armitage, Reg Butler, Lynn Chadwick, Bernard Meadows, Eduardo Paolozzi and William Turnbull. Knowledge of Clarke's early work in iron has benefited recently from a rising interest in art of the 1950s, as witnessed by James Hyman's fiftieth-anniversary recreation of the Biennale exhibition, David Hulks' psychoanalytical study of the sculpture itself, the Tate Gallery's acquisition of *Complexities of Man* (1950; LS003) and the Fine Art Society's exhibition of etchings from 1950.[1] Despite this revival, however, Clarke's work – widely acclaimed in Britain from the early 1950s to mid-1960s – today remains far from well-known.[2] The reasons for this current lack of recognition stem from a number of factors. During a career lasting over fifty years Clarke's work has undergone frequent changes in method of construction, materials and style. The work itself is to be found in numerous formats, from domestic or gallery works to site-specific architectural commissions to conceptual pieces intended to be created, completed or activated by the observer. Such variety presents the curator with difficulty of categorisation and the public with problems of recognition, hindering both its inclusion in exhibitions and the establishment of a realistic market value.

A brief survey of Clarke's work indicates, most noticeably, experimentation with a wide range of materials. In the early to mid-1950s he used iron, stained glass, enamel and printmaking techniques (etching, lithography and monotype) to create linear images of 'man'. By the late 1950s, when he was receiving regular architectural commissions, he had adopted aluminium, first open-casting, then developing his own, fast technique of casting using expanded polystyrene. Formally,

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[1] 'Henry Moore and the Geometry of Fear' (James Hyman Fine Art, 2002); David Hulks, 'The dark chaos of subjectivisms: Splitting and the geometry of fear', in Brandon Taylor (ed.), *Sculpture and Psychoanalysis*, Subject/Object: New Studies in Sculpture (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006); 'Geoffrey Clarke: 1950' (Fine Art Society, 2006). The Tate Gallery acquired *Complexities of Man* in 2003.

[2] Clarke was conspicuously absent from two recent large-scale surveys of art from the 1950s and 1960s: 'Transition: The London Art Scene in the Fifties' (Barbican Gallery, 2002) and 'Art & the 60s: This Was Tomorrow' (Tate Britain, 2004).

his sculpture underwent a process of reduction from earlier organic work, resulting by the mid-1960s in what appeared as an 'abstract' syntax of slabs, troughs, bars and angles. Although these structures could be traced back to earlier, figurative ideas, Clarke was, by his own admission, pursuing more formalist concerns. Between 1969 and 1972 Clarke changed direction again, producing the *Landscape Reinvestigation* series: ideas drawn from the contour of the landscape and intended to be realised on a vast scale with steel girders, gravel, aluminium walls and grassed mounds. In this he shared an interest with Richard Long and other 'land' artists in broadening the field of sculpture beyond the confines of the gallery. In the mid-1970s Clarke also experimented with the extension of sculpture from purely visual parameters, for instance using aroma as a constituent, or involving the active participation of the viewer. Post-1980, Clarke has returned to the figure as his principal subject, whether in *tableau* form (combining aluminium figures with painted backdrop), cast aluminium (the 'Head' and 'Pilgrim' series), wood (the 'Artist' series), or, most recently, bolted sheet aluminium (*Consignment*, 2006; LS751).

Against this evolving use of materials and form are balanced a number of constants. Clarke believes in the 'craft' of sculpture, with the artist ideally creating his own work. Clarke's work, since the 1950s, has focussed on man and nature, expressed through the medium of symbolism and coloured by his profound, all-pervading spiritual belief. In this sense even works differing most in outward appearance – for instance 1950s' etchings of man and the *Landscape Reinvestigation* series – can be considered as wide-ranging variations on a theme. The etchings present man in relation to his surroundings and a divine presence, while *Landscape Reinvestigation* explores elements of conflict introduced into the environment by man. Significantly the artist himself has always considered that, rather than presenting too much variety, his work has varied too little.[3]

Structure and Objectives of Thesis

This thesis seeks to address the critical neglect of Clarke's work: to provide an assessment of his contribution to British art, to contextualise his work in relation to that of other sculptors, identifying those aspects which are innovative or particular,

[3] Clarke, conversation with the author (January 2006).

and to explore his conformity (or otherwise) with the discourses of modernism and postmodernism. To this end, his work has been considered from four viewpoints. The opening chapter, 'Philosophy and Spirituality', considers the sources of the artist's beliefs. 'Symbolism and Form' traces the formation of Clarke's visual language and its application. 'Craftsmanship: Materials, Processes, Applications' examines Clarke's experimental approach to materials and his commitment to creating his own work. Finally, 'Architectural and Design Projects' discusses issues of collaboration and patronage and how the elements of spirituality, symbolism, craftsmanship and creative purpose are expressed in the artist's work. Issues relating to notions of modernism and postmodernism will be discussed throughout the text and drawn together in the Conclusion, which will also suggest reasons for the artist's critical neglect.

The title of this thesis, 'Towards Retreat' is taken from a work by Clarke dating from 1974 (LS410); one of his experimental or conceptual works using aroma, which at the same time suggests a spiritual constant in the concept of religious retreat. Paradox is thus present on a variety of levels: the tension between forward and backward movement, artistic progression or perceived regression, a journey *towards* a spiritual *retreat* or seclusion. This layered construct forms a cipher for Clarke, the artist, as well as for his work. This thesis will suggest that despite continual experimentation with materials and form, at each stage of Clarke's creative career his beliefs and attachment to symbolism have precluded wholesale alignment with any of the manifestations of modernism or postmodernism. For instance, Clarke's belief in the craft of sculpture prevented him from abandoning his casting process to explore methods of construction used by Anthony Caro or the New Generation sculptors, or, later, to take more than a passing interest in conceptual art. Equally, his willingness to design and create functional work (door handles, screens, church furniture) has distanced him from a perhaps more critically acceptable formalist perspective of 'art for art's sake'. However, the dichotomy is in no way clear-cut. It is this ambiguity – even complexity – of approach that resists analysis from a single critical viewpoint and contributes to the elusive nature of Clarke's work.

Literature

Overall, the published criticism of Clarke's work is slight. The principal surveys to date, by Peter Black, take the form of catalogue essays to exhibitions in 1994 and 2000, with a concise survey by Stephen Little in the Henry Moore Institute's recent 'Guide to Sculptors in the Leeds Collections'.[4] However, there also exists a considerable body of press cuttings and journal articles dating from the 1950s which indicate both Clarke's high critical standing at that date and the significance of his association with the group of sculptors – Adams, Armitage, Butler, Chadwick, Meadows, Paolozzi and Turnbull – who exhibited at the 1952 Venice Biennale.[5]

The choice of contemporary sculpture to represent Britain in 1952 signalled clearly its importance to the British Council selection committee, who were charged with presenting a convincing argument for the vitality of post-war British art.[6] The catalogue essay by Read (the most influential British art critic of the time) supported this image, offering a psychological interpretation of the sculpture keenly in tune with contemporary preoccupations and stressing its formal and material 'newness'.[7] By approving Clarke's work for the Venice Biennale, Read effectively sanctioned its inclusion in the canon of modernist British sculpture, but his endorsement ended there: nowhere in his writings is there a critical assessment of Clarke's work. (Read later dismissed Butler's and Chadwick's sculpture as 'wrought ironwork',[8] and continued to favour Moore, whose volumetric, organic forms had shaped his notion of the sculptural ideal. Read's *A Concise History of Modern Sculpture* includes a

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[4] *Geoffrey Clarke RA: Sculpture and Works on Paper 1950–1994*, foreword by Clare Lilley, essay by Peter Black (Wakefield: Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 1994); *Geoffrey Clarke: Symbols for Man. Sculpture and Graphic Work 1949–94*, essay by Peter Black (Ipswich: Ipswich Borough Council Museums and Galleries with Lund Humphries, 1994); *Geoffrey Clarke: sculpture, constructions and works on paper 1949–2000*, essay by Peter Black (London: Fine Art Society, 2000); Stephen Little, 'Geoffrey Clarke', in Penelope Curtis (ed.), *Sculpture in 20th-century Britain. Volume II: A Guide to Sculptors in the Leeds Collections* (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2003), pp 47–8.

[5] The Clarke archive has provided good access to this material, since Clarke subscribed to a press cuttings agency from April 1952 to October 1966.

[6] Nancy Jachec has recently examined this aspect of the 1952 Venice Biennale, pointing to the 'newness' and 'Europeanness' of the British sculpture selected as a political tool by the British Council and its Fine Arts Advisory Committee for forwarding European integration through culture. Nancy Jachec, 'The "New British Sculpture" at the Venice Biennale: Europeanism and its limits', *The British Art Journal*, Vol. VII No. 1 (Spring / Summer 2006), p. 26.

[7] Herbert Read, 'New Aspects of British Sculpture', exhibition catalogue for The British Pavilion at the XXVI Biennale, Venice (1952).

[8] Herbert Read, *The Art of Sculpture* (London: Faber & Faber, 1956), p. 114.

photograph of Clarke's 'Battersea Group', but no mention of his work in the text.)[9] While extended analysis of Clarke's work in writings from the 1950s is rare, a fuller picture emerges from collating references in articles and reviews by critics such as Robert Melville, M. H. Middleton, Stephen Bone, John Berger, David Sylvester, Lawrence Alloway and J. P. Hodin. Of these, a number were negative, acknowledging Clarke's technical facility, but failing to identify with the imagery and purpose of his work.[10] Bone noted its 'impressive pointlessness' in comparison with 'real' West African images, and, later, its creation of 'a world of forms so harshly austere as to have lost most of their meaning or interest'.[11] Berger acknowledged Clarke's originality, but questioned his work's ability to transcend initial impact on the grounds of obscurity (its 'semi-mystical symbolism'), divergence of iconography and aesthetic (oscillating between 'a desperate catacomb conception of art and an incompatible degree of sophistication') and, finally, puritanical sentimentality deriving from a lack of 'sensuous roots'.[12] Most surprising, given his advocacy of Giacometti, Paolozzi and Turnbull, and his selection of Clarke for the 'Sixteen Young Sculptors' exhibition at the ICA in January 1952, was Sylvester's dismissal of Clarke's sculptures in April 1952 as 'solemnity ... stripped of all meaning by their tired and arbitrary structure, the painful banality of their forms, and their humourless resemblance to fire-irons'.[13]

Two early articles by Melville and Middleton provided a critical context for Clarke's sculpture within the framework of modernism, but from opposing viewpoints. Melville's 'New Sculptors' diagnosed the new British school as home-grown, stemming from Moore and through him from the 'collective unconscious of

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[9] Herbert Read, *A Concise History of Modern Sculpture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1964; reprinted 2000), p. 179.

[10] M. H. Middleton summarised this tendency: '[Clarke's] name has appeared several times in these columns, and, for his years, he has already achieved an unusual measure of success. His first exhibition, at Gimpel Fils, has set the cat among the critical pigeons. For one so young to have formulated so complete and integral a language of symbols has seemed to some a matter for suspicion.' Middleton, 'Art', *The Spectator* (18 April 1952).

[11] Stephen Bone, 'Work by Young Sculptors', *Manchester Guardian* [undated cutting, Clarke archive: ?January 1952]; Bone, 'A Tour of Ten Galleries: London Art Exhibitions', *Manchester Guardian* (27 January 1955).

[12] John Berger, 'Geoffrey Clarke and Peter Potworowski at Gimpels', *New Statesman* (5 April 1952).

[13] David Sylvester, 'Round the London Art Galleries', *The Listener* (17 April 1952). This appears to be the earliest reference to 'fire-irons', which became the most common derogatory term for Clarke's sculpture.

the Northern peoples' and 'the pre-history of our land'.[14] In contrast, Middleton, responding to the same exhibition (the ICA's 'Young Sculptors' in January 1952), traced its roots to Russian constructivism, Picasso, Giacometti and Calder.[15] Middleton's less insular view of new British sculpture echoes Clement Greenberg's 'The New Sculpture' of 1949 to such an extent that it may have been written after consulting this text.[16] For instance Middleton emphasises, together with the search for new materials (string, glass, plastics, wrought iron), the new preoccupation with outlining space, 'the piercing of mass by cave and tunnel, so that the eye may move, not only about its exterior surfaces, but actually into the interior, to sense from within its bulk and volume, thrust and tension'. In this review, Middleton, like Melville, devoted little space to Clarke.[17] However, three months later Middleton reviewed Clarke's exhibition at Gimpel Fils. Like others, he admitted a failure to understand the basis of the symbolism, but acknowledged its impact and originality. Furthermore, in stressing the craftsmanship of the work, he was first to provide an evocative description of the *effect* of Clarke's work:

> A certain dark flamboyancy—a solemn and almost Hebraic richness of statement—is offset by the strict technical discipline Clarke employs. The effect is at once austere and stimulating. The heavy encrustations of the 'leading' in his plaster mosaics gives it the active, turbulent quality of early glass, but the whole smoulders rather than bursts into flame. The hammered rods of iron in parallel bundles, the horned crescents, the conceptual features, that combine to form his sculptured figures are monumental and hieratic.[18]

The language of this critique – notably, 'dark flamboyancy' and 'solemn ... Hebraic richness' – illuminates key aspects of Clarke's work: its seriousness (derived from

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[14] Robert Melville, 'The New Sculptors', *Harper's Bazaar* (January 1952), pp 33. While promoting the work of the new British sculptors, Melville dismisses contemporary French sculpture as suffering from 'barren and undirected' eclecticism. Melville, 'The New Sculptors', p. 33.

[15] M. H. Middleton, 'Art', *The Spectator* [undated cutting, Clarke archive: ?January 1952]. Middleton further commented that 'some of these sculptors have been credited with an originality which can only be justified by ignorance of what Picasso, Giacometti and Calder were pioneering twenty years before them'.

[16] Clement Greenberg, 'The New Sculpture', *Partisan Review* (June 1949); reprinted in Greenberg, ed. O'Brian, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, Vol. 2, 1945–49 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp 313–19.

[17] In 'The New Sculptors' Melville concentrates on Adams, Paolozzi, Turnbull and Butler.

[18] M. H. Middleton, 'Art', *The Spectator* (18 April 1952).

religious conviction), but equally its capacity for larger gestures (derived perhaps from a fascination with ritual, the rich colours of stained glass or ecclesiastical textiles). In this, without seemingly knowing Clarke's background, Middleton offers a perceptive interpretation that avoids the emphasis on 'post-war anxiety' which typifies later criticism and is largely incompatible with Clarke's work. Furthermore, in these reviews Middleton identified both the individual nature of Clarke's work and its position in relation to modernist sculpture and the emerging British school.

Three other articles from the 1950s deserve mention. First, Alloway's 'Britain's New Iron Age' (1953) noted (as had Middleton and Greenberg before) the European origins of the new tendency towards linearity and welded materials, and confirmed the appearance of an identifiable school of British sculpture.[19] However, Alloway added little to earlier criticism about Clarke, recalling Middleton's descriptions with a negative gloss.[20] Secondly, J. P. Hodin's 'Contemporary English Sculpture: recent trends and their origin' provides a typically literary summary of sources for the new sculpture.[21] It provides no more than a passing reference to Clarke (and a debatable identification of the influence of 'Calder, Butler and the primitives'), but signals his interest in Clarke's work which would persist throughout the next decade. Thirdly, and most importantly, an article by Ronald Grimshaw devoted solely to Clarke provides a quite different perspective, grounding Clarke's work in the British landscape, identifying the significance of the spiritual dimension in Clarke's work and suggesting continuity with medieval practice in terms of faith, purpose and craftsmanship.[22]

The promotion of the 'Iron Age sculptors' – principally Butler, Chadwick and Clarke – was largely a native affair, encouraged by Read in the early 1950s and supported by a number of British critics. Greenberg, Read's critical sparring partner, remained unconvinced, recalling the British post-war renaissance as 'false', Moore

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[19] Lawrence Alloway, 'Britain's New Iron Age', *Art News*, (Summer 1953), pp 18–20, 68–70.
[20] Alloway: 'Clarke's bundles of rods or sections of symbolic fences have a dry grace which recall Regency ironwork at its best (say, the balconies of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire). The symmetry of many of his works is hieratic and carries a burden of symbolic meaning which can be deciphered as Mexican ideographs are read ... The trouble is that the meaning is not really inherent in the forms, though these forms are handled with simplicity and grace'. 'Britain's New Iron Age', p. 69.
[21] J. P. Hodin, 'Contemporary English Sculpture: Recent Trends and Their Origin', in Hodin, *The Dilemma of Being Modern: Essays on Art and Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), pp 145–52.
[22] Ronald Grimshaw, 'Geoffrey Clarke', *The Painter & Sculptor*, Vol. 2 No. 2 (Summer 1959), pp 20–23.

as a 'minor artist' and Butler, Chadwick and Armitage as 'less than minor'.[23] By the beginning of the 1960s Read's critical attachment to the apparatus of Jungian psychoanalysis, which had proved a pertinent tool for considering the expressionistic imagery of much post-war sculpture, appeared increasingly outmoded. Greenberg, meanwhile, suggested a new, 'self-critical' model of analysis, whereby he described new sculpture by Caro in terms of the syntactical relationship between horizontal and vertical planes, axes, rectangles and enclosures.[24] Concurrently, a shift occurred in Clarke's work. A review of his Redfern exhibition in 1965 described the sculpture in terms of 'simple formal units – slabs, bars, and blocks – locked in equally simple relationships'.[25] The emphasis was now on distinct components, ordered in different configurations to create formally autonomous structures analogous to Caro's constructions. Although no critic chose to do so, Clarke's sculpture might plausibly have been analysed according to Greenberg's parameters. Like Caro, Clarke dispensed with plinths for his new (larger) aluminium work. Yet, unlike Caro, Clarke's forms remained essentially compact and earth-bound. The difference between the two sculptors' work was underlined by Hodin's catalogue essay, which stressed that Clarke's works were not 'constructions' and suggested that his seemingly autonomous forms were in fact symbolic,[26] thus breaching Greenberg's notion of 'self-criticism' and formal autonomy.

Hodin's criticism resembles Read's in its wide-ranging literary and philosophical basis, its leaning towards psychoanalysis (in particular the work of Jung), and its interest in the shared ground between science and the arts. These common interests stem at least in part from Hodin's role as librarian for the ICA during the 1950s, where he was involved in the organisation of exhibitions and in frequent contact with Read.[27] Like Read, Hodin was fascinated by symbolism, but unlike Read – and this may account for his lasting interest in Clarke – Hodin was

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[23] Greenberg, 'Interview Conducted by Edward Lucie-Smith', *Studio International* (January 1968); reprinted in Greenberg, ed. O'Brian, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, Vol. 4, 1957–69 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 277.

[24] See Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting', *Forum Lectures* (1960); revised reprint in *Art & Literature* No. 4 (Spring 1965), pp 193–201, and Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), *Art in Theory 1900–2000* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp 773–9; and Greenberg, 'Contemporary Sculpture: Anthony Caro', *Arts Yearbook* 8 (1965); reprinted in *The Collected Essays*, Vol. 4, p. 206.

[25] 'Formal Units in Sculpture', *The Times* (24 March 1965).

[26] J. P. Hodin, 'Geoffrey Clarke's Recent Works', *Geoffrey Clarke: Recent Sculptures 1965* (London: Redfern Gallery, 1965).

[27] In addition, Hodin gave lectures at the ICA, such as 'C. G. Jung and Modern Art, A Conversation' (28 February 1954).

intrigued by artists whose work demonstrated religious conviction. In *Modern Art and the Modern Mind* he devoted a chapter to questioning artists, including Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Louise Nevelson, about their beliefs;[28] he published a monograph on the abstract religious symbolist, Alfred Manessier;[29] and, in 1961, assessing the modern spiritual condition, he wrote:

> Cycladian amulets ... the statuary of the lateral portals of Chartres, the painters of Zen – they all had the spiritual certainty which our age is withholding from our feverishly restless consciousness. Only psychology is with us – no philosophy, no religious conviction. And the miracle of life. Never before in man's history has the artist stood so empty-handed and lonely before creation. That is why he has to turn his back on the life-force itself and strip himself of any consciousness to re-discover in the instinct the elemental syllables of a new language.[30]

Written in the early 1960s, this passage reflects the previous decade's existentialist sympathies, striving for stability and need to begin anew. However, Hodin's 1965 catalogue essay, conceived in a radically different social and artistic climate, uses much the same language. Hodin elaborates three themes – symbolism, craftsmanship and links with ancient art – any of which would have been equally appropriate to a catalogue essay a decade earlier. (Hodin in fact underscores the links between Clarke's recent sculpture and that of the 1950s by quoting from Clarke's student thesis and stating Clarke's own belief in his work's continuity.)[31] If Hodin was aware of Caro's new work, his essay displays no evidence of it, or of recent critical concerns. Instead, Hodin appears content to isolate Clarke (perhaps at the artist's suggestion) from contemporary practice.[32] That Clarke's new work at the Redfern Gallery fell largely unnoticed among the critics, despite its closer proximity with issues of modernism as defined at that moment by Greenberg, may be at least partly

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[28] J. P. Hodin, 'Art and Religion: The Permanence of the Sacred', in *Modern Art and the Modern Mind* (Cleveland and London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972), pp 162–7.
[29] J. P. Hodin, *Manessier* (Bath: Adams & Dart, 1972).
[30] J. P. Hodin, *Chadwick* (London: A. Zwemmer Ltd, 1961), p. [13].
[31] In retrospect it seems likely that by stressing the connections with the 1950s (and not pointing to the 'new' aspects of the artist's work), Hodin was not enhancing Clarke's critical reputation.

attributed to its concurrent showing with one of the most important displays of British sculpture that decade – the Whitechapel's 'New Generation' sculpture exhibition. Clarke was well aware of the impact of work being produced at St Martin's, and later identified Phillip King's cone-shaped *Genghis Khan* (1963) as the single bullet to end his popularity.[33]

Clarke's last work in iron (1956) coincides with the start of a decline of critical interest in his work. Although his name appeared frequently in the press after this date and until the mid-1960s, the focus shifts from 'gallery' sculpture to commissioned architectural work (where sculpture constitutes a minor aspect of the building), and reviews in the national press written by non-specialist critics. Clarke's pioneering work with full-mould casting was discussed with interest in trade journals for its potential application to industry, and his use of materials (expanded polystyrene and aluminium) used to publicise commercial products and services.[34] Yet unlike the use of plastics by the New Generation sculptors, Clarke's use of new techniques failed to catch the attention of art critics, with the consequence that his work in aluminium remained unexplored in relation to contemporary culture or currents in art history. Such paucity of critical comment persisted until Peter Black's extended essays for two large-scale retrospectives of Clarke's work, in 1994 and 2000. Black's writings are significant since they originate from discussion with the artist and provide an overview of his work not available elsewhere. However, partly due to their function as catalogue essays and partly due to their dependence on Clarke's views, they present a narrative lacking in context.

Black, throughout, promotes Clarke's own image of the artist in isolation and emphasises differences rather than parallels with the British 'iron' sculptors. For instance, he states that 'the influences that helped shape Clarke's abstracted linear figures were quite independent ... arrived at through his admiration for Klee, the magical tree imagery of Samuel Palmer and Sutherland, and through his chance

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[32] For instance, 'He is the only English artist to give honour, apart from the design, to the producing techniques themselves. His case is thus unique and exemplary.' Hodin, 'Geoffrey Clarke's Recent Works'.

[33] Stephen Little, 'Geoffrey Clarke', p. 47.

[34] Clarke's collaboration with industrial companies provided considerable publicity in the early 1960s. For instance, his cast work for Coventry was described in numerous of technical journals, each emphasising a different aspect of production. Typical titles include *Foundry Journal, Industrial Finishing, Metal Industry, Metalworking Production, Product Finishing, Aluminium Courier, British Plastics* and *Commercial Decor.*

discovery of botanical diagrams of seed-growth'.[35] Yet Clarke's interest in all these aspects, rather than isolating him, should be seen as providing common ground with other artist contemporaries. Sutherland, the pre-eminent British painter in the early 1950s, was a founding figure for the 'neo-romantics' – rediscovering and reinterpreting for a younger generation Blake, Palmer and a forgotten vision of England.[36] Sutherland also provided formal and emotional inspiration for the rising generation of sculptors: his imagery of hostile 'thorn trees' amid emotionally charged landscapes can be seen reflected in the spikiness and angularity of the new iron sculpture. Klee, too, proved inspirational through exhibitions in London, articles and reproductions in journals and through publications by Faber: amongst Clarke's sculptor contemporaries both Hubert Dalwood and Turnbull acknowledged his influence.[37] Clarke's interest in the growth-patterns of plants could be pinpointed to 'his chance discovery of botanical diagrams of seed-growth in the Science Museum,[38] but equally it could be considered a response to a widespread interest in the subject at the time, inspired by the rediscovery of D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's *On Growth and Form* and manifest in the ICA's exhibition 'Growth and Form' (1951).[39] Dalwood and Austin Wright explored similar themes, and the Contemporary Art Society's exhibition 'The Seasons' (1956) resulted in a number of works on the theme of plants and growth – by, among others, Clarke, Chadwick and Armitage.

Black further distances Clarke's use of iron from Butler's and Chadwick's (who 'each came to the medium by a different route'), as well as from any shared iconography. In particular, his dissociation of Clarke from Read's 'geometry of fear' appears unnecessarily dogmatic.[40] While the sculpture exhibited at the 1952 Venice Biennale, *Complexities of Man* (LS003) and *Family Group* (LS006), scarcely conforms to Read's 'iconography of despair', other iron works, such as *Symbol for Man VIII* (also titled *Man as a Fortress II*; LS102), could be interpreted as fitting the description perfectly. Several other themes favoured by the new generation of

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[35] Black, *Geoffrey Clarke RA: Sculpture and Works on Paper 1950–1994*, p. 6.
[36] Sutherland's critical status is acknowledged by the choice of his work to complement the sculpture shown in the British Pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 1952.
[37] The influence of Klee will be discussed further in Chapter Two.
[38] Black, *Geoffrey Clarke: Symbols for Man*, p. 11. The source of this statement is the artist's recollection; sketches of these diagrams remain among his student papers.
[39] D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, *On Growth and Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917; 1942).
[40] Read himself acknowledged that the artists were individuals and not a school.

sculptors also feature prominently in Clarke's work from this period: the cage (in the Unknown Political Prisoner works), man in isolation, plant forms, and the head. While acknowledging Clarke's debt to Picasso's heads, Black does not mention the significance of primitive models at this period. Paolozzi's sketches of primitive masks (e.g. *Two Studies for Sculpture*, 1946/7, probably made at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris), are comparable with a number of Clarke's monotype sketches for heads, as well as some of his iron sculptures from the early 1950s. These connections are identified, together with the significant impact of Paris, Picasso, Giacometti and existentialism, in a more recent study of the 1952 Venice Biennale sculptors: the catalogue accompanying Hyman's exhibition, 'Henry Moore and the Geometry of Fear'.[41]

Black considers Clarke's aluminium sculpture in greater detail than earlier writers, charting his progression from open- to full-mould casting, the implication of these techniques for his fulfilment of large-scale commissions and their influence on the forms of his sculpture, without, however, suggesting a comparison with other artists using the metal, or a wider context for the interest in the medium.[42] He does, however, point to the overshadowing of Clarke's sculpture from this period by works by Caro and his students from St Martin's, arguing for its status as 'an important and personal contribution to the history of British abstract sculpture'. Again Black's viewpoint is to enhance Clarke's reputation by demonstrating independence from the dominant tendency, in this case the 'school' of New Generation sculptors. Black's survey concludes with a survey of Clarke's landscape and figurative sculpture from 1971 to 1989: a useful overview identifying a parallel with the landscape work of Richard Long and Clarke's return to allegorical and spiritual imagery derived from the 1950s.[43]

The most recent phase of Clarke's work – in wood, exhibited in 'Geoffrey Clarke > aesthetic detector' (touring, 2003–2004) – is documented only by a catalogue essay by Richard Cork, which is indebted both to Black and to the artist for biographical detail. Even more so than Black, Cork reduces the artist's life to a

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[41] *Henry Moore and the Geometry of Fear*, essays by Margaret Garlake and James Hyman (London: James Hyman Fine Art, 2002).
[42] Black, *Symbols for Man*, pp 17–19. Black states, 'The genesis of Clarke's aluminium sculpture is interesting, because he was the first, indeed virtually the only artist to have used his particular technique of casting.' This statement is misleading in failing to take account of sculptors such as Alfred Duca who developed and used the technique in the United States.
[43] Black, *Symbols for Man*, pp 22–24.

persistent, solitary and spiritual search, guiding the reader through the (semi-autobiographical) 'Artist Series' with this vision in mind.[44] Yet this series of images is discussed completely without reference to Picasso, a model for Clarke in so many of his images of man and a seemingly obvious point of comparison for the portrayal of the artist in his studio. Cork instead reiterates the image of Clarke as loner, pilgrim, martyr, suggesting perhaps that there *are* no points of contact with contemporary sculptural practice.

Theoretical Framework

A primary objective of this thesis, to assess Clarke's relationship to modernism, demands first a definition of modernism against which to measure degrees of conformity or deviation. To take one as a starting-point, Charles Harrison defines modernism as progressively optimistic, (confident in the possibility of society's betterment through technological advance), revolutionary (simultaneously determined to break with the classical legacy and sceptical about received ideas and beliefs) and visionary (emphasising the importance of imagination in 'safeguarding human freedom and realising human potential').[45] With certain latitude Clarke's work could be accommodated within these tendencies, including the notion of scepticism towards received ideas and beliefs. As Harrison states, the disinclination to believe in superstition or spirituality where no direct proof exists helps to explain 'modernist art's virtually complete disengagement from traditional religious themes'. The important word here is 'traditional', allowing for exceptions such as Kandinsky's and Mondrian's belief in Theosophy. Clarke's spiritual belief, although essentially Christian, is neither accepted unquestioningly nor realised through traditional religious imagery.

One of the fundamental tensions in Clarke's work, identified in the title of this thesis ('Towards Retreat'), is that between spirituality and modernism. The two need not be antithetical, but are frequently regarded as such, with modernism perceived as progressive and spirituality as static (or occasionally regressive). This antithetical

[44] Cork: 'But now, at the onset of a new century, [Clarke] has turned away from buildings and gone back to the fundamental theme of the artist's perpetual solitary search in the studio'. Richard Cork, 'The persistent search', *Geoffrey Clarke › aesthetic detector* (Bury St Edmunds: Bury St Edmunds Art Gallery, 2003), p. 9.
[45] Charles Harrison, *Modernism*, Movements in Modern Art (London: Tate Publishing, 1997), p. 18.

viewpoint, deconstructed, appears to be historically conditioned. The status of religion in Western society, as George Steiner noted in 1974, has been diminishing markedly for over a century,[46] until now (in 2006) it appears scarcely possible for it to be marginalised further. *Is Nothing Sacred?*, the proceedings of a conference between philosophers and scientists at King's College London in 2001, reflects the extent of the trend: having posed the question of whether 'sacred' still suggests issues of a religious or spiritual nature, or whether it simply denotes something of great value, the answer, almost universally, was the latter.[47]

In art criticism, similar reticence towards engaging with issues of spirituality can be detected. Greenberg, approaching religion in formalist terms, criticised its failure to justify itself through '"Kantian" immanent criticism', thus becoming 'therapy'.[48] Harold Rosenberg observed that critics were content to praise Newman's late paintings in abstract terms – colour and form – but fought shy of religious association as surplus to their definition of modernism.[49] The spiritual dimension of Clarke's work has likewise frequently been ignored or evaluated negatively (John Berger's memorable description of Clarke in 1952 was 'puritanically sentimental').[50]

More recently, however, spirituality has appeared as a focus for studies of certain types of modernist art. John Golding's *Paths to the Absolute* (2000) and Mark A. Cheetham's *The Rhetoric of Purity* (1991) address spirituality as an essential aspect of Kandinsky's and Mondrian's early twentieth-century search for the essence of objects through abstraction, extending this precept to work by Abstract Expressionists such as Newman and Rothko.[51] This volte-face from Rosenberg's 1972 evaluation suggests a critical detachment made possible by the intervening half century. It also suggests the surfacing of an aspect of 'modernism' suppressed at the time as running counter to the dominant reading.

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[46] George Steiner, *Nostalgia for the Absolute*. Massey Lectures, Fourteenth Series (Toronto: CBC Publications, 1974), p. 1.
[47] Ben Rogers (ed.), *Is Nothing Sacred?* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004).
[48] Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting', in Harrison and Wood (eds), *Art in Theory*, p. 774.
[49] Harold Rosenberg, 'Newman: Meaning in Abstract Art, II' (1972), in David Shapiro and Cecile Shapiro (eds), *Abstract Expressionism: A Critical Record* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp 344–5. It might be pointed out that religious or church music causes music critics equal embarrassment.
[50] John Berger, 'Geoffrey Clarke and Peter Potworowski, at Gimpels', *The New Statesman* (5 April 1952).
[51] John Golding, *Paths to the Absolute* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2000); Mark A. Cheetham, *The Rhetoric of Purity: Essentialist Theory and the Advent of Abstract Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

A further question raised by this reassessment is the extent to which artists may have censored their expression of spirituality in order to encourage financial or critical success.[52] Rosenberg characterised Newman's apparent disregard of prevailing opinion ('behaving as if the sublime had not been dismantled by the modern age') as a mixture of naïveté and defiance, signifying clearly the critical consequences of his digression.[53] With Clarke, it was clear from the 1952 Venice Biennale onwards that the spiritual aspect of his work did not conform to the attractive and marketable notion of the 'geometry of fear', nor, later, was it compatible with Greenberg's notion of the essentially self-critical nature of Modernist sculpture. Clarke, however, made no attempt to moderate the expression of his spirituality, which is evident in symbolism, titles and explanations. It will be suggested that this spirituality constitutes both an artistic strength of Clarke's work and, because of its historical placement in the mid-twentieth century, a reason for critical neglect to date.

A highly specific, native modernism, with spirituality at its core (thus inviting comparison with Clarke), is the 'medieval modernism' identified in Michael T. Saler's *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England.* Saler's descriptor 'medieval modern' (coined by Minister of Health, Arthur Greenwood, in 1931) identifies an informal network of individuals with similar aims at a discrete historical moment: writers, critics, architects, educators, industrialists and government officials, mainly from the North of England, who between 1910 and 1940 aimed to transform society through the agency of modern art.[54] Saler's protagonists, notably Frank Pick and Herbert Read, updated the belief of Ruskin, Morris and other nineteenth-century 'romantic medievalists' in the integrated, spiritual community of the Middle Ages (prizing craftsmanship and not distinguishing between fine art and utility) to admit the potential of industry, such that artists might design aesthetically pleasing utility items for mass production. Critical to their view was a non-hierarchical notion of art, craft and industrial design, exemplified in the 1930s by Pick's integration of modern art

[52] In the case of Reg Butler (admittedly a 'non-religious' artist), Margaret Garlake has suggested that his work was positively shaped for a wealthy clientele: a clear case of supply satisfying and stimulating demand; art being both moulded for and by society. Margaret Garlake, *The Sculpture of Reg Butler* (Much Hadham: The Henry Moore Foundation; Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2006), p. 9.
[53] Rosenberg, 'Newman: Meaning in Abstract Art, II', pp 345–6.
[54] Michael T. Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England: Medieval Modernism and the London Underground* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

into the London Underground and Read's *Art and Industry* (1934).[55] Clarke's father, an architect, worked during the early 1920s in the office of Charles Holden, architect of the London Underground's headquarters. It is thus highly plausible that he, and by extension Clarke, would have been conversant with the views of those associated with Saler's 'medieval modernists'.

Arguably by giving a name to tendencies exhibited elsewhere at the same date, Saler unduly elevates and isolates his 'informal network' of individuals in interwar England. Movements to improve society by constructing utopias were characteristic of modernist architecture and urban planning, not just in England.[56] Nor, as Saler admits, was the English avant-garde unique in associating notions of modernism and medievalism. In Germany, the Bauhaus sought to emulate medieval workshops uniting art and craft, with artists working as part of an integrated, spiritual community.[57] The premise of a spiritual unity to life, art and society, which Saler detects particularly in nonconformist northern England, applies equally to Mondrian, Kandinsky and other modernist or 'vitalist' approaches to art.[58] Marxist theory, likewise, anticipated the bridging of divisions between art and industry, art and science, foreseeing the integration of art into options available to the masses and the partial aestheticization of the work process itself.[59] The cross-currents between England and Germany in the early twentieth century in issues relating to craft and design were (as Saler notes) of crucial importance.[60]

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[55] Herbert Read, *Art and Industry* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934).

[56] See Zygmunt Bauman's definition of modernism, which also emphasises the search for underlying truth in 'an incessant drive to eliminate the haphazard and annihilate the spontaneous'. Bauman, *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp xi-xvii.

[57] Saler, p. 10. 'Bauhaus' derives from 'Bauhütten', the term for medieval craft lodges used by artisans working on cathedrals.

[58] Vitalism, a late nineteenth century/early twentieth-century tendency to view the origin and phenomena of life as due to 'a vital principle, as distinct from a purely chemical or physical force' (OED), united aspects of religion, philosophy and science, offering a spiritually rooted alternative to Darwinism and an affirmative response to the scientific and mechanistic upheavals of modernism. Principal advocates included T. E. Hulme and Henri Bergson, whose *Creative Evolution* will be discussed below, while Richard A. Lofthouse has recently studied the influence of vitalist thought on twentieth-century German and English artists. See Lofthouse, *Vitalism in Modern Art, c.1900–1950: Otto Dix, Stanley Spencer, Max Beckmann, and Jacob Epstein*. Studies in Art History, Volume 10 (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005).

[59] See Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, and Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp 17–18.

[60] London's Central School of Arts and Crafts (led by W. R. Lethaby) influencing the foundation in 1907 of the Deutsche Werkbund (a coalition of artists, industrialists and educators to produce affordable but beautiful mass-produced items) and the economic strictures of the First World War impelling England to dispense finally with Ruskin's, Morris's and the arts and crafts' antipathy to the machine and found the Design and Industries Association (1915) and the Council for Art and Industry (1934).

Despite its origins in the 'medieval' romanticism of Ruskin and Morris, and the common currency of the adjective 'medieval' in the period under study,[61] the extent to which Saler should stress 'medievalism' in his account of modernism remains debatable.[62] Pick certainly framed his quest for a spiritually integrated community in terms of a 'medieval' ideal. For Read, despite many points of contact and a particular debt to the writings of Ruskin,[63] the epithet 'medieval' sits uncomfortably. However, many aspects of Read's work (some of which chime with Pick) relate significantly to Clarke, particularly the blurring of boundaries between art, industry, design and craft, and the admission of a wider variety of art forms – industrial design, pottery, stained glass, children's art – as legitimate subjects for study. Fiona Russell has considered Read's stance in terms of Charles Harrison's 'vernacular modernism', that is, the drawing upon native traditions (pottery, Gothic architecture or Regency furniture) and the landscape to create a lineage for British modernism.[64] Yet 'vernacular', like 'medieval', describes only part of the picture. Read's hybrid vision of modernism encompasses also a compelling interest in symbolism, the psychology of perception and forms derived from nature – all of which find resonance in Clarke's work. The notions of vernacular and medieval modernism[65] recur as frameworks for discussion throughout this thesis. However, as will become apparent, neither forms a perfect match for Clarke, while Read's writings about art, in particular their cross-disciplinary, non-hierarchical approach, consistently provide the most illuminating context.

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[61] Analogies between medievalism and modernism (particularly in relation to issues of craft) occurred frequently in English writings from the 1930s and early 1940s. The massive project of stained glass for Coventry Cathedral (1953–56) inevitably attracted comparison with medieval craftsmanship, while Clarke's work was discussed overtly in terms of medievalism in Grimshaw's article from 1959. Ronald Grimshaw, 'Geoffrey Clarke', *The Painter & Sculptor*, Vol. 2 No. 2 (Summer 1959), pp 20–23.

[62] Saler's complex thesis strays into areas – such as the social and cultural 'North / South' divide – which relate to principal protagonists in the discourse but (as he admits) bear no relation to notions of 'medievalism'.

[63] See Fiona Russell, 'John Ruskin, Herbert Read and the Englishness of British Modernism', in David Peters Corbett, Ysanne Holt and Fiona Russell (eds), *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past 1880–1940*, Studies in British Art 10 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), pp 303–321.

[64] Fiona Russell, 'John Ruskin, Herbert Read and the Englishness of British Modernism', pp 305–306. Read was well-placed to consider native traditions of craft and decorative art through his curatorial work at the Victoria and Albert Museum, specialising in the study of domestic glass, stained glass and pottery.

[65] Despite reservations about the appropriateness of applying 'medieval' to the entire scope of Saler's model for modernism, the descriptor 'medieval modernism' will be used in this thesis to refer to his argument. It should also be noted that the timeframe specified by Saler for 'medieval modernism',

Looking more closely at the 1950s, Clarke's formative period as an artist and the decade during which his work was perhaps best known and appreciated, two writers stand out as possessing a similar philosophical outlook: Read and his lesser known friend and colleague, J. P. Hodin. Hodin's writings cover many of the issues which concerned Read during the 1950s, Jung, symbolism, literature, philosophy, but with the addition of spirituality which is absent from Read's field of interest. This concern with spirituality, and the fact that Hodin interviewed Clarke at Stowe Hill and wrote articles specifically about Clarke's work, would seem to suggest that his writings bear greater relevance to Clarke than Read's. However, the reverse has proved the case. Hodin's writings are cast in a mode shaped to such an extent by his own literary and philosophical preoccupations that what emerges is less an examination of artists' work (which is rarely mentioned in specific or physical terms) than a projection of his own agenda. Hodin's writings do not cover issues of craftsmanship, education, design and industry which feature prominently in Read's much more extensive writings, and which relate to many aspects of Clarke's work. It is for this reason (and for the reason that Hodin does not specifically address Clarke's spirituality), that Read's writings will be considered at greater length in this thesis.

Clarke's inclusion in the group of sculptors chosen to exhibit at the 1952 Venice Biennale, aided by Read's catalogue essay which strongly characterised the artists' motives and endorsed their participatory role in 'a general revival of the art of sculpture', provided an important impetus to his career.[66] While Clarke's work exhibited in Venice may not have supported Read's general interpretation – that the new sculpture transmitted a 'collective guilt', an 'iconography of despair' – it did accord with Read in other respects. Principal of these was the propounding of art as a psychological construct, a 'wider manifestation of the creative will'. Read, in his catalogue essay, alluded to 'a general extension of consciousness'; Clarke, in his sculpture *Complexities of Man* (LS003), externalised man's inner contradictions to produce the basis of an intricate formal structure. That Clarke's work from this period also explores the concept of creative intuition, discussed at length by Read, further suggests an awareness of psychological and philosophical concerns in the 1950s.

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ending with the Second World War, predates Clarke's work, although it need not be discounted as period of formative influence for the artist.

Read's writing is indebted to Jung, with whose ideas Clarke was familiar. Read was highly supportive of a Jungian symbolic interpretation of art; as will be shown, Clarke's work is predicated upon the use of symbols. A final conjunction between Read and Clarke's outlook exists in their shared belief in the value of craft and design and the ideal integration of the artist into society.

Although Read did not champion Clarke personally, his approach to writing about art provided a sympathetic context for the appreciation of Clarke's work in the 1950s. Read's version of modernism, significantly, and unlike Greenberg's, accommodated the overtly expressionistic, scarred and attenuated work of the 'new British sculptors', with which Clarke's work undoubtedly belonged in the early 1950s. Yet to claim that Clarke's work is grounded solely in the ideology and iconography of the 1950s provides only part of the picture. Through work from the late 1960s onwards he has shown parallels with aspects of land art, conceptual art and even certain readings of postmodernism.

The relationship between Clarke's work and postmodernism depends, as with modernism, on the definition of the term. The artist's work will be approached chiefly via his own philosophy, formulated during the 1950s, and the points of contact with postmodernism, it will be contended, occur largely through co-incidence rather than through sympathy or design. However, it would seem perverse to continue to consider work produced post-1980 in terms of modernism without at least attempting a comparison with postmodernism. Postmodernism, by its very nature, exists in as many guises as its parent, modernism. Perhaps the best known – but with the least common ground with Clarke – is the nihilistic, deconstructive mode of postmodernism: a mode in which the world is recognised as irredeemable, fragmented, and the artist capable only of mirroring or exposing the vacuity of contemporary culture. Another mode, which does offer points of contact with Clarke, has been described as 'constructive' or 'revisionary', seeking to construct a revised worldview through a 'new unity of scientific, ethical, aesthetic, and religious intuitions'.[67] According to David Ray Griffin, this new viewpoint posits a web of interconnections, with God in everything, everything in God, and man's problems stemming from his unawareness of this fact.

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[66] Herbert Read, 'New Aspects of British Sculpture', exhibition catalogue for The British Pavilion at the XXVI Biennale, Venice (1952).

[67] David Ray Griffin, 'Series Introduction', in David Ray Griffin (ed.), *Sacred Interconnections: Postmodern Spirituality, Political Economy, and Art*, SUNY Series in Constructive Postmodern Thought (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), p. x.

From here it is only a short distance to ecological awareness: man's recognition of his link with nature and his custodial responsibility. Constructive postmodernism, a very specific form of postmodernism, has been criticised as New Age Utopianism ('process thought ... leavened with the politics and eco-mysticism of the ageing 1960s counterculture'),[68] and it is certainly arguable that its timeframe is anachronistic in relation to the formulation of Clarke's philosophy in the early 1950s. However, the foundation of constructive postmodernist theory is indebted to the writings of Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947), whose notion of 'prehension' (the primary form of perception, which allows for mystical connection with perceived objects or ideas) underlies a belief that everything in nature is related.[69] Knowledge of Whitehead's philosophy was fundamental to Read as well as to Pick, both of whom cited his work in their writings. While Saler proposes a vision of an integrated world – social, artistic, moral, spiritual – as central to his construct of medieval modernism, the application of this vision by Pick, Holden and Lethaby proves too specifically urban, too concerned with the transformation of society and too little concerned with the natural world, to form an entirely satisfactory framework for considering Clarke's work. In contrast, the interconnected worldview of constructive postmodernism might appear to offer a viable – and complementary – alternative. Yet there is no evidence of Clarke's awareness of 'constructive' postmodernist thought, as framed in the context of the late 1980s and early 1990s, and parallels between Clarke's 1950s-grounded 'world-view' and this form of postmodern thinking reflect perhaps more tellingly on the postmodern movement itself, in that it has initiated a critical discourse allowing for the reconsideration of holistic attitudes with spirituality at their core.

A view of postmodernism as historically delineated opens up a large proportion of Clarke's work to be considered in relation to its various guises. If, for instance, postmodernism is defined as anything succeeding Greenbergian formalist modernism in the mid-1960s, then Clarke's closeness to land art and conceptual art in the 1970s and his return to figuration in the 1980s and '90s may all be considered under the umbrella of postmodernism. Furthermore, Clarke's involvement in design projects, suggesting a lack of hierarchical distinction between autonomous and functional art,

[68] Carl Raschke, 'Fire and roses, or the problem of postmodern religious thinking', in Philippa Berry and Andrew Wernick (eds), *Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 97.

suggests kinship with certain values of the Independent Group, itself frequently described as 'postmodernist'.[70]

In this thesis, the term 'craftsmanship' is applied to Clarke's work neither to evaluate his skill in using particular techniques nor to isolate the sphere of the crafts (with its own complex, historically rooted agenda) as a primary context: this viewpoint has been adopted by Tanya Harrod in *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century*.[71] Instead, Clarke's work will be considered principally in relation to that of other sculptors, and the term 'craftsmanship' used to draw attention to his attachment to primary methods of construction and to his mastering of such methods. In so doing a distinction between Clarke's approach to creating sculpture and that of, say, Caro or Paolozzi in the 1960s, is highlighted: where Clarke remained committed to the 'crafting' of his work by a process of carving, casting and finishing, Caro and Paolozzi explored methods of assembling industrially produced components. Clarke's attitude to the materials and creation of art points to a paradox which might be compared with 'medieval modernism'. His work revives medieval techniques – the forging of iron or leading of glass – but equally it pioneers new techniques with modern materials – the full-mould process of casting using expanded polystyrene and aluminium. [72] These important issues of 'hand-crafting' and of exploiting the particular properties of materials in the creation of sculpture may similarly be contextualised in more than one way. Clarke's northern background and his grandfather's occupation as church furnisher suggest the heritage of the Arts and Crafts movement as one backdrop for his use of iron and stained glass.[73] However, knowledge of Picasso's sculpture and the provocative use of iron by other sculptors of the 'new iron age' provides an equally valid context. Likewise, Clarke's approach to stained glass far exceeds traditional methods (such as leading) to encompass the

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[69] David Ray Griffin, 'Introduction', in Griffin (ed.), *Sacred Interconnections*, p. 7.

[70] The similarity in outlook between those medieval modernists who advocated the dissolution of boundaries between fine art and industrial design and members of the Independent Group (such as Paolozzi, who produced sculpture as well as designing textiles and wallpapers) has been noted by Saler in *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, pp 172–3.

[71] Tanya Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1999).

[72] Saler, tracing the origins of 'medieval modernism', notes that its precursor, the arts and crafts movement, consisted of both antiquarians and progressives. Medieval modernism likewise 'associated the new art with venerable national traditions as well as with contemporary social concerns'. Saler, p. viii. The paradox of introducing vernacular or craft traditions to invigorate a modernist idiom will be considered further in Chapter Three.

[73] Michael T. Saler has noted the strong presence of arts and crafts in the north: Ruskin and Morris lectured widely, 'hectoring the consciences of local manufacturers', and provincial art schools were

recent vogue for *dalle de verre* and his own particular innovation of combining cast metal sculpturally with glass. Again, Read's ideology, advocating an end to boundaries between fine art and craft and encouraging artists to become involved in designing for industry suggests a useful theoretical framework for considering Clarke's work.[74] In this sense, Clarke's designing of functional items such as gates constitutes less of an anomaly alongside his creation of non-functional, abstract works for the gallery or home.

Finally, the use of the term 'spirituality' requires justification. 'Spirituality' has been preferred to 'religion' throughout, on the grounds that religion implies organised worship (liturgy) and received dogma (belief grounded in scripture). This distinction underlies a strand of contemporary theological thinking identified as 'religionless Christianity': the notion that mature Christian faith may exist independently of the religious activities with which it has traditionally been associated.[75] Such an attitude, founded on writings by Paul Tillich and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, can be seen gaining ground from the early post-war years until the early 1960s, when John Robinson's *Honest to God* dared to articulate the spiritual questioning of his time.[76] It is as a part of this historical context that Clarke's spiritual belief is best approached. Although Clarke suggests a Christian framework for his belief through the use of certain traditional symbols (for instance the Trinity or birth of Christ), these are vastly outnumbered by more universal symbols implying, for instance, a conjunction of the celestial and terrestrial or an ascent towards a higher order of faith: concepts which can be found in any number of religions. Clarke's confirmation and regular attendance at Church of England services coincided with meeting his wife, Ethelwynne Tyrer (whose Lancastrian family were devout churchgoers), and early years of marriage, but his church attendance ceased after 1954. Other factors also indicate that Clarke's belief does not conform to a Christian outlook centred on scriptural study and church attendance. A passing (early) interest in Theosophy – which aims to find a common root to all religions – links with his interest in universal symbolism. Likewise Clarke, in his early writings, frequently avoided the word 'God', preferring instead the less specific

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largely administered by arts and crafts enthusiasts. Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, p. 48.

[74] See Herbert Read, *Art and Industry* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934).

[75] Daniel Jenkins, *Beyond Religion: The Truth and Error in 'Religionless Christianity'* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1962), p. 9.

'divine presence' or 'supreme force'. It will be suggested that such actions, together with Clarke's ethos of 'search' in all fields of life, belong to a wider post-war quest for renewal, a need for each individual to reason again from first principles.[77] The writings of Tillich, although unlikely to have been read by Clarke, contextualise this need for spiritual renewal, voicing the need for a new language for religion, the ineffectiveness of Christian symbols 'too often repeated and too superficially used', the spiritual consequences of man's increasing separation from nature, and, above all, the need to penetrate beneath surface appearance to discover truth.[78]

Sources

The study of Clarke's work, to date, has been rendered extremely difficult through lack of documentation. As has been indicated by the survey of literature, the body of contemporary writing about his sculpture is restricted to brief press reviews, supplemented, since 1994, by a meagre four exhibition catalogue essays. The biographical outlines, lists of commissions and exhibition history in these publications provide little more than an indication of the artist's career, offering scant information and containing frequent, repeated errors.

This thesis has grown from the discovery in 2001 that Clarke still possessed a large collection of his work, as yet unstudied. Cataloguing was begun during the following year, with the urgent aim of identifying and documenting the work while the artist's assistance was still available. Material in the artist's collection comprises sketches, prints (monotypes, etchings, lithographs), maquettes, sculpture, work in silver, enamels and plaster reliefs. With the exception of the work in silver and the thousands of pencil sketches (dating from the late 1960s to the present day), all items have now been catalogued and photographed. In addition, through the study of exhibition catalogues and the sculptor's own records, an attempt has been made to document – and where to possible trace – all items no longer in the artist's possession. Clarke has rarely dated work, but, through discussion, stylistic comparison and study of ephemera, a chronology has gradually been established,

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[76] John Robinson, *Honest to God* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1963).
[77] Jean-Paul Sartre's essay, 'The Search for the Absolute' (1948) will be discussed later in this context.

allowing for the first time an appreciation of the development of his work. A separate study has been made of the artist's archive, comprising photographs, press cuttings, journals, catalogues, books, correspondence and unpublished writings, which have been sorted and in many cases also listed. In particular, the press cuttings have been catalogued as a database and indexed according to works cited and illustrated. An attempt has been made to trace and visit the surviving architectural commissions, although a number of these have fallen victim to changes in taste or ownership.[79] The study of this primary source material has resulted in the compilation of illustrated catalogues which include, as far as is possible, all sculpture, stained glass and prints (etchings and lithographs) by Clarke.[80] By establishing a chronology of Clarke's work, these catalogues aim to counter the widespread misdating of his work in secondary sources.[81]

Clarke's most extended piece of writing, his student thesis, 'Exposition of a Belief' (1951), has been studied in detail since it provides a vital summary of beliefs which have persisted throughout his career.[82] In addition to this, dispersed throughout the artist's archive, are unpublished writings which offer a startlingly candid insight into his beliefs, concerns and artistic searching. The understanding of Clarke's work which underpins this thesis has, above all, been informed by countless discussions with the artist while working on the archive.[83]

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[78] Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1949). I am indebted to Ron Howell, Director of Strand Gallery, Aldeburgh, and long-time supporter of Clarke's work, for his ideas on the spiritual dimension of Clarke's work.

[79] This process has revealed a number of previously undocumented works: for instance, Clarke's earliest commission for stained glass for a church in Australia (in 1953, predating Coventry) and the confirmation of hitherto unattributed stained glass at the Church of the Holy Cross, Blackpool.

[80] These catalogues are presented as Appendix A (Sculpture), Appendix B (Stained Glass) and Appendix C (Prints).

[81] The problem of dating Clarke's work has arisen through lack of contemporary documentation, as there was no consistent process of photographing and listing work as it was produced. More recently the problem has been compounded by the artist's unreliable memory.

[82] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief', RCA student thesis (1951) [Henry Moore Institute, Leeds]. Clarke's archive contains various drafts of this thesis which contribute further information.

[83] These discussions have taken place over regular visits to the artist's archive between 2002 and 2006. Where possible, a date has been indicated, which can often be related to notes made during or soon after the discussion. However, due to the informal nature of these discussions and to Clarke's dislike of recorded interviews it has proved impossible to provide documentation in more permanent form.

Methodology

The starting-point for this study has been the body of Clarke's work, the variety and extent of which has been revealed for the first time by the process of cataloguing. This variety, as has been suggested, renders the corpus open to analysis from a variety of viewpoints. Work in iron may be considered as craft (Tanya Harrod) or fine art sculpture (James Hyman). The focus of Clarke's career could be taken to be works (functional or otherwise) produced to commission, or sculpture produced independently. Clarke's attitudes to symbolism or spirituality could themselves form the basis for entirely separate studies. However, the viewpoint adopted for this thesis – particularly as it constitutes the first extended writing on the subject – has been to consider Clarke's work as a whole. In so doing, an attempt has been made to define and analyse those aspects which seem critical to his artistic identity (spirituality, symbolism, craftsmanship), but also to show how these attitudes, beliefs or approaches affect and determine the nature of his work. (In this way, for example, it may be demonstrated that Clarke's symbolism functions in similar ways in work from all periods of his career, and in media from stained glass to aluminium to wood.) With this 'holistic' aim in mind, it becomes clear that to approach Clarke's work via a single methodology would be inadequate. Instead, to consider Clarke's output as a whole, and to explore the identity of the artist, an interdisciplinary approach has been adopted, drawing from philosophy, religion, art, music and literature, and on elements of biography, cultural history and critical theory. The criterion for selecting these methods has been simply their capacity to illuminate Clarke's work.

Clarke's ideals and intentions have been studied through discussion and through his writings. This approach, always treated with caution because of its subjective nature, has proved valuable particularly for an appreciation of the artist's attitude to spirituality. Aspects of biography, such as the artist's attachment to the northern landscape, his living in London during the early 1950s and later isolation in Suffolk, have been drawn upon to substantiate an interpretation of his work.[84]

[84] However, this biographical dimension has been far from fully exploited: in a different study, a stronger case might be made for the linking of Clarke's works with certain events in his personal life. The economic dimension of his work – not entirely unrelated – has also not been considered in detail. Clarke's reluctance to cooperate with commercial galleries has almost certainly hindered the recognition of his work and its consequent market value. This independence was viable, at least until

Focussing inwards on the subject in these ways produces conclusions akin to Black's: the identification of the individual, unique aspects of Clarke and his work. However, consideration of the cultural context to Clarke's work produces a different conclusion. The artist shares numerous concerns with his contemporaries, iconographically and in the use of materials, and the subject matter of his work relates significantly to contemporary movements such as post-war expressionism, 'land art' or conceptual art. Many of his beliefs (with the exception of the spiritual dimension) parallel the writings of Read, in particular his interest in the psychological aspect of man, which mirrors also the contemporary fascination with Jung. However, Clarke's work from the mid-1960s may also be subjected fruitfully to analysis according to Greenberg, suggesting a degree of sympathy with the prevailing interest in formalism. In these ways Clarke's work might be interpreted as manifestation of a Hegelian *Zeitgeist*. Yet, as Gombrich has stated, 'It is one thing to see the interconnectedness of things, another to postulate that all aspects of a culture can be traced back to one cause of which they are manifestations'.[85] The aim of this thesis is to trace the common (or shared) aspects in Clarke's work, but in so doing to isolate also the individual, which may be judged as his particular contribution to the history of British art.

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the late 1960s, because of the income resulting from large-scale commissions. However, a case might well be made for the detrimental effect on Clarke's work of the reduction in income from commissioned work from the 1970s onwards.

[85] E. H. Gombrich, 'In Search of Cultural History' (1967); quoted in Eric Fernie (ed.), *Art History and its Methods: a Critical Anthology* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd, 1995), p. 229.

Chapter One: Philosophy and Spirituality

Introduction

The title of this chapter, 'Philosophy and Spirituality', indicates two vital aspects of Clarke's identity as an artist. First is his bearing as a thinker, his exploration of man's creativity and place in the world: literally hundreds of handwritten pages – in which metaphysical ideas are reworked, reformulated and recast – bear witness to this activity. Second is his spiritual belief, which permeates the subject matter of his work and forms the bedrock of his attitude to creativity. This spirituality itself forms a subject of enquiry, a quest to be explored, fulfilled or attained at the cost of effort.

The search for renewal in which Clarke participated from the early 1950s belongs to a distinct, if not always conscious, need to break with the past. The turbulent years of the early twentieth century, and in particular the aftermath of two World Wars, prompted artists to question the purpose of art and how – if at all – it might be appropriate to depict a brutally altered world. In many cases, strikingly similar responses resulted.[1] A frequent reaction was to return to primary levels, to begin by reasoning again from universal fundamentals or through the inspiration of primitive or prehistoric models. Particularly relevant to Clarke, as will be demonstrated, was Mondrian's and Kandinsky's early search for purity by means of abstraction, which sought an ideal union of spiritual, artistic and moral purpose. The language of this search – expressed as a striving for the 'absolute' – was replicated post-1945 from a number of different viewpoints. Sartre's essay on Giacometti, 'The Search for the Absolute' (1948), depicted the artist's desire to place himself at 'the beginning of the world' in order to create a new sculptural analogy for Man.[2] Wyndham Lewis's *The Writer and the Absolute* (1952) discussed the author's duty to strive for truth – the absolute – in a politically sensitive and obstructive climate.[3] Concurrently, the Abstract Expressionists were seeking to retrace art to its spiritual

[1] The concerns of post-1945 painting in France were examined in the exhibition 'Aftermath: France 1945 : New Images of Man' (Barbican Gallery, London, 1982).
[2] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'The Search for the Absolute' (1948), in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), *Art in Theory 1900–2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, New Edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), p. 612.
[3] Wyndham Lewis, *The Writer and the Absolute* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1952). Lewis's fear, that 'politics may, at any moment, bring to an end all serious creative writing' (p. 198), reflects the context of the Cold War.

source, drawing on what they identified as 'primitive' constants as revealed and substantiated by (Jungian) psychoanalysis.[4] While each artist's search differed in detail, each sought to capture the essence or fount of experience, and to achieve this not by building on tradition, but by revolution or by starting afresh. George Steiner has described this phenomenon as a 'striving to touch the void': the directing of perception back to a state of nothingness (or 'energized vacancy'), from which can spring an impulse of 'theological-metaphysical meditation on the absolute'.[5]

Clarke's own philosophy, as will be shown, shares this overriding principle of 'the search', but lacks the single-mindedness and rigorous practical application of an artist such as Mondrian. Clarke's thinking is eclectic, and its application less dogmatic. In this he mirrors Herbert Read, drawing from numerous, diverse sources to consolidate an idiosyncratic vision graspable not from a single work or writing, but rather from knowledge and understanding of an *oeuvre*. In Read's case, the sources of his reasoning are identified through documentation in published writings; in Clarke's case, sources prove much harder to trace.[6] Although it is not true, as Clarke has occasionally claimed, that he has never read books, the collection he owns is relatively slight.[7] Among this is a handful of books on architecture, ornament and printmaking (belonging formerly to his father and grandfather), monographs on artists (principally volumes of illustrations – the Penguin Modern Painters series, Kahnweiler's *The Sculptures of Picasso*, a couple of books on Klee) as well as a substantial collection of Penguin crime, adventure and science-fiction paperbacks from the late 1950s and early 1960s. The writings of Read himself are represented by *English Stained Glass* (formerly the property of the RCA Library) and introductions to two books about Klee. Yet Clarke's own writing, as shown by his 1951 thesis, undeniably reflects important tides in contemporary thinking: existentialism,

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[4] Pollock was particularly influenced by Jung, as will be discussed further in Chapter Two. See John Golding, *Paths to the Absolute* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2000), p. 116 ff.

[5] Steiner identifies this impulse in practices as varied as Zen Buddhism, Neoplatonism, Judaism and Japanese architecture. However, in the context of modern art history he traces a lineage from the minimalist paintings of Malevich, Lissitzky and Rodchenko ('white on white' and 'black on black'), accompanied by their theosophic concepts, to the works of Reinhardt, Ellsworth Kelly 'and the school of American "illuminators of the void" associated with the Pacific north-west'. Steiner also specifically discusses the work of Mondrian. George Steiner, *Grammars of Creation* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), pp 113–15.

[6] At the time of this research the artist's poor memory for this type of information (as distinct from recollections of a practical nature – such as how sculptures were constructed) has compounded the difficulty of tracing sources.

Theosophy, universal symbolism, Jungian psychoanalysis. Characteristically, knowledge of these ideas is signalled not by overt reference, but by use of language and terms in common currency. Such an approach is consistent with Clarke's outwardly anti-intellectual stance; a posture belied by the thinking reflected in his art and revealed in his writings. Clarke has resisted issuing published statements of his artistic or philosophical intent on the grounds that his work should speak for itself, but when questioned about his writings' purpose and his motives in preserving them, he has conceded that they may later be useful to those seeking to understand his work. In this, yet another paradox is exposed: the desire to be understood, but equally to guard a personal credo against abuse or misuse.

The spirituality underpinning Clarke's work in fact constitutes the single most important factor distinguishing it from that of his contemporaries, its symbolism sitting uncomfortably with Read's concept of *Angst* in the 1950s and seemingly irrelevant to the later manifestations of 'New Generation' sculpture and conceptual art. Clarke's work for churches (stained glass, crosses, altar furniture) has been evaluated, if at all, in exhibitions of religious art alongside that of silversmiths, embroiderers and woodcarvers. Where Clarke's work is considered in the context of contemporary sculpture, its spiritual dimension is often ignored, either as irreconcilable with its modernist technique or with the conception of sculpture as a reflection of the *Zeitgeist* in an increasingly secular society. Similarly, although it is possible to identify artists whose faith manifests itself in religious subject matter (Adams, Sutherland) or who consider that all artistic creation is 'spiritual' (Hepworth), it becomes difficult to find another artist with a comparable belief in art as a religious imperative, or who has so persistently communicated his faith through his work. In 1990 Clarke stated, 'I feel that art is basically religious ... it reveals something deeper than we are normally conscious of. Religion gives art a purpose.'[8]

Examination of Clarke's work and writings reveals a core of themes, each of which equates to contemporary attitudes as well as to earlier sources. Thus, Clarke's interest in nature relates immediately to the 1950s' science-based interest in 'growth and form', although its spiritual slant recalls earlier notions of natural theology and

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[7] Any resistance to reading on Clarke's part may be attributable to dyslexia, which runs (in varying degrees) in his family. Clarke's own 'word-blindness' is detectable not so much in his ability to frame an argument but in occasional mis-spellings.

[8] *Art in Churches: contemporary glass, painting, sculpture and textiles from churches*, exhibition catalogue (York: Bar Convent Museum, 1990), p. 6.

concepts of man, landscape and the eternal found in Goethe or, more locally, in Wordsworth. The appropriation of modern research to give credibility to age-old ideas is typified in the mid-twentieth century by artists' interest in Jungian psychoanalysis: in this way, Jung's concept of 'archetypal symbolism' imparted an aura of intellectualism to systems of sign-making widespread since prehistory, sanctioning their incorporation into new modes of creativity. Clarke, in his thesis, discusses notions of universal symbolism in terms of its ancient origins, and it seems highly likely, given the intellectual tenor of his thinking, that this is a reflection of the pervasive contemporary knowledge of Jung.[9] Equally, an awareness of existentialism, so influential in the early 1950s, is signalled by Clarke's repeated portrayal of man isolated in his predicament. Clarke's definition of man as essentially spiritual has more in common with the specifically 'Christian' existentialists, but it is notable that their shared belief in pilgrimage can also be found in seventeenth-century writings by Boehme and Bunyan, both of which Clarke consulted while writing his thesis. Clarke's concept of the fundamental unity of life, encompassing art, science and religion, suggests comparison not only with a medieval ideal, but with numerous versions of modernism in which there is a conscious movement to efface divisions between art, craft and industry as well as between art, science and religion. In all of the above ways Clarke can be seen both as of his time and dealing with timeless, transcending issues.

While identifying such diverse sources and contexts for Clarke's work it is important also to recognise the persistence of his vision, which was formed in large part in his student thesis. 'Exposition of a Belief' (1951) indicates Clarke's chosen themes of enquiry and, by citing the allegory of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, his predisposition to search. This sense of purpose has remained intact throughout a career spanning over fifty years. Clarke noted in 1998, 'Do not let the search be hurried no matter how late it is. To search is enough',[10] and in 2000, 'Artists search, or should.'[11] This search for understanding, for penetrating to the core of matters, accounts for a recent fascination with George Steiner's *Grammars of Creation*.[12] In one passage highlighted by Clarke, Steiner refers to the motivation behind the

[9] This knowledge, as will be discussed, was mediated by Read.
[10] Clarke, unpublished note (1998) [Clarke archive].
[11] Clarke, note accompanying series of lithographs, *The Search* (2000) [Clarke archive].

creative search, the sense in which each finished work is merely an articulation of far greater possibilities ('in creation ... solutions are beggars compared to the riches of the problem').[13] Clarke's thousands of sketches, measured against a fraction of sculptures realised, demonstrate the relevance of Steiner's comment.

Theories of Art

Aesthetics: the Search for the Absolute

'Aesthetics' constitute a recurrent theme within Clarke's writings about art: a topic of sufficient importance to form, in the 'Artist Series' (1999–2003), a subject also for sculpture. One work within this series, *Towards an Aesthetic* (LS730), shows the manipulation of formal elements to create an 'aesthetically' satisfying composition. Another, the *Sculptor and Aesthetic Detector* (LS679), further suggests that the artist possesses the means to detect and realise an 'aesthetic' that is personal to him. Yet these works give only an indication of Clarke's conception of aesthetics. Intriguingly, he has recently commented that post-'Artist Series' 'there is room for aesthetics to return',[14] signalling that the 'Artist Series' is a cipher for ideal practice rather than its actual realisation. In exploring Clarke's conception of aesthetics, his aims will be contextualised as part of a wider 'search for the absolute' and his methods – principally the process of abstraction – considered in relation to parallel practice in the work of Mondrian and Kandinsky. Lastly, his practical realisation of these ideals will be considered.

The concept of aesthetics, defined generally as the philosophy of the beautiful, appears near the opening of Clarke's thesis:

> Beauty, truth and goodness are constantly sought, often however, with the physical senses and emotions only, to the exclusion of the soul.

Clarke's argument appears to read as follows. (Primitive) man leaving the rock needs to learn that the rock itself, or God, is fundamental to his existence. This truth can be

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[12] George Steiner, *Grammars of Creation* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001). Clarke is the first to admit to not having read Steiner's book in its entirety, but has annotated his copy and even included Steiner in contemporary sketches relating to creativity.
[13] Steiner, *Grammars of Creation*, p. 110.

appreciated most directly through sincere contemplation of the arts – the pure recreation of nature – which can provide insight in the form of an aesthetic experience. To this end, 'the artist's aim is the production of beauty', which is consistent and eternal, using new but fundamental laws.[15] Philosophically, Clarke seems to be suggesting a religion of art, where art (embodying beauty) provides a direct link to spiritual truth. Practically, he is equating beauty with abstraction: the symbol must be beautiful in order to be effective, and the most effective symbol is the abstract.

Clarke's initial statement, 'Beauty, truth and goodness', identifies Platonic ideals or constants as objects of the artist's search, a derivation reinforced by Clarke's advocacy of abstraction, which parallels Plato's recommendation of non-mimetic art as a means of attaining purity and giving access to a higher truth. Clarke's differentiation between the 'physical senses and emotions' and the 'soul' further appears to accord with Plato's hierarchical placement of the metaphysical or non-sensuous above the material. As before, no direct evidence can be forwarded of Clarke's knowledge of Plato's philosophy, thus no attempt will be made to link his writing with specific texts. Also, a clear demarcation will not be made between the thinking of Plato and his successor Plotinus (identified with Neoplatonism): in relation to Clarke's writing it is the general, rather than detailed, concepts of Platonism that prove relevant.

Historically, Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy was of immense importance to Mondrian and Kandinsky in ratifying a new mode of creating art that had begun with Gauguin. Mark A. Cheetham has identified these artists' aim of attaining purity through abstraction as 'essentialism': 'the search for immutable essence or truth and the concomitant ontological division between reality and mere appearance'.[16] Gauguin inaugurated the search by rejecting external appearances and choosing to paint from memory, following Neoplatonism in turning inward to the 'soul', wherein lies the ability to recognise truth. This non-mimetic approach was described

[14] Clarke, conversation with the author (March 2006).
[15] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief'.
[16] Mark A. Cheetham, *The Rhetoric of Purity: Essentialist Theory and the Advent of Abstract Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp xi–xii.

specifically by Plotinus's example of a sculptor who must keep chiselling at his statue until the inner, 'perfect goodness' of beauty is revealed.[17]

While it is not possible to identify any specific influence of Mondrian or Kandinsky on Clarke during his formative years,[18] Herbert Read may again be considered as a mediator, particularly in the case of Mondrian. Hampstead, where Read lived from 1933 to 1938, became in the 1930s a haven for Continental artists threatened by events in the run-up to war. Among these were Marcel Breuer, Naum Gabo, Walter Gropius and László Moholy-Nagy, with Mondrian arriving in 1938. Read followed the progress of their work closely, and his writings from this period expose a tension between the 'Abstract-Constructionists' (Gabo, Moholy-Nagy, Leslie Martin, Nicholson etc.) and the Surrealists – both of whom he aimed to support.[19] Mondrian, falling on the side of the Abstractionists would have held far greater appeal for Clarke than the opposing camp of Surrealists,[20] and it is perhaps not coincidental that Clarke's thinking, at the time of writing his thesis, reveals parallels with Mondrian's adoption and adaptation of Neoplatonic ideals.

For both Clarke and Mondrian, art is not merely an end in itself but a means also of revealing absolute truth. Art, for Mondrian, is a medium 'through which we can know the universal and contemplate it in plastic form',[21] and abstraction a necessary part of the creative process by which the artist looks profoundly beyond nature, '*abstractly* and above all *universally* ... [seeing] the external for what it really is: the mirror of truth'.[22] Clarke likewise identifies art as encouraging those who are receptive to form a direct link with the truth through 'sincere contemplation', and

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[17] Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen Mackenna; abridged with an introduction and notes by John Dillon (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1991), p. 54.

[18] The first of Mondrian's writings to be published in English was *Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art, 1937, and Other Essays, 1941–1943* (New York: Wittenborn and Company, 1945), and the first solo exhibition of his paintings in London was at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1955. Kandinsky's *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* was published in London in 1914 (as *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*) in a translation by M. T. H. Sadler. Kandinsky's paintings were exhibited in London by Gimpel Fils in June 1950.

[19] Herbert Read, 'A Nest of Gentle Artists' (1962), in Benedict Read and David Thistlewood (eds), *Herbert Read: A British Vision of World Art* (Leeds: Leeds City Art Galleries, 1993), p. 60. See also Judith Collins, 'An Event of Some Importance in the History of English Art', in *Herbert Read: A British Vision of World Art*, pp 63–73.

[20] In *Art Now* Read identified those at the extremes of the two movements as Mondrian (abstract) and Dalí ('superreal'). Herbert Read, *Art Now: An Introduction to the Theory of Modern Painting and Sculpture* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1933; revised edition, 1936), p. 146. Clarke has spoken of his lack of sympathy with the Surrealists in general and with Dalí in particular. Clarke, conversation with the artist (March 2006).

[21] Piet Mondrian, 'The New Plastic in Painting' (1917); quoted in *The Rhetoric of Purity*, p. 40.

abstraction, or that which is further from outward experience, as obtaining 'the finer ends ... because the physical senses are less activated, and the appeal is more directly to the soul'.[23] A yet further parallel exists in the shared acknowledgement of intuition's role in abstract creation. For Kandinsky, intuition is the source common to all the arts and in particular the origin of abstract painting.[24] In Kandinsky's words, the intuitive vision – or internal eye – 'penetrates the hard shell, the external "form", and goes deep into the object and lets us feel with all our senses its internal "pulse"'.[25] This language (in particular the reference to the inner 'pulse' of objects) echoes Clarke's own, and, as will be shown, intuition plays an important role in Clarke's conception of artistic creativity.[26]

Thus far, the similarity between Clarke's, Mondrian's and Kandinsky's ideals has been emphasised, but, as has been suggested, a divergence in strictness of application produces remarkably different results. Mondrian's pursuit of purity and turning from the appearance of nature, rigorously applied, results in geometric abstraction. His desire for equilibrium or repose – a balancing of inner and outer, universal and particular, immaterial and material, male and female – matches similar motives in Clarke, but again Mondrian pursues this process more diligently. Clarke's portrayal of woman frequently functions as a symbolic contrast with man, a useful complement, or paired 'other', with the distinguishing factors between symbols taking the form of generalisations: the obvious difference in genitalia, and perhaps greater delicacy (or, in the artist's words, 'ethereality') for woman. From the artist's point of view this results not from an evaluative conception of woman as the negative of man but from a desire to represent woman as an ideological abstraction who forms a graphic, always constructive, complement to man.[27] In contrast, Mondrian's identification of the female with passivity and materiality (as opposed to the positively creative, spiritual male) culminates in a ruthless desire for the purification or 'neutralisation' of the feminine for its role in shackling 'spiritual expression as a

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[22] Mondrian, 'Natural Reality and Abstract Reality' (1919–20); quoted in *The Rhetoric of Purity*, p. 41.
[23] Clarke, draft for 'Exposition of a Belief' (1951) [Clarke archive].
[24] Vasily Kandinsky, *Complete Writings on Art*, trans. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982), Vol. 2, p. 758; quoted in *The Rhetoric of Purity*, p. 66.
[25] Kandinsky, *Complete Writings on Art*, Vol. 2, p. 779; quoted in *The Rhetoric of Purity*, p. 66.
[26] The common source here, as discussed later, would appear to be Henri Bergson.
[27] See Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, femininity and the histories of art*. Routledge Classics (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), p. 30. Discussions with Clarke suggest that his

function of the masculine'.[28] Furthermore, both Mondrian and Kandinsky see in abstract art the much wider-reaching potential for social reform, for the attainment of an ideal, Platonic society through equilibrium and purification.[29]

Clarke's philosophy is generally less dogmatic than Mondrian's, and, like Read's, contains inherent contradictions. The consequence, in Clarke's case, is a vision paralleling the sculptural metaphor of *Complexities of Man* (LS003): for every profound belief there is a counter-pull, a product of the delicately balanced human condition. Although these divergences may confuse or outwardly dilute his main message, Clarke does not seek to mask them, with the result that within his *oeuvre* there are works that appear openly to contradict the tenor of his beliefs. An evaluation of Clarke's stance in this respect depends necessarily on the criteria for judgment. Critics seeking a clear-cut ideology can justifiably formulate an attack on the grounds of confused thinking; those without such agenda may view Clarke's openness in acknowledging, exploring and celebrating contradiction as a sign of integrity. More usefully, however, Clarke's approach is indicative of a fundamental balancing process, whereby no one idea is given full rein without considering its counter-argument. A similar notion of balance underlined Read's psychological definition of the term 'aesthetic', in which *vitality* and *beauty* – both fully present in an ideal work of art – are in perfect equilibrium. (Read however noted the precariousness of this balance, and that in general the artist has to choose between vitality and beauty.)[30]

Before analysing how Clarke's notion of aesthetics is borne out by his work, a later statement (postdating his thesis by forty years) should be considered:

> The abstract, the step further detached from particular reality, is my way of repeating a purity of form within a personal genre. Without rejecting form, or quality, or personality, or the object, the heart, the craft, or the seductive. Purity with affection, purity with care. Not with

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attitudes to gender and the social and creative status of women are characteristic of his generation and background in displaying a distinct (though not extreme) patriarchal bias.

[28] Robert Welsh and J. M. Joosten (eds), *Two Mondrian Sketchbooks 1912–1914* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff International, 1969), p. 137; quoted in *The Rhetoric of Purity*, p. 123. Mondrian continued, 'A Futurist manifesto proclaiming hatred of *woman* (the feminine) is entirely justified'.

[29] Cheetham has drawn attention to the implications of purity in abstract painting – in particular 'the potential for oppression' that typifies work by both Mondrian and Kandinsky – in relation to Nazi ideology. *The Rhetoric of Purity*, p. 133 ff.

[30] Herbert Read, *Icon and Idea* (London: Faber and Faber, 1955), p. 33.

a ruler, purity with art, not purity with anti-art. Purity with the imprint of man not machine.[31]

Here the dialectic of Clarke's artistic ideology is laid bare. Purity is sought, through abstraction. Yet whereas purity would normally imply the elimination of individuality in order to attain an absolute, Clarke demands the opposite: purity embracing personality, object, heart, craft and the seductive. Significantly, the emphasis that Clarke has placed on each element has varied at different points in his career, such that a positive shift in one direction will be followed by a balancing countermove in another. With this framework in mind, it is instructive to consider what are undoubtedly the most extreme – and therefore problematic – works by the artist.

Between 1971 and 1974 Clarke produced a succession of works which might be described as minimal or conceptual. These works, of any among Clarke's *oeuvre*, approach most closely notions of 'anti-art', or, more specifically, appear to oppose constants established by earlier works and writings. *Landscape Reinvestigation: Blueprint I: Contrast not Conflict* (1971; LS368), a steel girder with heaped gravel, presents a symbol intended to be recreated or copied by others on any scale: in this, Clarke was content to act not as creator, but instigator.[32] Contrasting with earlier, hand-crafted works in iron, glass or aluminium, *Blueprint I* signals perhaps awareness of the 'death of the artist'; the idea is paramount, the sculpture's physical form secondary, and the audience or viewer elevated to the level of potential collaborator in the work's construction. A related work, *Blueprint and Reality* (1972; LS374), refers to a Platonic dichotomy, but in materials provocatively at odds with both the philosophical ideal and the origin of the idea in landscape. An aluminium wall bisects a gravel mound. On one side is Clarke's unmarred blueprint, corresponding with Plato's perfection, or the pure 'reality' beyond appearance. On the other side, scarred with graffiti and litter, is Clarke's reality, reflecting man's destructive intervention, and corresponding with Plato's materiality or

[31] Clarke, notes produced prior to interview with Peter Black (1993/4) [Clarke archive].
[32] The outrage caused by the exhibition of this work at the RA prefigured that of Carl André's brick-constructed *Equivalent VIII* at the Tate in 1976. For Clarke, see Richard Lay, 'All my own work for £7', *Daily Mail* (30 April 1971). The André scandal is summarised by Simon Ford in Penelope Curtis (ed.), *Sculpture in 20th-century Britain*, Vol. 2 (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2003), pp 265–6.

'appearance'.[33] Both *Blueprint I* and *Blueprint and Reality* are undeniably abstract in format and relate (symbolically) to an ideal of purity, but both equally and undeniably reject craft in their realisation. In *Cupid's Action Pack* (1973; LS401–2), a roll-up kit fitted with various arrowheads, a bow, phials and tinctures, craft again takes a low priority, the work being fabricated from canvas and brass in almost deliberately crude fashion, while the symbolism of the work – a conceptual representation of equipment or tools to ensnare woman – seems uneasily at odds with Clarke's notions of purity or spirituality. Two further works, *Dark and Constant Origin* and *Fair and Eternal Spring* (1974; LS405–6) explicitly explore a sexual motive: an intimate portrait of woman is suggested by a tangle of cast aluminium surrounding an aromatic phial containing the aroma respectively of brunette or blonde, which the observer is invited to unstop and sample.

The unsettling nature of these last two works lies not only in the extension of Clarke's sculptural remit from the optical to the overtly sensual,[34] but in the apparent challenging of his stance as 'spiritual' artist. They undoubtedly run counter to Mondrian's cerebral search for purity, which, as has been demonstrated, culminates in a ritual purging of the feminine. They also apparently contradict Clarke's rejection of the 'physical', outlined in terms of symbolism in his thesis. Yet where Clarke's thesis refers to the physical, it is in order to measure the inferiority of physical or emotional response (to the representational) against the superiority of instinctive or intellectual response (to the abstract). Nowhere in Clarke's writings or art, in contrast with Plato or Mondrian, does he specifically deny the physical in terms of human relationships. On the contrary, examination of his work reveals the value placed on the union of male and female, viewed as a spiritual, creative, but also sexual, bond. This image appears from the earliest etchings, where man and woman, subject to a divine presence, are blessed with a child. The sculpture *One & One* (1986; LS559) symbolises a union of male and female by two conjoined schematic figures. More problematically, the 'Artist Series', as will be suggested, presents creativity in terms of a male artist and receptive or female source of inspiration. A gendered

[33] Clarke's use of the term 'reality' in this instance directly contradicts Plato's, since Plato refers to 'reality' as the ideal to be found beyond the surface of objects.tra

[34] Aesthetics, as the perception of beauty, applies in any case to all senses. Clarke has shown an interest in all of the senses except 'sound', and in 1988 produced two works entitled *Perception Series* (LS572–3).

interpretation of these works might conclude that they share Mondrian's patriarchal identification of the female with passivity and the male with creativity, an interpretation which might also validly be made of their nearest parallel, Picasso's paintings of the artist's studio. Examination of Clarke's 'Artist Series' from this viewpoint in fact produces a case study of the artist as 'archetypal masculine personality structure, egomaniacal, posturing, overidentified with sexual prowess, sacrificing everything and everyone for something called his art'.[35] Clarke does not oppose this analysis, but rather identifies its ruthlessness and its identification of sexuality with creativity as inevitable.[36] Physicality, in this sense, is not viewed as opposed to spirituality, but as another instance of forces to be kept in balance. Evidence of this might be drawn from the series of olfactory sculptures itself, which includes the overtly sexual *Dark and Constant Origin* as well as the ascetic *Towards Retreat* (LS410), a work signifying spiritual retreat, whose scents – if made – no longer exist.

A decade later, in the 1980s, works on similar subjects exhibit a different aesthetic balance. *One & One* (1986) emphasises form: the two figures present a clear profile, a model of classical restraint. Cast in bronze, their material presence also returns to values of craftsmanship eschewed by works from the early 1970s. A similar purity is seen in the series of landscape reliefs, 'Cumbrian Project' (1981–3). In abstracting elements of landscape – rocks, waterfalls, the sun – to the pure forms of pyramids, columns, spheres, these works too suggest a return to a chaste ideal. In particular it is a spiritual purity, as ascribed to abstract forms (and to the pyramid in particular) by Kandinsky in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art.*

Clarke's works from the early 1970s – seemingly reacting against Greenbergian formalism – explored areas outside the remit of traditional sculpture, through materials and production processes deliberately crude in nature.[37] However, in prioritising idea above form, or aesthetic, to such an extent, they constitute anomalies within Clarke's overall output. After this date Clarke returned to the

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[35] Griselda Pollock, in this quotation, is paraphrasing Germaine Greer's image of the artist in *The Female Eunuch.* Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference*, p. 56. Richard Cork's interpretation is not dissimilar: 'this is the artist at his most imperious, claiming the right to take all the nourishment on offer and grow into a formidable source of imaginative energy'. Richard Cork, 'The persistent search', *Geoffrey Clarke › aesthetic detector* (Bury St Edmunds: Bury St Edmunds Art Gallery, 2003), p. 12.
[36] Clarke, conversation with the author (24 September 2006).
[37] A parallel could be drawn with the illustrations to Clarke and Stroud Cornock's *A Sculpture Manual* (1968), which were drawn as simply as possible, deliberately to appear 'anti-art'. Clarke, conversation with the author (2004).

values he later outlined – form, the object, craft – all of which were (ideally) to be held in balance. It is perhaps in this context that Clarke's comment about the 'Artist Series' in relation to aesthetics should be understood. In exploring the subject of creativity, emphasis on content was bought at the expense of craft (an enquiring use of materials) and form – hence the subsequent need for 'aesthetics' to return. As always, however, it is an aesthetic of balance, a search for the absolute in terms of the personal: in Clarke's words, purity without rejecting 'the object, the heart, the craft, or the seductive'.

Theories of Creativity

As early as 1951, Clarke's student thesis offers vital clues to understanding his notion of artistic creativity, signifying through ideas and terminology an awareness of contemporary psychological discourses and knowledge of the writings of several key figures: principally Jung (the unconscious), Bergson (intellect versus intuition), Klee (the artist as medium) and Kandinsky (colour symbolism and intuitive use of colour). Clarke may have consulted some texts directly – for instance, Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* – although it seems likely that awareness of current issues was gained chiefly from secondary sources. The figure whose writings continually seek to address the philosophical and psychological dimensions of creation, and whose language and field of reference most closely resemble Clarke's, is Herbert Read, with at least some of whose writings Clarke would have been familiar.

Read's writings are grounded on a broad knowledge of cultural theory, taking elements from numerous sources to support his ideas. Read discovered the concept of creative intuition – that the mind contains two modes of understanding, intellect and intuition, and that creativity occurs intuitively – immediately after the First World War in the theory of Bergson.[38] He thereafter began to elaborate a concept of art as an intuitive process, accounting for the creation of both symbol (from the creative unconscious) and form:

[38] Andrew Causey, 'Herbert Read and the North European Tradition 1921–33', in *Herbert Read: A British Vision of World Art*, p. 41. Read continued to acknowledge the inspiration of Bergson's 'metaphysics ... based on biological science' and his reliance on Bergson's definition of consciousness and intuition. Read, *Icon and Idea*, p. 19.

> form, though it can be analysed into intellectual terms like measure, balance, rhythm and harmony, is really intuitive in origin; it is not ... an intellectual product. ... When we describe art as the 'will to form', we are not imagining an exclusively intellectual activity, but rather an exclusively instinctive one.[39]

Clarke's theory of creativity, as defined in his thesis, is likewise based on the distinction between intellect and instinct:

> In the revelation of goodness, the finest instinct will be superior to the finest intellect ... Initially the instinctive leads to reasoning and understanding, and from thence to instinct again, so that in this way a progression is accomplished. The artist thus follows a philosophy of Intuitionism where instinct and intellect are combined ...[40]

Clarke's concept of the primacy of intuition, together with the notion (unlike Read) of an organic continuum between intellect and instinct, is directly comparable with the philosophy outlined by Bergson in *Creative Evolution*.[41] Intuition, as defined by Bergson, allows access to the interior of an object, revealing what is 'unique and consequently inexpressible about it'. Intellect, in contrast, observes objects only from their exterior, and may effectively immobilise the perceptive faculties in its pursuit of precision. However, intuition and intellect combined, Bergson believed, could promote a capacity for deeper insight. Clarke is perhaps unlikely to have read *Creative Evolution*, but he definitely consulted one source, while preparing his thesis, which discussed Bergson's theory: W. B. Honey's *Science and the Creative Arts*.[42] Honey believed, in common with Bergson and Read, that the creative aspect of art defies scientific analysis, belonging not to the intellect but to the non-rational part of the mind. Thus, creativity originates unconsciously – as intuition – while an

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[39] Herbert Read, 'Form and Expression', *The Listener* (17 December 1930); quoted in Causey, 'Herbert Read and the North European Tradition 1921–33', p. 42.
[40] Clarke, draft for 'Exposition of a Belief' (1951) [Clarke archive]. This typescript draft includes a fuller discussion of creativity than the final version.
[41] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1911).
[42] W. B. Honey, *Science and the Creative Arts* (London: Faber & Faber, 1945), p. 17. Clarke annotated the British Library request slips with comments on the usefulness of each book; Honey's book was graded 'Good'.

artist undertakes another practical task.[43] Honey's viewpoint approached Bergson's in other ways that are likely to have appealed to Clarke. In positing a notion of the *élan vital*, a life-force that is responsible for the creative evolution of everything, Bergson envisaged a spiritual force – to be equated with God – which operated throughout an interconnected universe. Honey's argument likewise derived from a spiritual stance, being framed specifically to counter C. H. Waddington's view that scientific progress provided the only positive force for social improvement.[44] Honey questioned the ethical purpose of scientific research, concluding that goodness, like beauty, may only be known intuitively, since it constitutes the spiritual aspect as opposed to the intellectual or material. He also concluded that the relation of these two worlds constitutes the central mystery of human experience, accounting for the internal conflict of man.[45] These views relate specifically to Clarke in their acknowledgement of a vital spiritual dimension, in the role of intuition in creativity, and in their deliberate moral colouring of the creative process.

Clarke's reasoning may also have been influenced by his reading, while at Cranwell in 1944, of a booklet about Theosophy, a doctrine which proved highly influential within artistic circles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, particularly after the publication of Madame Blavatsky's *Key to Theosophy*.[46] The crux of Theosophy is the search for a shared root to all religions, which, as will be shown, links both with Jung's psychoanalytical studies of universal symbolism and with contemporary anthropological research: Blavatsky's writings in fact provide abundant information about religion, symbolism, art and the occult in a single source.[47] Additionally, Blavatsky identifies art and religion as following parallel paths with the shared aim of transcending matter, transforming observation of the natural world through the 'inner eye'. Mondrian and Kandinsky drew inspiration from numerous aspects of Theosophy: its concept of revelation through the balancing and reconciliation of opposing forces, its stated relation to eternal truth – functioning as a spiritual, inner doctrine leading to the essential – and its identification of a

[43] Honey, *Science and the Creative Arts*, p. 5.
[44] See C. H. Waddington, *The Scientific Attitude* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1941). Honey, *Science and the Creative Arts*, p. 9.
[45] *Science and the Arts*, p. 57.
[46] H. P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy* (London: Theosophical Publishing Company, 1889). Blavatsky founded the Theosophical Society in 1875. Clarke's 'booklet' has not been identified, but is unlikely to have been Blavatsky's comprehensive *Key*.
[47] John Golding, *Paths to the Absolute*, p. 15.

hierarchical structure to human experience.[48] As stated in Blavatsky's *Key*, man inhabits three 'conditions': the low, animal state; the ordinary, human level; and a higher, spiritual level. Higher still, purified from all lower elements, is a level unknown to most men, but which constitutes 'the source of their highest inspiration'.[49] Clarke's early description of the creative process parallels this Theosophical construct. The artist, while creating vital, new work, inhabits a 'meditative state', with intuition plainly predominant. Once repetition occurs, however, the artist's 'spiritual and "living" side at once becomes material, and eventually exhausted'.[50]

As will be discussed later, Clarke's notions of the origin of symbolism relate closely to his interest in universal constants, or, as Cheetham describes it, 'essentialism'. In the context or artistic creativity, however, a statement by Clarke referring to the artist as 'medium' in the formulation of symbols contains important clues about his conception of the creative process. In the late 1940s Clarke had bought Klee's *On Modern Art*, which includes the well-known simile about artist and tree: a tree's sap flows from its root, via its trunk to its spreading crown; likewise the artist's inspiration flows from his 'root' to his eye, spreading 'in time and in space' as his work.[51] Klee thus defines the artist as a transmitter:

> His position is humble. And the beauty at the crown is not his own. He is merely a channel.[52]

In his essay, 'The Reconciling Image', Read quotes Klee's simile of the tree, defining the artist's 'roots' as 'deep in the collective unconscious'.[53] Clarke inverts this imagery: the artist's 'roots' are in a higher, spiritual state of consciousness; and

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[48] Cheetham, *The Rhetoric of Purity*, p. 79.
[49] Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, pp 170–71.
[50] Clarke, draft for 'Exposition of a Belief' (1951) [Clarke archive].
[51] Paul Klee, *On Modern Art*, with an introduction by Herbert Read (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), p. 13. Clarke applies the metaphor of the tree to symbolism in his thesis: 'A symbolism containing creative vitality is enabled to increase its power and progression within itself, as in the case of the seed which one day grows into a tree, so the symbol having a fundamental root spreads in various directions expressing complexities of its nature, and at the same time consolidating its basis'. 'Exposition of a Belief' (1951).
[52] Klee, *On Modern Art*, p. 15.
[53] Read: 'The efflorescence of abstract art in our time is not a deliberate creation of the artist: it is a necessary symbol transmitted by the artist from the unconscious, and the intricate crown of this tree is nothing other than the Golden Flower, an oriental emblem of reconciliation.' Herbert Read, *The Forms of Things Unknown: essays towards an aesthetic philosophy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), pp 189–99. The Jungian notion of a 'collective unconscious' will be discussed in Chapter Two.

the source of inspiration is divine. Proof of this belief is found not in Clarke's writings but in his art. The early etchings show man repeatedly in relation to a divine presence – an emblematic descending form, pointing sometimes to a chalice as symbol of spirituality. In 1993, Clarke produced a series of monotypes in which the 'artist' appears clearly as a channel. The imagery of these later prints is essentially organic, with the artist's presence symbolised by a heart and his function by channels resembling either tendrils or human entrails. In all cases the artist's work is indicated at the base of the channel by a scattering of solid forms – pyramids and spheres.[54] The primary effect of these images, with their contorted channels, is to indicate the artist's struggle to produce his work. Yet although the spiritual dimension of creation is left unstated, the contrast between the 'organic' or human artist and the pure (or for Kandinsky, 'spiritual') forms that result is undoubtedly significant. Clarke's more recent works depicting the artist, the wooden 'Artist Series', overtly acknowledge the role of spirituality in creation. For instance, *Transmission* (LS731) depicts the artist alongside a white bowl – a fount or chalice – containing inspirational symbols; the artist or 'medium' is meanwhile engaged in transmitting these ideas to a painting on the wall behind. Equally, in *Solarplexus of the Mind* (LS680) a cluster of rods around the artist's head indicates creative activity; a pile of crumpled white paper hints at the preceding struggle; a leather strap changes from black to white as it ascends towards the work under creation.

The 'Artist Series', some sixty sculptures produced between 1999 and 2003, are presented as *tableaux* in uniform glass-fronted boxes, a foot high.[55] All are constructed from natural materials such as wood, leather and clay; nailed, jointed or glued together, sometimes in conjunction with painted panels. The artist engages with his work at different stages of completion; contemplating the materials, lost in activity or alongside a finished creation. On one level these boxes depict the artist's studio. On another level, like Picasso's representations of the artist's studio, these boxes suggest autobiographical commentary: the artist's beliefs with regard to creativity.[56] The comparison with Picasso deserves examination, not least because of Clarke's admiration for his work and almost certain knowledge of Picasso's

[54] Clarke identified these monotypes as self-portraits. Conversation with the author (January 2003).
[55] The series is not finite, has no specific ordering, and not all works so far produced have been exhibited.
[56] Clarke admits that the 'artist' in this series can be seen as a self-portrait. See Richard Cork, 'The persistent search', p. 10.

paintings of his own studio.[57] As Michael FitzGerald has noted, Picasso depicted the artist's studio throughout his life.[58] The studio constituted the centre of Picasso's world, providing a milieu for entertaining collectors, critics and dealers as well as friends and lovers. It presented a set piece, within the boundaries of which he could consider contemporary experiences and experiment stylistically. Through its historically endorsed subject it also provided a forum for reconsidering the art of the past; for juxtaposing modernism with tradition, cubism with classicism.[59]

In Clarke's 'Artist Series' the studio is never presented (as sometimes in Picasso) as a real or identifiable environment. Clarke's sculptures contain only those elements necessary for the artist, such as wooden blocks, sticks, canvas or paintbrush. Furthermore, the glazed wooden box through which the artist is observed defines the studio as a hermetically sealed space, isolated from everyday life. For Picasso, such seclusion suggested a sanctuary, particularly later in life, from international celebrity.[60] For Clarke's work the possibilities, particularly if the 'Artist Series' is to be read as autobiography or self-portraiture, are quite different. In the first instance, the artist is alone. Clarke's studio – unlike Picasso's – contains no model to inspire or relate to the artist. This defines the act of creation as essentially solitary. In relation to Clarke, however, this solitude, or isolation, suggests further meanings. The artist may be isolated from other artists; isolated from critical acclaim; isolated through spiritual belief. The concept of solitude (with its concomitant mode of silence) has been identified by George Steiner as proving increasingly unacceptable in contemporary society. Steiner further suggests that the intense silence of creativity is akin to religious experience: that 'the inner voices heard by the poet ... come out of that loaded silence towards which the mind and spirit bend their attentiveness'.[61] Steiner's reading is matched by one particular work from the 'Artist Series', *Standing Alone* (LS728), where the solitary figure merges with his background, discernible only by the contrasting, whitened sphere of his head. Below the wooden table (or supporting earth) are jagged shapes, ciphers for the

[57] At this date (2006) Clarke does not clearly remember with which works by Picasso (other than the sculptures photographed in Kahnweiler's book) he was acquainted in the 1950s.
[58] In Picasso's final decade the depiction of the studio outnumbered all other subjects. See Michael FitzGerald and William Robinson in *Picasso: The Artist's Studio* (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art; New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2002).
[59] Michael FitzGerald, 'The Studio Paintings', in *Picasso: The Artist's Studio*, pp 18, 29–31.
[60] FitzGerald, 'The Studio Paintings', p. 17.
[61] Steiner, *Grammars of Creation*, p. 261.

fraught path of the artist or pilgrim as much as for hell. The act of studying the work through the glazed aperture – effectively an observation hatch – makes the viewer conscious of witnessing a private act of creation or meditation. Yet the process is knowing; the artist inescapably conscious of the face he is presenting. Thus the image of the artist as isolated, spiritual pilgrim can plausibly be equated with Clarke's image of himself.

Some facets of Picasso's studio paintings have little bearing on Clarke's work. While Picasso frequently allowed a domestic situation or world events to invade his studio, incorporating references to wives, mistresses, or most memorably, to the massacre at Guernica, Clarke's studio remains untouched.[62] Yet in one important respect – the depiction of creativity – Picasso's studio images relate positively to Clarke's. Between 1924 and 1934 Picasso's acquaintance with the Parisian Surrealists fostered an intense contemplation of creativity that resulted in his representation of the studio in imaginative rather than documentary terms.[63] Picasso pondered for the first time the concept of the artist as a channel, effaced by the creative process. Like Clarke, Picasso also debated the role of the unconscious and the associated dichotomy of rationality and instinct.[64] One particular work, *The Painter* (1934)[65] depicts a sprawling naked model observed by the alert, sharply defined artist. In this juxtaposition of sensual and cerebral, instinctive and rational, it is the artist, despite his relegation to the perimeter of the composition, who appears as the dominant figure. However, the gesture of the artist's brush-hand, pointing towards the model, indicates a link between the two: a necessary union or two-way movement between the opposing forces.[66]

In Clarke's 'Artist Series' the opposing – or complementary – concepts of instinctive and intellectual creativity are depicted separately rather than within the

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[62] The absence of external or personal references implies that the purpose of these works is neither documentary nor confessional. Indeed, the circumstances of Clarke's domestic life have rarely impinged on the subject matter of his work.

[63] FitzGerald, 'The Studio Paintings', p. 38.

[64] These concerns were reported by Christian Zervos in articles based on interviews with the artist. Zervos, 'Oeuvres récentes de Picasso', *Cahiers d'Art* (1926), pp 89–92; quoted in Michael C. FitzGerald, *Making Modernism: Picasso and the Creation of the Market for Twentieth-Century Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), p. 166. Herbert Read also quotes Zervos (*Cahiers d'Art*, 1936) on Picasso's creative processes: Read, *Art Now: an introduction to the theory of modern painting and sculpture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1933; fifth ed., 1968), pp 87–8.

[65] Picasso, *The Painter* (13 May 1934), oil on canvas [Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art]. Reproduced in *Picasso: The Artist's Studio*, p. 133.

same work. The instinctive is equated with the inexplicable in works entitled *The Illusion* (LS713) and *The Magician* (LS719), both of which allude to conjuring tricks by three dishes, a ball (black or white) and a triangle. The compositional device of the triangle is replicated in two further works where titles imply an intellectual input from the artist. The first, *Towards an Aesthetic* (LS730), rearranges the constituents of *The Illusion*, suggesting the artist's conscious experimentation with form: two of the three dishes are turned from the viewer. Equally, the second work, *Purity by Design* (LS722), implies conscious simplification: the dishes are now absent, and behind the table are merely a small triangle and a curved stick.[67] Significantly, the formal elements chosen by Clarke to indicate his search for aesthetic purity are also those identified by Kandinsky as spiritually pure: the triangle (or pyramid) and circle (or sphere).[68]

In the above works the artist is not visibly present. However, in others he is depicted as participating in the creative process, in roles varying from passive, to controlling, to verging on the destructive, with each stance reflecting a varying degree of consciousness. The correlation between Clarke's perception of intuitive creativity during the early 1950s and the writings of Read has already been noted. However, the consistency of Clarke's thinking is such that his recent 'Artist Series' continues to reflect Read's analysis of 'the creative aspect'.[69]

Clarke's artist is initially presented alongside symbols implying divine inspiration, as a creative medium or channel, or, as in *Sculptor and Aesthetic Detector* and *The Artist's Real Instrument* (LS673), as spiritually receptive, armed with a bristling, antenna-like wand. These preliminary examples parallel Read's 'predisposing emotional need', 'state of readiness or awareness' and 'sense of the momentary availability of the unconscious levels of the mind'. Clarke's *Contact* (LS706) illustrates the next phase, the channelling of the idea to the artist, by an emblematic thunderbolt coinciding with the artist's wand. For Read, this is the

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[66] FitzGerald, 'The Studio Paintings', p. 44. FitzGerald suggests that in *The Painter* Picasso resolves conflicting sources of inspiration from the previous two decades, ranging from forms of classicism to Surrealism.

[67] When Clarke photographed these works he numbered three of them consecutively: *Towards an Aesthetic* (24E), *The Illusion* (25E), *The Magician* (26E). *Purity by Design* is unnumbered, but relates to a further work, *Support* (22E), which includes the figure of the artist. It seems likely that Clarke either created these works consecutively or at least conceived them as a group.

[68] See, for instance, Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, pp 28–9.

artist's 'first premonitions of a symbol, or thought to be expressed, not in words, but in visible and tangible material shape'. Read's next steps are the mental elaboration of the symbol, the selection of a method or medium for representing the symbol, and finally the 'technical process of translating the mental perception into objective form – a process during which the original symbol may receive considerable modifications'. For Read it is crucial that form be allowed to develop freely in the unconscious, and to this end he quotes Jung:

> we must be able to let things happen in the psyche ... Consciousness is forever interfering, helping, correcting, and negating, and never leaving the single growth of the psychic processes in peace. It would be a simple enough thing to do, if only simplicity were not the most difficult of things. It consists solely in watching the development of any fragment of fantasy.[70]

In his 'Artist Series' Clarke appears similarly wary of the artist's conscious involvement during the creative process. *The Aesthetic Give and Take* (LS691) shows the sculptor taking control of his materials, as they visibly mould under his influence. Such physicality is increased in *It's a Martial Art* (LS717) and *The Slightly Aggressive Nature of the Sculptor* (LS727) until, in *Excess* (LS708), the detrimental effect of excessive conscious participation results in over-elaboration and the ultimate disintegration of form. Conversely, works such as *Respect* (indicating the artist's respect for the simple; LS725) and *If Only* (LS712),[71] imply a belief in the primacy of works created without artifice or embellishment. These late works continue to equate ideal form with spiritual, essentially instinctive modes of creation.

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[69] Herbert Read, *Art Now*, pp 37–8. Read makes it clear that the five phases he identifies in actual fact take place as 'an integral and inseparable activity', and that the artist may begin at any stage and go either backwards or forwards.

[70] Jung, *Secret of the Golden Flower* (London, 1938), p. 90; quoted in Read, *Art Now*, fifth ed., p. 104.

[71] The title *If Only* is shorthand for 'if only the artist could achieve such a simple composition'. Clarke, conversation with the author (2004).

Spirituality

The Spiritual Search

Clarke's sense of spiritual enquiry – his need to test, clarify and thus strengthen his beliefs – forms a pendant to his searching in artistic fields. Again, Clarke's attitude mirrors a contemporary striving for renewal. The questioning of religious attitudes, originating post-war but growing in strength and generally perceptible from the early 1950s, sent shockwaves through the Christian Church.[72] Of the books that resulted, John Robinson's *Honest to God* endures as the most widely read and influential in Britain, encouraging an end to unthinking religious observance, but simultaneously offering assurance that there may be many sincere and valid definitions of being 'Christian'.[73] Robinson questioned notions of God and Christianity embedded in traditional worship, many of which, he concluded, were fundamentally incompatible with, or unhelpful to, modern society. Historical notions of God as answering the inexplicable could thus be seen to recede as science discovered its own solutions; in this respect God was no longer 'needed'. Equally, traditional images of God located metaphysically beyond reach had become increasingly unviable as the unexplored universe contracted and space was incorporated into man's realm. Robinson also noted – as does Clarke – that the accepted terminology used to define or discuss God was no longer adequate. One source which provided Robinson with important justification for his revised beliefs was Paul Tillich, whose sermons were published in English in 1949 as *The Shaking of the Foundations*.[74] Tillich's writing, not unlike Sartre's in 'The Search for the Absolute', adopted a quasi-Biblical literary style characterised by repetition and verbal simplicity, paralleling in linguistic terms his return to primeval origins to discover reasons for man's current predicament.[75] Thus, wrote Tillich,

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[72] For instance, G. N. Ridley: 'We are to-day participators in the genesis, in Western civilization at least, of a great doubt concerning the validity of the whole system of traditional theology which demands obedience to certain supernaturally revealed rules of belief and conduct.' G. N. Ridley, *Man: The Verdict of Science : Science and Superstition*, The Thinker's Library, No. 114 (London: Watts & Co., 1946), p. 134.

[73] John Robinson, *Honest to God* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1963).

[74] Robinson, *Honest to God*, pp 21–22.

> out of the fertile soil of the earth a being was generated and nourished, who was able to find the key to the foundation of all beings. That being was man. He has discovered the key which can unlock the forces of the ground, those forces which were bound when the foundations of the earth were laid. He has begun to use this key. He has subjected the basis of life and thought and will to *his* will. And he willed destruction. For the sake of destruction he used the forces of the ground; by his thought and his work he unlocked and untied them. That is why the foundations of the earth rock and shake in our time.[76]

Tillich's philosophy, a penetrating critique of religious belief in the twentieth century, in fact constitutes a powerful counter-argument to Sartre's. Both share beliefs that might be described as 'existentialist', but where Sartre emphasises an atheistic (or humanistic) mode, Tillich stresses a mode in which man – though still free to act – is bound in a relationship with God.[77]

While it is not suggested that Clarke was directly influenced by either Sartre or Tillich, their contemporary philosophical search undoubtedly sheds light on aspects of his work and thinking. In Sartre's humanistic or atheistic mode of existentialism, man appears isolated, overwhelmed by his own insignificance, and teetering on the edge of the abyss. In his predicament he is solely responsible for his own fate and moral existence and can thus only despair. Tillich likewise identifies a fundamental sense of estrangement in the condition of modern man, a separation from the roots and meaning of life which can lead to the profound sin of despair. Part of this separation stems from man's excessive faith in science, a relocation of belief from God and the Kingdom of Heaven to man and his own power to effect progress on earth. Such scientific progress, as has been proved, can lead to methods of destruction, 'a return to the chaos of the beginning'.[78] Yet Tillich also identifies man's estrangement as deriving from a separation from what he calls the 'Ground of

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[75] This consciously simplistic use of language mirrors Newman's in 'The First Man Was an Artist' and Clarke's in his thesis. Barnett Newman, 'The First Man Was an Artist', *Tiger's Eye*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (October 1947), reprinted in *Art in Theory 1900–2000*, pp 574–7.

[76] Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1949), p. 4.

[77] Tillich in fact denied the concept of 'Christian' existentialism, stating that 'as long as an existentialist is theistic, he is either not existentialist or he is not really theistic'. Tillich, 'Existentialist Aspects of Modern Art', in Carl Michalson (ed.), *Christianity and the Existentialists* (New York: Scribners Sons, 1956), pp 128–146.

[78] Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations*, p. 5.

our being ... the origin and aim of our life', the 'mystery, the depth, and the greatness of our existence'.[79] This 'Ground' (which Tillich significantly avoids describing in traditional religious terms) is, however, inescapable: man is bound to it whether he recognises the fact or not. As such, man might either experience the hell of 'union-in-estrangement' with the Ground of his being, or 'union-in-love', through which he is offered the chance to overcome the alienation of existence and find grace.[80] For Tillich this condition of grace cannot be willed, but occurs as a wave of light signalling acceptance by 'that which is greater than you': a transcendental moment which bridges the gulf of estrangement and demands nothing more of the recipient than that he accepts the gift.

Clarke's thesis does not address his spiritual beliefs in detail. However, what he does say, amplified by images from etchings produced in 1950, accords with aspects of existentialism and in particular with Tillich's philosophy. Clarke states that a part of the supreme force (again an avoidance of the word 'God') exists within every man. This is consonant with Tillich's identification of the 'Ground' of man's being, and is symbolised by Clarke's inclusion of a cross within man's head. Clarke states that man must accept this supreme force in order to exist. Visually this is represented by the numerous images of *Man: the Gift* (LP073–7), where man looks upwards to acknowledge the gift of the supreme force. Such a construct of inner and outer spirituality – elements which need to be balanced – can be explained with reference to Jung's theory of 'individuation', which will be considered later. Yet there is one important aspect of Clarke's portrayal of man in the 1950s which, contextually, seems hard to justify without suggesting a debt to existentialism. In Clarke's etchings are several images emphasising man's isolation: *Solitary* (LP097), *Men in the Wilderness* (LP083), *Men Isolated* (LP084). Man is isolated within nature, such that where Clarke includes more than one figure in a landscape, each is separated on his own mountain. Nikolay Berdyaev, a 'Christian' or religious existentialist, described man in this respect as 'a tiny, infinitely small, part of the universe ... not the centre of the universe and not its king: he is only one among many and is forced to struggle for his place with an infinite number of beings and

[79] Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations*, p. 161 ff; quoted in *Honest to God*, pp 79–80.
[80] *Honest to God*, p. 80.

powers which are also striving to rise'.[81] This is essentially the image presented by Clarke's etching, *Woman in a Landscape* (1951; LP120), where (wo)man is besieged by the forces of nature, jostling and encroaching on all sides. Crucially, though (and in contrast with Sartre), Berdyaev's man – although unable to escape his environment – is free to transform it through spiritual creativity and his natural impulse to strive, hence through 'the pilgrimage of his spirit toward a higher life'.[82]

Clarke's interest in the figure of the pilgrim, which would become almost a *leitmotif* from early etchings to sculpture in the 1990s, can be traced to his reading in 1951 of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Jakob Boehme's *Threefold Life of Man*.[83] In exploring the notion of pilgrimage, both Clarke and Berdyaev emphasise the attendant concept of solitude, whether of man in his environment, of man as pilgrim, or indeed man the creative artist. Berdyaev wrote:

> Solitude, a man's being alone, is not alienation from the cosmos. It may be only a symptom of the fact that a personality has outgrown certain conditions under which others live, and its universal content is not yet recognized by the others.[84]

Berdyaev recognises absolute solitude as divine; the solitude of God, deserted by the world, or of Christ, who was understood only after his death. Undoubtedly in Clarke's images he projects also personal feelings of solitude: the creative solitude of an artist, isolated by spiritual belief and perhaps not yet understood.

Clarke's inward spiritual search has been matched by a reaching out to discover ways in which an artist can harness his power to influence and specifically to counter spiritual decay through art. From March 1992 to February 1996 he was a voluntary member of the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England, which met

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[81] Nikolay Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act* (1916), pp 72–5; reprinted in *Christian Existentialism: A Berdyaev Anthology* selected and translated by Donald A. Lowrie (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1965), pp 55–6.

[82] Berdyaev, from a letter to E. F. Gollerbach (13 September 1916); reprinted in *Christian Existentialism*, p. 77. The gender implications of Clarke's representations of men and women will be discussed later.

[83] Jakob Boehme, *The high and deep searching out of the threefold life of man through The Three Principles*. Englished by J. Sparrow (London, 1909). Boehme's writings, mixing (in Tillich's words) 'speculative vision, mystical experience, psychological insight, and alchemist traditions' have proved influential on philosophers from Schelling and Schopenhauer to – in the twentieth century – Bergson, A. N. Whitehead and Jung. See Paul Tillich, 'Preface', in John Joseph Stoudt, *Sunrise to Eternity: A Study of Jacob Boehme's Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1957).

[84] Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, p. 158; reprinted in *Christian Existentialism*, p. 75.

every month in London to discuss issues relating to restoration, alteration and new artworks for cathedrals. During this period he wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury to recommend the endowment of a Chair of Religious Art at the RCA, to be held by a believer in God capable of being directed towards 'deliberately spiritual' areas of research. Clarke specifically named Rachel Whiteread (an artist he admires), suggesting that there was 'a short step between "Ghost" ... and a cast of the inside of a Gethsemane tomb ... the most powerful religious symbol ever'.[85] Clarke also recommended the establishment in each cathedral of a small gallery where clergy and administrators could appreciate 'current professional aesthetic spiritually related considerations'.[86] Clarke's ideal of a simple, religious service structured around prayer prompted him in the 1960s to criticise an increasingly perceptible tendency towards liturgical informality. This tendency, which was allied to the questioning of liturgical practice post-Coventry, aimed to attract a more inclusive following by departing from formats outlined in the Book of Common Prayer, admitting use of 'popular' worship songs and elements from other modes of worship or meditation, such as Taizé.[87] In 1969 Clarke declined an invitation from the Senior Industrial Chaplain of Coventry Cathedral to talk in a series entitled 'The Artist and his Work' during an informal evening service on the grounds that such events – however effective in attracting a congregation – are incompatible with the basic aesthetics of worship. He reasoned,

> The Church of England instead of saying we have a new Cathedral ... should be building something the size of a small parish Church each year in successive cities ... in an effort to reach a solution to the basic problem – prayer. The very act of search in the word would create an artery through which some life blood could begin to flow ... I cannot

[85] Clarke, letter to Pr. Purkis, (14 December 1993) [Clarke archive]. Clarke is not alone in finding in Whiteread's work resonances that may be related to spiritual experience. See Tom Derbyshire-Jones's review of Whiteread's 1996 Tate Liverpool exhibition, 'Shedding Life', in *Art and Christianity Enquiry Bulletin*, No. 8 (October 1996), p. 3.
[86] Clarke, letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury (14 December 1993) [Clarke archive].
[87] For a contemporary viewpoint on the need both to review the format of church services and to undertake 'research and experiment' in the sphere of religion, see Daniel Jenkins, *Beyond Religion: The Truth and Error in 'Religionless Christianity'* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1962), pp 112–17.

> accept present methods used to revitalise the church. It only denigrates the act of worship for it to be too closely connected with the bait.[88]

In 1998 Clarke created a sculptural analogy to his view of the Church's predicament: an altar, fractured and inherently unstable (LS672).[89]

Landscape, Nature and Moral Purpose

In 1959 Ronald Grimshaw, Clarke's teacher at the Lancaster and Morecambe School of Arts and Crafts (1947–8), wrote an article about his former pupil which focussed both on links with medievalism and on Clarke's attachment to the landscape of the North.[90] The legacy of the guilds, with their emphasis on apprenticeship to trade or craft, wheelwright or blacksmith, persisted in the North during Clarke's formative years, and Grimshaw, who was close to Clarke, noted a strong practical, social and spiritual influence on Clarke's work: an echo of those 'mediaeval craftsmen who worked from pure instinct, with an inspired unquestioning love of God'.[91] Grimshaw's viewpoint offers numerous points of contact with Michael T. Saler's notion of 'medieval modernism', such that both can be considered together as a framework for discussing Clarke's work. In *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, Saler argues for the medieval modernists' aim of reforming society by religious means, and specifically through the agency of modern art. The example forwarded is of Frank Pick, vice-chairman of the London Public Transport Board (1933–40), who sought to establish the London Underground as a model of 'aesthetic integration and communal service' and in so doing to provide the catalyst for wide-spread transformation of the city.[92] Pick employed artists to design all aspects of the system,

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[88] Clarke, draft of letter to Michael Forrer (Senior Industrial Chaplain, Coventry Cathedral) (21 February 1969) [Clarke archive]. It should however be noted that Clarke's comments were general rather than specific, and that at this time he did not regularly attend church services.

[89] *The Church*, exhibited at the RA Summer exhibition in 1998, was described as speaking 'clearly of the present dark night of the Church'. Pamela Tudor-Craig, 'Indoor sunshine', *Church Times* (24 July 1998), p. 24.

[90] Ronald Grimshaw, 'Geoffrey Clarke', *The Painter & Sculptor*, Vol. 2 No. 2 (Summer 1959), pp 20–23. Grimshaw, a painter and illustrator, had a reputation for getting students into the Royal College of Art. Clarke recalls his influence not in terms of technical instruction but for the ability to open students' imagination: for instance he would read poetry aloud while students worked. Grimshaw remained in contact after Clarke's enrolment at the RCA and collaborated with him in 1955 on the Groupe Espace *House of the Future* project.

[91] Grimshaw, 'Geoffrey Clarke', p. 21.

[92] Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, p. 27.

from posters (E. McKnight Kauffer, Graham Sutherland, John Piper) to external relief carvings on LPTB buildings (Jacob Epstein, Eric Gill, Henry Moore), to seating, textiles for train interiors and a new typeface for signage (Edward Johnston). The result was the commissioning not of specifically religious art, but of works which, by improving the conditions in which man existed, sought to approach the perfection of God's design. Pick's purpose was at once educative, social and spiritual, and his vision – drawing from the examples of Ruskin and Morris – was that the integration of art into society would foster not only an aesthetically educated public, but ultimately a recreation of the spiritual community he believed had existed in the Middle Ages.

Pursued to one conclusion, a fusion of religious and artistic ideals could (and did) result in the recreation of a quasi-medieval society, such as that by Eric Gill at Ditchling in Sussex. Clarke, as an independent worker, would never have subscribed to such an experiment, but he was a key contributor from the mid-1950s to what Saler termed 'an inadvertent monument to medieval modernism': Coventry Cathedral.[93] Basil Spence's cathedral brought together a collective of artists, designers and craftsmen – potters, weavers, embroiderers, metalworkers, stained glass makers (among them Piper, Sutherland and Epstein who had earlier contributed to Pick's vision for the Underground) – whose contribution at Coventry was overtly recognised in a revival of the medieval 'guild chapel'. Like Saler, Grimshaw pointed to Coventry Cathedral's parallel with medieval principles (the power structure of Church as patron and architect as 'presiding genius and benevolent dictator') and its promotion both of a renaissance in stained glass and 'a reference back to the vigour and passionate intensity of 13th century windows'. By virtue of Clarke's (spiritual) belief and training in the techniques of glass and metalworking, he was ideally suited to undertake the commission.[94]

Bearing in mind the caveats already attached to 'medieval modernism', three elements of Saler's model may be isolated to illuminate Clarke's work. Two, paralleling other versions of modernism, need not be examined with reference to Saler: the effacing of boundaries between fine and applied arts, and a spiritual vision

[93] Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, p. 176. Clarke produced more work for Coventry Cathedral than any other artist.
[94] Grimshaw, 'Geoffrey Clarke', p. 21.

that modern art could be used to effect social reform.[95] Clarke's aim, in any case, is to address man as an individual; in Grimshaw's words, 'universal man – Everyman, who is also a mediaeval figure'.[96]

The aspect of Saler's argument that finds no parallel elsewhere derives from its specific locus. As Saler identifies, many of the medieval modernists were from 'the North': a problematic composite (signalled by Saler's admonitory descriptor, the 'myth of the North'), but which nonetheless suggests useful comparisons with Clarke.[97] In Saler's picture of interwar England, Northerners represent dynamism and independence, religious nonconformity, and an eagerness to embrace the cultural avant-garde, at least in part to counteract the image of themselves as 'gradgrinds – Protestant, hard-working, no-fun members of the English middle classes – interested only in "getting on"'.[98] Those from the North included sculptors, architects, patrons, writers, reformers and educationalists, such as Moore, Hepworth, Pick, William Rothenstein, Read, Sir Michael Sadler, Percy Jowett and Charles Holden. The heritage of industry (mining, steel-working, cotton and woollen mills) and the persisting influence of the Arts and Crafts movement, encouraged a visualisation of the integration of craft, art and design. Furthermore, there was a suggestion by Read that the organic sculpture of Moore and Hepworth was produced in reaction to Yorkshire's 'extreme contrasts of romantic beauty and industrial ugliness'.[99] William Rothenstein, Principal of the RCA between 1920 and 1934, recalled that his best students at the RCA were from Lancashire and Yorkshire and Read, in turn, planned to capitalise on this tendency by establishing a pioneering, provincial art school:

> It is our only chance of a renaissance: art only exists where there is a virile people; and our first virility is in the northern counties.[100]

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[95] See Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Translation from the German by Michael Shaw. Foreword by Jochen Schulte-Sasse. Theory and History of Literature, Volume 4 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).
[96] Grimshaw, 'Geoffrey Clarke', p. 23.
[97] Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, pp 44–60. Saler states that for his purposes 'the North' is often synonymous with Yorkshire, but that in the interwar period London writers frequently included the Midlands in 'the North' or used the description to highlight a contrast between the provinces and London ('the South').
[98] Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, p. 47.
[99] Read, ms. review of J. P. Hodin's *Barbara Hepworth*; quoted in Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, p. 47.
[100] Read, letter to Wilfred Childe (27 April 1922); quoted in Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, p. 50.

The Northern landscape itself could be seen as representing, or containing, the essence of medieval modernism: modernism embodied in the topography of industrial towns, with medievalism persisting in the landscape's ruined abbeys, monasteries, castles and remnants of craft guilds. Spirituality, too, was an important factor. The educationalist and art collector, Sir Michael Sadler, in particular, believed that the spiritual rhythms underlying creation were captured in modern art, an interest which he extended to the notions of physical equilibrium and movement in Dalcroze's 'Eurhythmics'. More than this, however, he identified the Northerners' widespread faith in the immanence of the Holy Spirit in material creation as "animism plus methodism".[101]

Several elements of this so-defined Northern identity relate to Clarke, who spent part of his childhood in Preston and his early twenties in Warton, Lancashire. A sense of class-awareness was created by his father's profession as architect, considered a considerable advance over his grandfather (a church furnisher),[102] moulding Clarke's determination to succeed (in the south, hence the Royal College of Art) on his own, practical terms, through architectural and design projects rather than a contract with a London gallery.

Clarke's period of study at the Lancaster and Morecambe School of Arts, during which he lodged at the fifteenth-century Warton Rectory, was crucial both for the awakening of his spirituality and for his empathy with the Northern landscape. In the first instance, a link with the industrial past can be traced to Clarke's father-in-law, owner of a cotton-mill in Bolton, where Clarke was able to make use of power tools for his early iron sculpture. As Grimshaw noted, the crafts were still practised with pride in the villages and hill-towns, where 'a ruthless apprenticeship to trade or craft [was] still insisted upon, according to rules established by the Mediaeval Guilds'.[103] Unlike his future wife and her family, neither Clarke's father, nor his

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[101] Sir Michael Sadler collected significant abstract works by Kandinsky and in 1914 his son, Michael T. H. Sadler (also known as Sadleir), translated Kandinsky's *Über das Geistige in der Kunst.* References to the spiritual rhythm underlying creation can be clearly linked to Kandinsky. See Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, pp 48–9, 52.

[102] Clarke recalls his father consciously attempting to 'iron-out' the idiosyncrasies of his northern speech to appear less conspicuous when working in the south.

[103] Grimshaw, p. 21. A related line of enquiry would be to pursue the significance of Clarke's wife in this respect. 'Bill' Clarke, a native Lancastrian, exhibited strong sympathy with the Arts and Crafts movement in her emphasis on the 'hand-made', evident in her creation of the home environment at Stowe Hill (handmade curtains, hand-mixed wallpaint, scrubbed floor-tiles) and her making of simple, hard-wearing and functional clothes – such as smocks – for herself and son Jonathan. Trained in art, Bill was skilled as an illustrator and printmaker, assisted Clarke with some of his larger iron sculpture

grandfather – despite his profession as church furnisher – had been churchgoers. However, the young clergyman at Warton, Eric Rothwell (1912–2005), introduced Clarke to the Church and acted as spiritual mentor, overseeing his confirmation in spring 1948.[104] Clarke explored the countryside near Carnforth, the moors and the Lake District, discovering landscapes which would remain imprinted in his imagination. Grimshaw, in his article, noted the importance of a Northern spirit of place ('the everlasting heights of fells, the ceaseless tidal flow of estuary'), not to be underestimated as a continuing source of inspiration for Clarke in terms of subject matter.[105] However, he also identified the more pervasive influence of landscape in terms of colour, derived naturally from metals, plants and crystals, and form, derived from principles of organic growth.[106]

This integration of landscape and nature into a holistic, spiritual unity, encompassing man, invokes the writings of Wordsworth and Ruskin – both associated with the landscape with which Clarke was acquainted as well as with notions of natural theology. In his writings Ruskin's sphere of argument ranges freely from nature, the expression of the divine, to art, the reflection of nature – and hence of the divine, to man's relationship with nature and his spiritual obligation to others. For instance, a lecture on iron considers first the metal's properties and occurrence in nature, colouring the landscape; secondly its use in art for decorative work based on an 'abstract of portions of natural forms'; and thirdly its use in policy or political action – as the plough, fetter or sword.[107] Ruskin concludes by discussing the moral issues raised by industrialisation (the obligation of society towards the oppressed working classes) and conflict, but within a religious, and specifically Biblical, field of reference.[108] Clarke showed no interest in the political implications of natural phenomena, but his fascination with the interrelationships between man, nature and a divine force is revealed in the large group of etchings made in 1950. Clarke's

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and made one significant, small-scale sculpture in iron. From the late 1960s onwards she ran her own lettering business, producing signs in aluminium for businesses, Cambridge colleges and pubs.

[104] Clarke was confirmed at Carnforth on 28 April 1948. Rothwell advised Clarke on the symbolism for the Coventry windows, sending him a commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.

[105] Grimshaw, p. 21

[106] Grimshaw, p. 23.

[107] John Ruskin, 'The Work of Iron in Nature, Art and Policy', a lecture delivered at Tunbridge Wells, February 16th, 1858; reprinted in John Ruskin, *On Art and Life* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2004), pp 57–98.

[108] Similar moral arguments were propounded by the geologist Adam Sedgwick addressing colliers on Tynemouth beach in 1838. See John Brooke and Geoffrey Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature: The Engagement of Science and Religion* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), p. 27.

etchings expose a microcosm, a universe teeming with life, where boundaries between man and nature, viewed minutely, blur and dissolve. In *Men in the Mountains* (LP082), man is constructed from the same lines as the trees, which, as they topple, form further, fallen figures. *Man, Woman and Tree* (LP081) presents three figures, the smallest of which – if not for its frond-like roots – might plausibly be mistaken for a child.[109] Read identified the same unity of action and reaction between the Godhead, Man and Nature as at the heart of Wordsworth; 'the exquisite functioning of this interlocked universe' constituting the highest theme of his poetry.[110]

Clarke's appropriation of natural imagery can be related plausibly to his immersion in the Northern landscape as well as to specific sources such as the highly magnified photographs of plants in *Art Forms in Nature*.[111] However, his use of natural form as a metaphor for spiritual growth or perfection, unless deriving in some sense from Sadler's moorland 'animism plus methodism', is harder to trace. As Saler points out, aspects of natural theology can be detected in writings by Ruskin and later by Pick and Read, who described art as a *natural* activity whose 'rules are the proportions and rhythms inherent in our universe', bringing the individual 'without effort into sympathetic harmony with his environment'.[112] Although no concrete evidence can be forwarded for Clarke's knowledge of natural theology, parallels with his thinking are striking. Natural theology admits a dialogue between art, science and religion whereby each can be perceived as in harmony rather than in conflict, thereby suggesting a rationale for Clarke's interest in (and apparent lack of separation between) each field of enquiry. Scientific discovery can further be likened to religious experience, as a miraculous gift uncovering laws known previously only to nature.[113] The perfection of nature's design had been graphically exposed in Robert Hooke's *Micrographia* (1665) – an effective precursor of 1950s' microphotography – which contrasted the beauty of natural forms viewed through a microscope with the

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[109] See Judith LeGrove, 'Man and Nature', in *Geoffrey Clarke: 1950* (London: Fine Art Society, 2006).
[110] Herbert Read, *Wordsworth* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1930; new edition: 1949), pp 126–7.
[111] *Art Forms in Nature*, examples from the plant world photographed direct from nature by Professor Karl Blossfeldt, with an introduction by Karl Nierendorf (London: A. Zwemmer, 1935).
[112] Herbert Read, 'Art and Crisis' (1944); quoted in Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, p. 21.
[113] Comparable language has been used by Einstein, Eugene Wigner and Frank Close. Brooke and Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature*, pp 227–8.

crude imperfection of a man-made object, such as a needle. This theme became a staple tenet of the nineteenth-century natural theologians, used as an argument not only for the existence of God, but for His power, wisdom and goodness. As John Cantor and Geoffrey Brooke state, this argument, through its transparency and ubiquity, could transcend education or social background: anyone could see and appreciate natural design, the intricate structure of the thistle or rose; the 'Book of Nature was open for all to read'.[114] Clarke's pervasive use of natural symbolism is no doubt in part chosen for its simplicity in conveying his message in comparable contexts and with similar purpose.

Two simple rhetorical devices frequently deployed by the natural theologians, analogy and antithesis, also parallel Clarke's use of natural symbolism. The combination of paired terms points to the difference between man-made and God-created objects. For instance, a telescope relates to its maker (an optician) as the eye relates to its divine Creator; hence the artefact to the artisan and the natural object to God.[115] An identical construction in Clarke's pair of Coventry windows illustrates the comparable wisdom of man and God, man capable of fashioning a chalice and God of creating a flower. Likewise, the natural theologians conjured visions of a chaotic, hellish universe to contrast with an ordered world created by Divine influence.[116] Clarke's use of antithesis often has a similarly moral purpose. For instance his student notes state,

> Imperfection must exist before a picture is created. (St John chapt. 1.5: The light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not.) There must be evil (blackness) in order that good (whiteness) may be comprehended. [117]

An overt pictorial rendering occurs in the etching *The Choice I* (1950; LP024), where man deliberates between the cross and chalice (spiritual objects) and a ring (worldly goods). The choice here might be seen as a question of balance, a weighing of the

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[114] Brooke and Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature*, pp 180–81.
[115] *Reconstructing Nature*, pp 190–91.
[116] *Reconstructing Nature*, pp 193–5.
[117] Significantly, under this passage is written, 'Plants die without light'. Clarke, notes relating to thesis (*ca.* 1951) [Clarke archive]. However, Clarke has stated that reading the Bible was neither a part of his upbringing nor of later life. Clarke, conversation with the author (8 December 2005). Paralleling medieval practice, Clarke's notes also contain several diagrammatic expositions of antithetical concepts: beauty opposed to ugliness, good to evil, God to man.

celestial and the earthly to find an ideal equilibrium. Clarke's rarely depicts evil in any material sense, instead suggesting a contrast with goodness by the symbolic use of colour (black versus white), often in conjunction with the notion of progression towards a higher order.[118] The frequency with which this antithetical symbolism recurs reflects Clarke's moral stance: the artist, endowed with special powers of communication, is charged with – if not exactly setting an example – offering guidance; 'reminders about good and evil, for a variety of situations'.[119] Like Ruskin, Clarke invokes nature as a constant against which to gauge man's morality. For instance, man's responsibility to the natural world is depicted frequently in works from the 1950s (the etching *Man Taking Away*, where greed tempts man to destroy a forest) to the 1970s (medals showing man's destruction and pollution of the environment).

Clarke's sense of enquiry into spiritual matters, seen for instance in his proposal for a Chair of Religious Art, parallels a similar spirit of enquiry into landscape, an enquiry once again linked with moral responsibility on the part of the artist. In the early 1970s he produced detailed proposals for a research project entitled *Landscape Reinvestigation*, reasoning that the artist's creativity and visual awareness could contribute to the environment in ways not yet investigated.[120] Amongst public objectives he listed the recreation and manipulation of acres of landscape despoiled by mining or motorways; the study of natural elements (e.g. reclamation from the sea, ebb and flow, buoyancy, sound), plants (mosses and lichens) and microclimates; and an analysis of scale. Private objectives included the creation, as a by-product, of material suitable for gallery display. This aspect of Clarke's search originated in 1969 during what he described as an 'attitude change', when he began to be as interested in the environment in which an object was placed as in the object itself, exploiting contrast and avoiding conflict. The first resulting work, *Blueprint I* (1971; LS368), a formal exaggeration of the harmony possible between man and nature, led to further works examining man's relationship with (and responsibility to) landscape, for instance *Blueprint and Reality* (1972; LS374):

[118] The ladder, a frequent symbol for ascent to wisdom or spirituality in mediaeval images, appears often with similar intent in Clarke's work from 1964 onwards.
[119] Clarke, conversation with the author (21 June 2005).
[120] Clarke, papers relating to 'Landscape Reinvestigation' (1971–3) [Clarke archive].

> The front – Blueprint ... is my sketch of one kind of perfection. Man's new machine like capability related to natural form. He has always built walls in the midst of nature. Their function & complexity invariably obscuring the essential contrast.
> The back – Reality reflects me no less, but as an ineffectual, often exasperated, participant.[121]

In this way, an artwork (consisting of aluminium wall, gravel and litter) that could be viewed as merely provocative in physical terms, represented a more profound philosophical construct, but one perhaps not obvious without the accompanying, unpublished explanation. As demonstrated by the *Blueprint* series, the specific practical areas of study outlined in Clarke's research proposal – plant growth, the pressure produced by mushroom spawn under stretched PVC – were actually realised along metaphysical lines as symbolic works of art. A series of smaller-scale works combining aluminium, moss and gravel, suggests comparison with Japanese gardens (an acknowledged interest) as well as with Dalwood's contemporary work (1973–5) incorporating plants.[122]

Clarke's attitude to nature, as to spirituality, has been predicated on a mission of improvement: his landscape research proposal conceded to side with conservationists in preserving a status quo only if no better solution could be found. A much later statement clearly defines this intent:

> I fall for nature ... like anyone else, but would not be contented to simply represent it nor even to re.present it. I'm afraid I would wish to physically intrude with the intention of honouring nature (but no doubt some would call it rape). [Richard] Long intrudes nicely but perhaps rather too often and too politely.[123]

Clarke admired Long's landscape work of the late 1960s, and the contemporary tendency for land-based art – ranging from Long's relatively non-interventional approach to monumental intrusions into deserts in the United States – undoubtedly influenced his decision to investigate similar areas. However, Clarke's 1970s'

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[121] Clarke, notes on *Blueprint & Reality* (16 April 1972) [Clarke archive].
[122] See Chris Stephens, *The Sculpture of Hubert Dalwood* (London: The Henry Moore Foundation in association with Lund Humphries Publishers, 1999), pp 134–5.

landscape works, in continually acknowledging man's relationship to nature, can equally validly be interpreted as further variations on a theme originating in work from the 1950s. Man, from the early etchings to the environmental medals, has been symbolised in Clarke's work as an integral, interconnected element of nature, as honouring (or adoring) nature, and as morally responsible for nature's fate.

Conclusion

The elements of Clarke's philosophical, spiritual and artistic identity, as revealed through his work and writings, may be assembled into a composite in which everything is related, a parallel to an idealised medieval worldview in which the artist is integrated into society and all matter is subject to a divine will. Thus, in Clarke's thinking, man is an indissoluble part of nature. A supreme, divine power has created nature and man, and is ever-present within him, whether or not he is conscious of the fact. The artist, through his work, creates symbols to link with this divine force and to provide reminders of man's responsibility to the environment. This network of interconnected beliefs – and the profundity with which it is believed – is undeniably engaging. However, when each element is examined in isolation, interesting side issues, potentially problematic, emerge. Clarke's spirituality, Christian in essence, appears if not to admit elements of other religions, at least not to preclude them. For instance, when questioned by Peter Black about the symbolic cross within man's head in the early etchings, Clarke states, 'What particular religion it is does not matter'.[124] When further questioned about his interest in the Church (in relation to work for Coventry), Clarke replied:

> it is not an interest in the church at all, it is an interest in man himself, in a sense. What he has inside him already. What, in a sense, he has been given.... It keeps applying more and more. ... I think, in my thesis I said something about returning to the rock, meaning returning to the true faith, you see, having sown one's wild oats. This seems to be exactly what had happened to me. ... And I must say that I am not

[123] Clarke, notes produced prior to interview with Peter Black (1993/4) [Clarke archive].
[124] Clarke, typescript of interview with Peter Black (1993/4), p. 3 [Clarke archive].

> impressed by the Church of England, or any other church at all, the way they are going.[125]

Again Clarke fails to distinguish between 'churches' and religions. The symbols he chooses to indicate spiritual receptivity, search, growth or power (the chalice, ladder, flower or vortex) are not in themselves Christian, but general to various systems of religious belief. Equally, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* may be read as an allegorical spiritual quest as much as a specifically Christian work.[126] It could further be argued that the fact that Clarke's spiritual work does happen to be sited in Christian places of worship is a mere coincidence of circumstance – the result of commissions undertaken and fulfilled. Clarke's attitude to nature appears similarly problematic. The respect for nature underlying the environmental medals appears compromised by an attitude that would unashamedly intervene to improve upon nature. It should be noted, of course, that Clarke never took part in any such projects to alter landscape. Like many of his ideas, the *Landscape Reinvestigation* project exists essentially as a visionary proposal, one that was never developed in sufficient detail to prove practical.

A crucial factor here – and arguably one that constitutes part of Clarke's philosophy – is his fiercely guarded independence. Clarke has consistently shunned interviews, declined association with artistic groups and proved reluctant to commit himself long-term to a commercial gallery. More seriously, perhaps, he has avoided the work of contemporary artists and reading about contemporary (or earlier) art, an attitude which he has described as 'almost a total inhibition about being visually influenced'.[127] This isolation, upon which recent writers such as Black have constructed the myth of Clarke as pilgrim, can be adduced as responsible for both weakness and strength in Clarke's work: weakness because of a lack of critical or practical testing for his ideas (leading to repetition or unrealistic goals); strength because of the unimpaired integrity of his vision. Yet rather than impose on Clarke's work artificial criteria for success, it is perhaps more constructive to identify his own

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[125] Clarke, typescript of interview with Peter Black (1993/4), p. 12 [Clarke archive].

[126] Jonathan Rose identified Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* as one of the most widely-known texts of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, appreciated on numerous levels. For instance one reader admitted having known the text for many years before, through exposure to Freud and Jung, discovering it as 'one of the greatest, most potent works on practical psychology extant'. Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 105.

philosophical aims. As has been demonstrated, Clarke's search for essences, or 'the absolute', is fundamental to his artistic and philosophical constitution. His approach to symbolism and interest (albeit passing) in Theosophy are indicative of a reaching towards universal absolutes, ideals or beliefs that can transcend the specific. Thus, his use of symbols common to various religions – the flower, chalice or ladder – is not so much a betrayal of his own faith, Christianity, as an attempt to convey as widely as possible his belief in the transformative power of spiritual communion. Likewise, Clarke's projects involving landscape might be seen to stem from his belief in an aesthetic absolute: that it is not only possible to counteract man's negative contribution to nature but to 'improve' with artistically balanced, harmonious intervention. These two aims – in respect to spiritual belief and landscape – should perhaps be seen as the limit of Clarke's aspirations for the reformative power of art: aims which, although not insignificant, fall far short of those of Kandinsky or Mondrian. An interesting comparison can be drawn with Clarke's contemporary, Alan Reynolds, who began similarly by painting landscapes influenced by Klee and neo-romanticism but, again like Clarke, from the early 1960s pursued a course of increasing abstraction. The culmination, for Reynolds, was the production of the type of work he has continued to produce ever since: pure white reliefs; geometrical compositions based on numerical ratios and principles such as the golden section. Clarke recalls the first exhibition of such works, at the Redfern Gallery in 1969, as profoundly uninteresting.[128] For Clarke it is the consistency with which Reynolds has pursued his ideals that is unsatisfactory, whereas abstract reliefs by Nicholson – following no such agenda – can prove formally satisfying. In Clarke's own work he has rarely pursued purity or abstraction to the complete exclusion of other elements, but where he has, such pursuit has frequently been followed by a counter-move, such as the readmitting of elements of figuration, craft or symbolism. Again it is informative to return to the example of Read, whose writings, always eclectic, are characterised by an increasingly balanced approach: a methodology whereby individual elements are synthesised rather than pursued single-mindedly.

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[127] Clarke, notes produced prior to interview with Peter Black (1993/4) [Clarke archive].
[128] Reynolds' 1969 Redfern Gallery exhibition was a critical failure and Reynolds afterwards burned many of the reliefs exhibited. Michael Harrison, 'Alan Reynolds – from country lane ...', in *Alan Reynolds* (Cambridge: Kettle's Yard, 2003), p. 20.

Chapter Two: Symbolism and Form

Introduction

When J. P. Hodin sought to classify the types of British sculpture from the two post-Hepworth/Moore generations on show at various London venues in 1965, he identified four categories: Constructivists, Figurative-Romantic-Surrealists, Symbol or Image Makers and Dada.[1] Hodin's categories, though by no means exhaustive, acknowledged the schism between purely formal 'Constructivist' works and those concerned more primarily with the communication of a message or idea. Clarke, together with Armitage, Chadwick, Dalwood, John Hoskin, Bryan Kneale, Paolozzi and Wright, belonged to the 'symbol makers'. Undoubtedly the majority shared an interest in organic forms, the human figure as a symbol, and the primitive or ritual object. Yet these concerns, which had emerged during the 1950s, were less urgent by 1965. Turnbull, whose idols and votive objects would have justified him as an 'image maker' a decade earlier, was now classified by Hodin as a Constructivist, creating abstract forms with non-allusive titles. Equally, while Clarke's work from the 1950s belonged comfortably in the 'symbolist' stable, his new work (1964–5) explored a different formal vocabulary of angles, troughs, slabs and bars, which Hodin himself described awkwardly as 'signs without symbolism'.[2]

Considering Clarke's output as a whole, however, it becomes apparent not only that symbolism is essential – as a tool for facilitating communication across boundaries of language or social context – but that its highly developed field of reference dates from his student years, the early 1950s. The reasoning behind Clarke's use of symbols is documented in his student thesis, 'Exposition of a Belief' (1951), which will be discussed below. However, Clarke's use of the term 'symbolism' should be defined at the outset. Firstly, 'symbolism' indicates the use of a visual form as a substitute for an idea. Yet Clarke also understands 'symbolism' as an alternative term for 'abstraction'.[3] This concept of an abstracted form embodying

[1] J. P. Hodin, 'The Avant-Garde of English Sculpture and the Liberation from the Liberators', *Quadrum* 18 (1965), p. 61.
[2] Hodin, 'The Avant-Garde of English Sculpture', p. 63.
[3] Clarke, conversation with the author (19 September 2005).

the essence of an idea was succinctly stated in Roger Fry's *Vision and Design*, in a passage which Clarke copied and retained among his student notes:

> the simplification of ... forms is the result of an instinctive reaching-out for the direct symbol of the idea. The essential power of pictorial, as of all other art, lies in its use of the fundamental and universal symbol, & whoever has the instinct for this can convey his ideas, though possessed of the most rudimentary knowledge of the actual forms of nature while he who has it not can by no accumulation of observed facts add anything to the spiritual treasure of mankind.[4]

Fry identified the crux of the matter: the artist's simplification of form to create a fundamental, universally recognised symbol.

The symbols chosen by Clarke to effect his aim may be divided into two categories. In the first, images identifiable to the viewer – such as man, a chalice, a tree – are deployed in various casts or contexts to suggest different meanings. For instance, Clarke's symbols for man are chosen to reveal aspects of his underlying psychological or spiritual constitution:

> There are numerous forms for man, woman and child. They are various, though basically the same, because it is the artist's function to suggest, to imply, to reveal in as many ways as he can. Though the subject may be similar, the implication or revelation, call it the aesthetic experience will vary both in depth and direction.[5]

The second category, illustrated particularly by Clarke's stained glass, consists of less distinct symbols which suggest an effect or atmosphere rather than a meaning that can be defined in words. For instance, the power of God (the 'supreme force') might be implied by a swirling form, or the mystery of spirituality – to be explored – by a void. Both categories of symbol, however, share the same purpose: the revelation of underlying truth.

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[4] Roger Fry, 'Three Pictures in Tempera by William Blake', *Burlington Magazine* (1904); published in *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1920; Pelican edition, 1937), p. 180. The emphasis is Clarke's.

[5] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief' (1951) [Henry Moore Institute, Leeds].

Symbolism

Clarke's adoption of symbolism, and a concomitant interest in notions of the primitive and the unconscious, connects his work with important strands of cultural response in the post-war years. The aftermath of war – its horrific visual legacy, economic privation and continuing physical threat in the shape of atomic annihilation – produced in certain groups of artists a necessity of looking inwards to locate a new subject matter and new approach to art. As Charles Harrison and Paul Wood state, 'the inner and the mythical were made to coincide as expressive resources with which to face a modern world otherwise beyond description ... the archaic and the unconscious offered themselves as lifeboats for the avant-garde'.[6]

The groups who exhibited this tendency most markedly were, in the United States, the Abstract Expressionists, in Europe the *Tachistes* and CoBrA, and in Britain those artists influenced by Abstract Expressionism (Alan Davie, William Gear). While one impetus behind this artistic search for renewal was undoubtedly war, provoking an instinctive return to the most primitive, deeply held beliefs of mankind, another was almost certainly scientific progress, perceived by many as the fundamental hope of society (supplanting religion), but by others as bringing about change at an uncomfortable rate, not to mention the potential for mass destruction.[7] Both concerns were reflected in Barnett Newman's 'The First Man Was an Artist' (1947), a passionate argument against empiricism and in favour of a return to primary values, which claimed that the poet and artist were better equipped than the palaeontologist to reveal the 'truth concerning original man ... [through] trying to arrive at his creative state'.[8] For Newman, as for his compatriots, Adolph Gottlieb, Clyfford Still, Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock, the concept of the unconscious as a source for creativity – accessed through dreams, trance or meditative states – proved intensely liberating.[9]

The roots of Pollock's art, which reveal particular parallels with Clarke's, can be traced pre-war to the 1920s and '30s. As Michael Leja has stated, Pollock was

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[6] Harrison and Wood, 'Part V: The Individual and the Social: Introduction', in *Art in Theory 1900–2000*, p. 558.
[7] Cf Clarke: 'At this stage scientists & others, far from simplifying matters, are producing theories & facts too fast for us to comprehend'. ['Notes'], dated 22 November 1964 [Clarke archive].
[8] Barnett Newman, 'The First Man Was an Artist', *Tiger's Eye*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (October 1947), reprinted in *Art in Theory 1900–2000*, p. 577.
[9] See *Art in Theory 1900–2000*, pp 568–77.

familiar with American 'Modern Man' literature, which originated in the 1920s and called for intellectual regeneration in the face of changing values and new sources of information. Many Modern Man writers were psychologists or interested in psychology (particularly the work of Jung); all were influenced by the vogue for anthropology, and as a result of this, with man's ability to communicate, through art, across the ages.[10] Pollock, though not widely read, absorbed this contemporary urge to communicate, combined with the paradoxical need both to establish a new individual identity and to identify with the absolute nature of art stretching back to prehistory. From 1939 to 1942 Pollock underwent Jungian psychotherapy, following which his work became increasingly steeped in archetypal imagery. *Male and Female in Search for a Symbol* (1943) indicates not only this interest in Jung but awareness of ancient Assyrian, Egyptian and Mayan art, gleaned (like Clarke) through study in museums. In collating these mythical symbols and glyphs Pollock (again like Clarke) was seeking to communicate across time and national boundary. Golding goes further – to suggest that Pollock saw himself at this date as on the threshold of creating a 'pictorial *lingua franca*'.[11] If Pollock's *Male and Female in Search for a Symbol* illustrates the need to identify with universal absolutes, the complementary need for individual creative renewal can be seen in Newman's *Genetic Moment* (1947). This tracing back to the moment of creation – the fusing of male and female to create life – was produced shortly before Newman's revelatory *Onement I*, his first 'zip' painting, in which he established his *tabula rasa* or creative absolute.[12] Clarke, in the process of preparing his thesis, underwent a similar, artistic reversion to first principles to discover a point from which his own symbolism could be rebuilt. Thus, by way of monotype symbols, he illustrated the reduction of pictorial imagery to its most basic constituents: the spot ('The initial conception. The beginning. The basis. A statement.') and the line ('Progression from one point to another. The amplified statement.')[13]

A renewed interest in symbolism and the unconscious occurred somewhat later in Britain than in the US. Some of the sources were identical, such as James Frazer's anthropological *The Golden Bough* ('a study in magic and religion', published in a

[10] Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); John Golding, *Paths to the Absolute* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2000), p. 114.
[11] Golding, *Paths to the Absolute*, p. 122.
[12] Golding, *Paths to the Absolute*, pp 187–94.

single volume in 1922)[14] and Jung's theories (available in English translation from the 1920s onwards). Yet it was not until the late 1940s and early 1950s that their influence on art was felt, largely through the filter of Read's lectures and writings.[15] Jung's concept of 'universal symbolism' provided a rationale for the occurrence of identical myths or images throughout the world through a layered map of the psyche (consciousness uppermost, a first layer of the unconscious below and lowest of all a primitive world scarcely accessed by consciousness), suggesting that universal symbolism resulted from a 'collective unconscious' at the lowest level, rather than from individual experience or cultural dissemination. Likewise, Frazer's *The Golden Bough* documented extensive similarities between myths and rituals in different cultures, influencing writers from D. H. Lawrence to Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot.[16] The marshalling of anthropological research to support psychological enquiry (and *vice versa*) provided a perceptible impetus to new ways of viewing 'man': as a divisible construct (for example 'organic man', 'psychological man')[17] or as a complex but newly graspable entity.

The relationship of British artists (including Gear and Davie), who developed ideas similar to the Abstract Expressionists and *Tachistes* during the early 1950s, to Clarke lies in their similar exploration of creative processes deriving from the unconscious which could tap into universal symbols or archetypes. Two models proved of particular interest: Jungian psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism (in which a state of enlightenment, *Satori*, can be found in the unconscious). It seems probable that relatively few artists read Jung, but gained knowledge of his psychoanalytical theory through discussion, lectures and secondary sources such as the writings of

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[13] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief'. Monotype symbols, p. 5.

[14] Clyfford Still in particular was influenced by Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. Golding, *Paths to the Absolute*, p. 170.

[15] As Margaret Garlake notes, 'Read was the conduit for the entry of Jungian theory into contemporary art, both as the psychoanalyst's publisher and through his own writing'. Garlake, *New Art New World: British Art in Postwar Society* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 109.

[16] James Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London: Macmillan, 1890–1915), 12 vols. Read considered the significance of *The Golden Bough* in *Icon and Idea* (London: Faber and Faber, 1955), pp 54–6, 59, and *The Form of Things Unknown* (London: Faber & Faber, 1960; Meridian edition, 1963), p. 33. In the latter, Read was echoing a well-known passage by Eliot: 'Psychology ... ethnology, and *The Golden Bough* have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of a narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I believe, a step towards making the modern world possible for art.' T. S. Eliot, 'Ulysses, Order, and Myth' (1923), reprinted in Frank Kermode (ed.), *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), pp 177–8.

[17] This somewhat naïve (and later ridiculed) approach underlies G. N. Ridley's discussion of 'questing man', 'organic man', 'mental man' and 'social man'. G. N. Ridley, *Man: The Verdict of Science : Science and Superstition*, The Thinker's Library, No. 114 (London: Watts & Co., 1946).

Read.[18] A specific debt to Jung (in particular to *Psychology and Alchemy*) was admitted by Davie.[19] Dalwood, too, read Jung, and developed a predominantly symbolic idiom – in some ways the closest to Clarke's.[20] Yet many others betrayed the impact of Jung even if no specific influence was acknowledged. Chadwick, for instance, described art not as an intellectual activity, but as 'the manifestation of some vital force coming from the dark, caught by the imagination and translated by the artist's ability and skill'.[21] The titles of Turnbull's sculptures from the mid-1950s, such as *Icon*, *Rite*, *Totemic Figure* and *War Goddess*, bear witness to archaic, universal origins, as do their surfaces scarred by numinous symbols. Preceding most of these examples, however, is Clarke's thesis of 1951, an extraordinary statement of belief in archetypal symbolism and creativity derived from the unconscious, and suffused – apparently – with concepts derived from Jung.

The common thread linking British artists and their knowledge of Jung's theory is clearly Read, who did much to promote understanding of Jung's work. Yet although Read had been including elements of Jung's theories in his writings from the 1920s onwards, his major considerations of symbolism – *Icon and Idea* and *The Form of Things Unknown* – postdate Clarke's thesis by several years.[22] While Clarke does recall an awareness of Jung's ideas in the early 1950s, he has no specific recollection of either reading or discussing his theories.[23] Prior to writing his thesis, Clarke visited the British Museum's galleries of antiquities and consulted a variety of texts, among them F. E. Halliday's *Five Arts*, W. B. Honey's *Science and the Creative Arts*, E. Lehmann's *Mysticism in Heathendom and Christendom*, S. Heath's *The Romance of Symbolism*, Jakob Boehme's *Threefold Life of Man* and Marcel Chicoteau's *Studies in Symbolist Psychology*.[24] Clarke's aims were threefold: to

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[18] Fiona Gaskin, 'British Tachisme in the post-war period, 1946–1957', in Margaret Garlake (ed.), *Artists and Patrons in Post-War Britain*, Courtauld Research Papers No. 2 (London: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2001), p. 41.

[19] Letter from Alan Davie to James Hyman, in *Alan Davie – Recent Paintings and Gouaches*. Exhibition Catalogue (London: James Hyman Fine Art, 2003).

[20] Chris Stephens, *The Sculpture of Hubert Dalwood* (London: The Henry Moore Foundation in association with Lund Humphries Publishers, 1999), pp 42–7.

[21] Dennis Farr, *Lynn Chadwick* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), p. 41.

[22] Read had begun to acquire and read the works of Freud and Jung when in his twenties. His first article to focus on psychological concerns was 'Psychoanalysis and the Critic' (1925). See Benedict Read and David Thistlewood (eds), *Herbert Read: A British Vision of World Art* (Leeds: Leeds City Art Galleries, 1993), p. 14.

[23] Clarke, conversation with the author (8 February 2005).

[24] An annotated set of British Library Reading Room request slips (dated 24 February 1951) among Clarke's student notes provides an indication of books consulted in preparation for his thesis [Clarke archive].

investigate the historic use of symbols, the psychology of creativity and the religious or spiritual dimension. His resulting thesis represents a cogent argument for the use of symbolism: a frame of reference that has remained relevant throughout his career.[25]

'Exposition of a Belief'

Clarke's thesis addresses the creation of the symbol, its nature, and its purpose. His conception of creativity – which occurs intuitively while the artist inhabits a spiritual or meditative state – implies that symbols created by the artist originate in the unconscious, the locus of Jung's archetypes or universal symbols. Although Clarke makes no reference to Jung, he was clearly in agreement with the concept of archetypes (symbols without known origin which reproduce themselves 'in any time or in any part of the world – even where transmission by direct descent or "cross fertilization" through migration must be ruled out').[26] Many symbols included in Clarke's thesis were copied from the woodcuts in Koch's *Book of Signs*, a historic compendium of crosses, stonemasons' signs, symbols for nature, the elements, astrology and chemical substances.[27] However, Clarke does not cite Koch, stating that such symbols are his own interpretations, 'arrived at through various channels of research, and chiefly through nature ... formed in several cases only to find later, that reasoning along different lines, a basic sign had once again been created'.[28] Jung's research similarly concluded that archetypes are not fixed symbols, but trends or impulses to produce certain types of symbols, accounting both for their instinctive creation and for the fact that they are not necessarily recognised or understood when they appear in consciousness.[29]

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[25] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief' (1951). This unpaginated thesis is an outsize leather-bound volume with an oval iron relief on the front cover, typewritten text on handmade paper and illustrations in the form of etchings (four in colour) and monotypes.

[26] C. G. Jung, 'Approaching the Unconscious', in *Man and his Symbols* (London: Aldus Books Ltd, 1964), p. 58.

[27] Rudolf Koch, *The Book of Signs, which contains all manner of symbols used from the earliest times to the middle ages by primitive peoples and Early Christians* (London: First Edition Club, 1930). Koch's *Book of Signs* was in common use in the RCA Stained Glass Department, and among Clarke's student notes is a complete copy in typescript with hand-drawn ink symbols.

[28] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief'. Koch's symbols could indeed be discovered elsewhere, for instance as illustrations in Heath's *The Romance of Symbolism: Church Ornament and Architecture* (London: Francis Griffiths, 1909), which Clarke had consulted.

[29] Jung, 'Approaching the Unconscious', p. 58.

Fundamental similarities can be identified between Clarke's, Jung's and (by extension) Read's descriptions of the nature of symbols. In his thesis Clarke states that the 'near "abstract"' symbol appeals more directly to the soul, because the physical senses are less activated:

> The more vividly the symbol can be recognised, the more people gain from seeing it, for example, the Cross, but the more realistic the symbol, the more away from the truth and concerned with the physical it becomes, for example, the Crucifix.[30]

First it should be noted that Clarke's wording recalls a particular passage in Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*: that 'the more abstract [the] form, the more clear and direct is its appeal' and that 'in any composition the material side may be more or less omitted in proportion as the forms used are more or less material, and for them substituted pure abstractions, or largely dematerialized objects'.[31] (Kandinsky uses the word 'material' to express the opposite of 'spiritual'.) However, despite the obvious parallels with Clarke's writing, Kandinsky is discussing form rather than symbolism. Read, in contrast, specifically addresses the issue of abstraction in relation to symbolism, endorsing the supremacy of abstract symbolism on two counts. First, Read invokes Whitehead's view that irrelevant detail hinders 'the symbolic transfer of emotion' by inhibiting the unity of the main effect. The solution to this may be a process of simplification, a progressive modification of the 'schema' in the direction of abstraction.[32] Secondly, Read invokes Jung's theory that a symbol loses its original force when it becomes too explicit – 'when the libido, instead of being retained in the image, is squandered in sexuality or any other physical dispersion of the retained energy'.[33] To clarify using Clarke's example, the 'physical' crucifixion produces an empathetic identification with Christ's suffering, whereas the 'abstract' cross suggests associations – such as redemption – which stand further removed from the actual object.

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[30] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief'.
[31] Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, translated and with an introduction by M. T. H. Sadler (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977), p. 32. Sadler's translation was first published under the title *The Art of Spiritual Harmony* (London: Constable and Company Limited, 1914).
[32] Herbert Read, *The Philosophy of Modern Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), pp 24–25.
[33] Read, *The Form of Things Unknown*, p. 57.

Jung described the phenomenon of an archetypal symbol's associative properties as 'numinosity' (or psychic energy), one result of which is that a symbol can bear different, but still valid, meanings depending on context and recipient. Thus, although a devout Christian may interpret the cross in its Christian context,

> one cannot say that, at all times and in all circumstances, the symbol of the cross has the same meaning. If that were so, it would be stripped of its numinosity, lose its vitality, and become a mere word.[34]

As will be demonstrated, Clarke's use of symbols embraces Jung's concept of numinosity. Clarke's belief that a symbol can lose its vitality through repetition ('If ... too derivitive [*sic*] the freshness of the experience is lost')[35] equally finds parallels in Jung:

> a symbol loses its magical power ... as soon as its dissolubility is recognized. An effective symbol, therefore, must have a nature that is unimpeachable... its form must be sufficiently remote from comprehension as to frustrate every attempt of the critical intellect to give any satisfactory account of it; and, finally, its aesthetic appearance must have such a convincing appeal that no sort of argument can be raised against it on that score.[36]

In *The Forms of Things Unknown*, Read applies Jung's arguments to the symbolism in Picasso's *Guernica* sketches, judging them, despite previous admiration, as unsatisfactory because of their intentional use of traditional symbols (for example, a bull and a woman bearing light) 'activated by surface emotions, and not by the unconscious'.[37] Read further maintains, in agreement with Clarke's thesis, that this weakness derives from symbols which have become clichés, stripped of their vitality through overuse. In contrast, a vital symbol (as Clarke states) possesses the power to

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[34] Jung, 'Approaching the Unconscious', p. 87.
[35] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief'.
[36] C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types* (London: Kegan Paul, 1938), p. 291, in Read, *The Form of Things Unknown*, p. 69.
[37] Read, *The Form of Things Unknown*, p. 69. Jung agreed with Read's criticism of Picasso in *The Form of Things Unknown* and delivered 'a more devastating critique of Picasso than Read had hazarded'. David Thistlewood, 'Herbert Read's Paradigm: A British View of Modernism', in *Herbert Read: A British Vision of World Art*, p. 77.

grow and spread – as a seed into a tree – in various directions, 'expressing the complexities of its nature and at the same time consolidating its initial basis'.[38]

Throughout history, man has formed and worshipped symbols in order to reconcile himself with those aspects of life – the mysteries of nature and his origin – with which he is unable to reason. Such symbols, Jung concluded, form the basis of archetypal religious myths, suggesting that man possesses within him a natural spiritual tendency. Jung believed in man's innate religious dimension, despite the fact that it could not be proved, only known or experienced.[39] Clarke, likewise, has always believed both in a supreme, divine force, and that man possesses within him a spiritual aspect, which 'must be unified for existance [*sic*]'.[40] This 'supreme force', as stated, may be identified as 'God', and it is perhaps significant that Jung also referred to a 'Supreme Being' rather than a spiritual guide from any specific religion.[41] The notion that man must 'unify' the spiritual force inside him, which corresponds with Jung's concept of 'individuation', will be discussed later.

Clarke's thesis concludes with a consideration of colour, stating that in his illustrations colour has been used 'to encourage the senses', rather than symbolically:

> Colour symbolism, if taken in direct connection with scientific fact, is vastly superior to its traditional use, which has become greatly distorted. It is safe to assume that its basis and origin would however derive from the intuitive awareness of what has now been scientifically proved, for example, the movements and emphasis of certain colours owing to their light wave lengths.
> Intuitionism can therefore lead the artist to the creation of a tree of colour just as of a tree of symbolism.[42]

This viewpoint relates specifically to Kandinsky in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, who defines the starting point of his study of colour as 'its effect on men' and admits

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[38] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief'.
[39] Jung, *Complete Works*, 11, para. 167; quoted in Anthony Stevens, *On Jung* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 249. A similar view was articulated by Julian Huxley: 'Religion, in the light of psychological and anthropological science, is seen not as a divine revelation, but as a function of human nature'. Huxley, *What Dare I Think* (1931) quoted in Ridley, *Man: The Verdict of Science*, p. 135. Clarke's view is comparable: 'Brain. Its complexities and numerous functions, are symbolized. Always present is the Supreme force, whether the brain is aware of it or not.' 'Exposition of a Belief'.
[40] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief'.
[41] Jung, 'Approaching the Unconscious', p. 75
[42] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief'.

that his findings have no scientific basis, being founded purely on spiritual experience.[43] To consider the effects of colour, Kandinsky constructs diagrams consisting of two pairs of antitheses. In the first instance, yellow (warm) and blue (cold) produce horizontal movements 'bodily' towards the spectator (yellow) and 'spiritually' away from the spectator (blue), as well as circular movements outward (yellow) and inward (blue). Secondly, light (white) and dark (black) produce – in addition to outward and inward circular movements – 'eternal discord, but with possibilities for the future (birth)' and 'absolute discord, devoid of possibilities for the future (death)'.[44] Kandinsky's theories relate neatly to a pair of etchings in Clarke's thesis. In *Birth of a Flower*, yellow – indicative of outward, positive motion – is used for the supporting earth and sun (or divine presence) above. However, in *Death of a Flower*, the earth, flowers and sun are violet, a colour described by Kandinsky as 'passive', 'sad and ailing', and 'withdrawn from humanity'.[45] In a contemporary statement, Clarke described his use of colour at Coventry as 'symbolic and psychological', with the primary aim of creating atmosphere,[46] and indeed throughout Clarke's stained glass can be seen the manipulation of colour – along the lines of Kandinsky's theories – to suggest opposites, movement, and 'spiritual' atmosphere.

Themes

The twenty-four etchings in Clarke's thesis, produced between 1950 and January 1951, present a core of images that remain important as symbols throughout his work. Three broad themes emerge: man, nature and reconciliation. In all cases it will be argued that spirituality plays either a visible or subliminal role.

Man

The three iron sculptures exhibited by Clarke at the Venice Biennale in 1952 originated in etchings included in his thesis. Each presents man as a collective of parallel, upright iron rods. In the largest, *Complexities of Man* (1950; LS003), Clarke

[43] Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, pp 36–7.
[44] Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, p. 37.
[45] Kandinsky, pp 36, 41.

intended this cluster of rods to suggest 'the complexities of the human form, and the growth of nature surrounding him', clearly indicating an interest in the psychology of man:[47]

> the base of the rods represents the physical ... the thinner tops of the rods represent mental activities. Some are blocked ... meaning that some of the mental or physical senses have never been used.[48]

Clarke, in externalising man's inner contradictions and inadequacies, ignored his outward form to create a symbol for man's complex psyche. *Family Group* (1950; LS006) presents another, although still schematic, version of man. The differences between man and woman – basically vertical rods – are capricious: minute details in the genitalia, a difference in stature, a subtle contrast of curves and angles to imply femininity/masculinity; the group of children, distinguished by size, stands apart on its own supporting table. Compared with the enfolding solidity of Moore's family groups, this spindliness and separation of parent and offspring is disconcerting. However, reference to the etching *Father, Mother and Children* (1950; LP032) in Clarke's thesis, from which the iron sculpture derives, clarifies the image: a rod and sphere descending from the top of the plate above the children indicates that they are products of a supreme, divine force. This force, practical in two dimensions but clearly impractical in three, is either overt or implied in the etchings. For instance, in the etching *Man, Woman and Child [I]* (1950; LP079), the woman (her empty womb indicated by a circle) holds a child, while the man offers her a ring as symbol of their union. No supreme force is visible, but both man and woman look upwards in recognition of their gift.

The concept of this supreme force is crucial to an understanding of Clarke's representations of man. As stated in notes on the etchings, a cross is used as the visible symbol of religion.[49] A cross within a figure's head indicates his essential spirituality; a figure holding or reaching for a cross indicates a need for spirituality. A further, psychological, dimension also exists. Man's acceptance of the supreme force is initially instinctive, but ultimately intellectual. The etchings therefore divide

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[46] Clarke, in *Windows for Coventry* (London: The Royal College of Art, 1956), p. 7.
[47] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief'.
[48] Clarke, quoted in Lawrence Alloway, 'Britain's new Iron Age', *Art News*, (Summer 1953), p. 69.
[49] Clarke, notes relating to thesis (1951) [Clarke archive].

into those where man has no external cross (the instinctive), and those where man – recognising his need – holds or reaches for the cross (the intellectual). A working through of these ideas appears in the etching *The Choice [I]* (1950; LP024), where man, his head containing a cross, has multiple pairs of arms holding variously a cross, a chalice (into which descends the heavenly presence) and a ring, symbolising, in this instance, worldly goods. The choice is between materiality and spirituality; man's complexities and contradictions have again been externalised.

Clarke's iron 'symbols for man' are contextualised by their inclusion in the selection of British sculpture at the 1952 Venice Biennale, for which Read wrote his potent catalogue essay defining a new sculptural aesthetic: the 'geometry of fear'.[50] In the attenuated figures, insects and scuttling crustaceans, Read detected the legacy of recent world events – guilt, fear, despair. His use of language betrays Jung: the innocent artist transmitting collective guilt; forms that have 'drifted from the primordial Id'. Read describes the participating sculptors as individuals, but he in fact assigns to all – with the exception of Adams and Clarke – a collective purpose in the expression of horror or despair. Paolozzi's sculpture is likened to incrusted larvae; Turnbull's to petrified twigs. In Meadows' work is a vortex, with an animal's virtue 'caught in a snare'; in Chadwick's, toys armed with vicious teeth and claws. Butler's images present hybrid species, interchanging human and insect attributes. In contrast, the description of Adams' sculpture is emotionally neutral ('architectonic ... forms with small but compact masses'), while Clarke's is identified simply as 'strong symmetrical forms, preserving the smelted texture of the metal'.[51] Despite its use of linear form, which in common with others could quite justifiably be described as 'nervous, wiry', Clarke's iron sculpture in no way expressed despair, as Read accepted. What it did share with the majority of the sculpture on display, however, was an interest in exploring the psychological condition of man through the cast of his outer frame. It is this aspect which Read alluded to in his statement, 'They are all

[50] Herbert Read, 'New Aspects of British Sculpture', exhibition catalogue for The British Pavilion at the XXVI Biennale, Venice (1952).

[51] Read, 'New Aspects of British Sculpture'. In a paper at the Herbert Read conference (Tate Gallery, 25–26 June 2004), Margaret Garlake noted that Read's essay was written both quickly and relatively shortly before the Venice exhibition. Clarke was a late inclusion, most likely after Read had seen his exhibition at Gimpel Fils (Jan.–March 1952). It is therefore likely that Read was less familiar with Clarke's work.

involved in some wider manifestation of the creative will, some general extension of consciousness'.[52]

David Hulks has recently sought to locate the 'geometry of fear' sculpture within the context of 1950s' knowledge of psychoanalysis, focussing specifically on research into the schizophrenic condition.[53] Although this approach exposes interesting parallels between the physical format of the sculpture and the nature of 'abnormal psychology', Hulks' conclusions prove problematic – particularly in relation to Clarke – in conflating his own interpretation with the artist's intent.[54] Describing the iron balls used to cap the vertical rods in *Complexities of Man* (LS003), Hulks writes:

> These 'full stops' were intended to represent the way Cold War officialdom was suspicious of free expression, and instead preferred to insist upon 'civilized restraint'. *Complexities of Man*, then, depicts a troubled individual who finds that in conservative Britain his spirit is caged and his mental eccentricities held firmly in check.[55]

Hulks later asserts that *Complexities of Man* alludes 'not to the abnormalities of diagnosed schizophrenia but rather to splitting in the wider "mass neurosis" sense ... there is no mistaking the abnormality of "man's" condition: he and society are clearly fundamentally unwell'.[56] The interpretation, following Klein, that such sculpture as Clarke's represents psychological 'splitting', capable of being read as a metaphor for the Cold War cultural condition but also as a necessary stage in the psychic self-healing of the nation, is intriguing. Yet Clarke, when questioned about Hulks' interpretation, has agreed that his concern rests not with society or politics, but with man himself. *Complexities of Man*, as intended by the artist and outlined in his thesis, explores simply the contradictory forces within man: contrasts between

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[52] Read, 'New Aspects of British Sculpture'.
[53] David Hulks, 'The dark chaos of subjectivism: Splitting and the geometry of fear', in Brandon Taylor (ed.), *Sculpture and Psychoanalysis* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), pp 95–114.
[54] The problem is compounded in that Hulks discusses the tall *Complexities of Man* sculpture (LS003; now owned by the Tate), which was illustrated and described in Alloway's article 'Britain's new Iron Age', but reproduces a photograph of the formally related, squat, wide sculpture, *Man* (LS034; also exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 1952). Hulks also quotes Clarke as referring to the sculpture's 'spirit' (p. 101), text which does not appear in either source cited (see fn. 12, p. 113).
[55] Hulks, pp 101–102.
[56] Hulks, p. 105.

mental and physical, instinctive and intellectual.[57] A further balancing of opposites, not evident in *Complexities of Man* but clear in the formally related 'Time Life' sculpture (1952; LS050) is that of spiritual and material. On the right of the 'Time Life' figure is the material (a spiked ball, symbolising the temptation of worldly goods, and arrows of evil); on the left the spiritual (a cross, less threatening projections, and, at the foot, a chalice-like form).

The emphasis on the head (both in terms of size and detail of features) in many of Clarke's early sculptures and etchings of man locates his imagery within a broader artistic continuum, one which again can be related to psychoanalytical concerns. Between the late 1930s and mid-1950s the head became one of the most universally explored themes in painting and sculpture. Picasso's heads distorted by grief, in particular his seminal *Weeping Woman* (1937) and studies for *Guernica*, embodying the violence of the Spanish Civil War, expressed the anguish of their time and indicated the way in which the head, as a symbolic form, could be invested with virtually any shade of psychological meaning. Clarke later wrote:

> The Head, Always interests the artist. Apart from obvious reasons a square foot of head has more interest and implications than a square foot of arm, leg or torso. ... Picasso expanded our way of looking, the lid came off and the head received even more attention. It is the control room, it says, it does everything, all else is structure and function.[58]

Equally important to this concentration on the physical and psychological properties of the head, in Britain, was the post-war surge of interest in primitive art. In 1948 the ICA's *40,000 Years of Modern Art*, an exhibition juxtaposing primitive masks and twentieth-century art, crucially redefined the concept of 'primitive', psychologically, in terms of Jung. Read, author of the catalogue preface, wrote:

> like conditions produce like effects ... conditions in modern life ... have produced effects only to be seen in primitive epochs ... they are archetypal and buried deep in the unconscious. But generally they can be described as a vague sense of insecurity, a cosmic anguish

[57] Clarke, conversation with the author (11 April 2006).

> (*Angst* ...) feelings and intuitions that demand expression in abstract or unnaturalistic forms.[59]

These notions of universality, intuition and symbolism echo the concerns in Clarke's thesis: Clarke was studying in London in December 1948 when the ICA exhibition opened, and, although no evidence exists, seems likely to have seen it. Clarke did, however, see the exhibition of 'Portrait Sculpture Through the Ages' from the ethnographic Pitt-Rivers Collections, for which an annotated essay remains in his archive.[60] Like Read, this essay by George Pitt-Rivers points to the universality of art ('Modernism in Art, for all its boasts, in whatever age, seldom has anything new to present') and, again like Read, stresses the shared purpose of modern and primitive art. Clarke's annotations on the reverse indicate his assimilation of these concepts, which would lead, as he suggested, to the creation of his own '20C Benin Bronze':

> This was tradition, not ours – but a tradition. ... They have between them all a constant value. Contemp. artist desires above all to create & above all to produce the aesthetic the essence. He has come to realise that it is this essence which is lasting & never changes – only external aspects of it change.

Like certain works of Paolozzi (which had been influenced by study of the Pitt-Rivers and Ashmolean Museum's ethnographic collections), Clarke's iron heads from 1951 bear the imprint of primitive antecedents. One particular head, which Clarke refers to as 'Nefertiti' (LS025), is a case in point: the most basic symbols for eyes, nose and mouth project from a shield-shaped head; the metal's surface finish is unsophisticated, clearly bearing marks from its working tools; the rough stone on which the head is presented accentuates its status as 'modern artefact'. A debt to tribal art is suggested, but an exact visual source proves elusive. Clarke's reaction to the Pitt-Rivers exhibition, which emphasised the importance of identifying the 'essence' of a subject or image, reinforced by a reading of Fry's *Vision and Design*, may provide the key. In 'The Art of the Bushmen', Fry considers the reduction of a

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[58] Clarke, notes produced prior to interview with Peter Black (1993/4) [Clarke archive].
[59] Herbert Read, 'Preface', *40,000 Years of Modern Art*, ICA exhibition catalogue (1948), pp 6–7; quoted in Garlake, *New Art New World*, p. 53. The ICA played an important role in promoting the study of 'art by anthropologists and anthropology by artists' through exhibitions and lectures during the 1950s. 'Postscript', *Image* (1949), in Garlake, *New Art New World*, p. 53.

visual image to its most significant constituents. A man consists most importantly of his head (containing eyes, nose, mouth), arms, hands, legs and feet; the connecting torso serves no obvious function, so is represented by a single line. This image forms a hieroglyphic script for man, a 'mental image coloured by his conceptual habits'.[61] Clarke's RCA sketchbooks, dated between autumn 1948 and early 1950, show the development of his characteristic symbol for the head through a similar process of linear reduction.[62] An informative parallel can be drawn with Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, which the artist always denied had been influenced by African sculpture: recent examination of the sketches has proved that Picasso's mask-like images evolved from a process of abstraction and distortion.[63]

The archetypal image of the head was addressed specifically by the ICA's exhibition *The Wonder and Horror of the Human Head* (1953), whose title Read explained in the catalogue foreword as the dichotomy between the head as site of man's controlling intelligence but also as his most vulnerable feature.[64] This concept of vulnerability was expanded in an essay by Roland Penrose to encompass horrific notions of constraint in the brain's imprisonment within its protective shell.[65] For Clarke, vulnerability has always been an important psychological construct, although without its notion of horror. Among its earliest manifestations were three iron sculptures, *Symbols for Man XI–XIII* (LS075–77), dating from 1953. Later referred to as *Façade* or *Man as a Façade*, these sculptures consist of protective shields, behind which shelter man's essential being – symbolised by a spike and pin-head. In a number of iron pieces created in 1954, Clarke casts the idea of the façade in an architectural mould: man as a building, fortress or fortification. Here the physical

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[60] Details of this exhibition have not been traced.

[61] Fry, 'The Art of the Bushmen', *Burlington Magazine* (1910), published in *Vision and Design* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1920; Pelican edition, 1937), pp 76–7. Clarke is unable to identify a source for his iron sculpture in any particular model of primitive sculpture, but agreed with the suggestion that it was the 'attitude behind primitive art' which influenced him. The head nicknamed 'Nefertiti' refers to the precision of Egyptian art rather than a specific image. Clarke, conversation with the author (17 November 2005).

[62] Clarke, RCA sketchbooks [Clarke archive].

[63] Carsten-Peter Warncke, *Pablo Picasso 1881–1973* (Köln: Taschen, 2002), pp 145–54.

[64] Herbert Read, 'Foreword', *The Wonder and Horror of the Human Head*, ICA exhibition catalogue (1953), p. 5. (Read was President of the ICA.) The exhibition assembled scientific data, photographs, and primitive and modern art. An installation photograph is reproduced in Garlake, *New Art New World*, p. 54.

[65] Roland Penrose, 'Introduction', *The Wonder and Horror of the Human Head*, p. 8. (Penrose was Vice Chairman of the ICA.) His psychological reading of the brain imprisoned in the skull could encompass notions of oppression and censorship, issues reflected by symbolic cage constructions in the contemporaneous Unknown Political Competition.

presence of man derives entirely from his psyche, abstracted to a series of walls, shields and spikes. These works' origin is explicitly psychological: the façade is man's *persona*, the mask behind which he hides the 'real dimensions' of his self.[66]

Clarke's recurrent images of warriors constitute a variation on his interest in man's vulnerability, exploring man's capacity for defending himself rather than for attacking others. An iron *Warrior* (1954; LS110) presents a defiant figure, not overtly armed, but whose plated skull doubles as helmet: a delicate life-form surrounded by a protective outer shell. An obvious parallel is Moore's image of the 'helmet head', opposing similar notions of interior and exterior: feeling/knowledge, imagination/reality, defence/attack. The second of three large etchings of warriors by Clarke (1956; LP170) represents, in the artist's words, man 'through tank observation hatch. The vulnerable organic behind armour plate ... expressive of insecurity, aggression'.[67] The date of these warriors, 1956, is perhaps not coincidental: a year scarred by the Soviet invasion of Hungary, escalation of the Suez crisis and tensions of the Cold War; neither was Clarke's imagery isolated. In 1956, among British sculptors alone, Paolozzi created *Damaged Warrior*, Turnbull *War Goddess*, Meadows *Tank Crab* and Moore his highly symbolic *Falling Warrior*. In 1984 Clarke produced a series of aluminium sculptures specifically on the 'tankman' theme. Here, a 'shadow' frequently accompanies the head inside the observation hatch: a reminder that these works are symbols for the split human psyche as much as for man's darker purposes in warfare.

Unlike the warriors, Clarke's images of man as pilgrim were, if not unique, unusual in the context of the 1950s. Clarke's thesis introduces the notion of man's spiritual need to search, illustrated by a retelling of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* – itself an allegorical progress from the City of Destruction to the City of Light, or, a journey from ignorance to truth.[68] Decades later Clarke's 'Pilgrim Series' (1994–5) depicts man (abstracted to a minimal column with spherical head) alone, shunned by others, or amidst a hostile landscape of abstract, jagged forms.[69] In one instance, a

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[66] Read, *The Form of Things Unknown*, p. 114.
[67] Clarke, quoted in *Geoffrey Clarke: Early Engraved Work and Iron Sculpture*, Taranman exhibition catalogue (1976), p. [2].
[68] John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678). It is not known which edition formed the basis of Clarke's thesis.
[69] It is interesting to compare Clarke's late return to Bunyan with the case of composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958). Drawn early to the spiritual symbolism of Bunyan, in 1949 Vaughan Williams completed an 'operatic' setting of *Pilgrim's Progress*, premiered at Covent Garden, a day

pilgrim-like figure within a wheel is titled *Perpetual Effort*, symbolising not just the perpetual search, but also its futility.[70] Clarke's latest pilgrim, a full fifty years after his thesis, is constructed from wood. Standing over-lifesize, *Pilgrim* (2001; LS739) presents a hybrid between 1950s capriciousness (V-shaped heart; prominent genitalia) and 1990s severity (stark vertical and spherical head). Its fundamental outline, however, is that of a cross, conflating perhaps Clarke's image of the artist as pilgrim and as martyr.[71]

Nature

Clarke's depiction of landscape and nature traces a rapid trajectory from illustrative work produced prior to enrolment at the RCA to the symbolic works of 1950 onwards. In early graphic work (1947–8) the contemporary but unassimilated influence of Sutherland and Craxton (together with their model, Palmer) predominates, in nocturnal landscapes and Arcadian pastoral scenes. Such images of solitary shepherds were entirely congruent with Craxton's paintings, themselves nostalgic metaphors for man trapped in a hostile wartime environment. Yet the 'Neo-romantics' projected landscape as more than a charged backdrop to the figure, proposing landscape *as* figure (or vice versa).[72] This identification was made explicit in the *Penguin Modern Painters*' volume on Piper (1944), where the artist insisted on the juxtaposition of a female nude (a portrait of his wife, Myfanwy) opposite an undulating Welsh landscape. Clarke was likewise interested in the relationship between figure and landscape, but explored in different terms. His linear etching *Figure in a Landscape* (1950; LP034) presents a cross-section of nature: simple organisms, projecting from the supporting table of the earth, are disposed to imply the features of a recumbent figure straining upwards towards a suspended cross. Thus

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before the Festival of Britain opened in April 1951. Clarke did not see the production, but may have been aware of it through publicity.

[70] Clarke explored this aspect further in the series *Monument to Man's Constant Effort* (1993), discussed below.

[71] In his catalogue essay, Richard Cork suggests that 'the choice of a dominant cruciform for another of the large sculptures indicates that Clarke now equates the artist's role with martyrdom'. Cork, 'The persistent search', in *Geoffrey Clarke > aesthetic detector* (Bury St Edmunds: Bury St Edmunds Art Gallery, 2003), p. 18. Clarke has agreed with this interpretation (conversation with the author, 2003).

[72] In 1931 Read had described Henry Moore's sculpted figures as landscapes (Read, 'Henry Moore', *The Listener*, 22 April 1931, pp 688–9), while Sutherland, ten years later, advised the landscape painter to 'look at the landscape as if it were himself – himself as a human being' ('Art and Life', V.

nature (or landscape) is presented symbolically as containing man, but with both man and nature subordinate to a 'supreme force'.

A number of factors contributed to Clarke's altered perspective. Primary among these, perhaps, was the discovery of Klee's work.[73] The attractions of Klee were numerous. First, the linearity of his work. Secondly, the fertility of his imagination, producing – in David Sylvester's words – 'a landscape through which you journey ... [as] a participant', 'an organism, not a constructed form'.[74] (Read acknowledged this aspect of Klee's work in psychological terms – the mining of the unconscious for thousands of images which 'constitute a fairly accurate chart of his inner world'.)[75] Thirdly, the profound study of nature underlying Klee's work, suggesting that a form could be analysed then reconstructed from memory, producing an image parallel to nature, not enslaved to it.[76] An equivalent statement exists in Clarke's thesis: 'The ideal is to endeavour to create as nature creates, and not like nature creates'.[77] Lastly, in Klee's work could be found basic symbols to represent natural forces, such as plant forms and the elements, as well as symbols corresponding to 'inwardly apprehended feelings'.[78]

Other sources reinforced Clarke's findings in Klee. The enlarged, sculptural photographs of plants in Karl Blossfeldt's *Art Forms in Nature* proved inspirational, as did diagrams for seed growth discovered at the Natural History Museum.[79] In the early 1950s many artists were enthused by the burgeoning study of natural science, turning afresh to D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's *On Growth and Form* for its

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S. Pritchett, G. Sutherland, K. Clark and H. Moore in discussion, *The Listener*, 13 November 1941, pp 657–9).

[73] Clarke owned *Klee 1879–1940*, with an introduction and notes by Herbert Read (London: Faber and Faber, 1948) and Paul Klee, *On Modern Art*, with an introduction by Herbert Read (London: Faber and Faber, 1948).

[74] David Sylvester, 'Auguries of experience', *The Tiger's Eye* (4 June 1948), pp 76–8; quoted in Garlake, *New Art New World*, p. 48.

[75] Read, *Icon and Idea*, p. 119. For this reason, Read cited Klee as 'the artist who has gone farthest in this exploration of the self'.

[76] Richard Verdi, *Klee and Nature* (London: Zwemmer, 1984), pp 7, 17.

[77] Cf Clarke's description of his working methods in 1952: 'Successful re-creation produces an insight which was not before fully comprehensible. If, for instance, a drawing is satisfactory, it is analysed, the process of construction is reversed to try to determine its individual fundamental, taken apart and put together again many times. Eventually, the mind responds to laws particular to it. Thus, the cycle continues and grows, but contradiction and pruning are essential for its vitality.' Clarke, statement in *Ark* No. 6 (November 1952), p. 29.

[78] Read, introduction to *Klee 1879–1940* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), p. 3. In defining Klee's 'introverted' personality, Read referred overtly to Jungian psychology.

[79] *Art Forms in Nature*, examples from the plant world photographed direct from nature by Professor Karl Blossfeldt, with an introduction by Karl Nierendorf (London: A. Zwemmer, 1935). Clarke owned

explanations of plant growth.[80] In turn, the ICA's exhibition *Growth and Form* (1951) incorporated scientific drawings, diagrams, models, photographs and projections, and its accompanying symposium included lectures on psychology, embryology, biochemistry and astronomy. Direct descendents of these studies were textiles inspired by seed and plant forms (for instance, by Lucienne Day) and designs influenced by the structure of crystals at the Festival of Britain.[81]

At their simplest, in the etchings, Clarke's plant forms appear either as upright arrows (indicating upwards growth or the outline of a coniferous tree) or clover-like shapes derived from the chemical symbol for wood.[82] An intriguing parallel can be drawn with the clover forms in Dalwood's early aluminium reliefs *Growing* and *Cornucopia* (1957), which resemble – through their subtle referencing of ancient artefacts – mystical icons for nourishment and fecundity.[83] However, the fundamental purpose of Clarke's organic forms is to present nature as a spiritual construct, a divine gift to be treasured and respected by man, and to suggest a parallel between man's spiritual growth and the natural growth of a seed. Clarke's reasoning is evident in his thesis, plotting primitive man's emergence from the rock (symbol for imperishable reality) to a quest to explain his existence in the world:

> In the beginning, man is overwhelmed by the apparent complications of nature. Realisation of the fact, that he himself is an integral part, and his consequent acceptance of the fact, enables him to look to it for laws for re-creation through his instinct and reason. He thus eventually becomes aware of its simple fundamentals.[84]

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a copy of this book and retained copies of the schematic seed growth diagrams among his student papers.

[80] D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, *On Growth and Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917; 1942). The influence of this book, as well as the influence of microphotography on artists such as Klee, is considered in Jennifer Mundy, 'Form and Creation: The Impact of the Biological Sciences on Modern Art', in *Creation: Modern Art and Nature* (Edinburgh: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, 1984), pp 16–23.

[81] See, for instance, Mark Hartland Thomas, *Festival of Britain Souvenir Book of Crystal Designs* (London: London Typographical Designers, 1951).

[82] The chemical symbol for wood appears in Koch, p. 74.

[83] Chris Stephens, *The Sculpture of Hubert Dalwood* (London: The Henry Moore Foundation in association with Lund Humphries Publishers, 1999), pp 41–2. Stephens detected a resemblance to trees in ancient Egyptian wall paintings.

[84] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief'. Clarke had studied numerous books about primitive symbolism: notes and diagrams relating to rites such as sun- and rain-worship exist among his student papers.

The pair of windows representing 'Wisdom' at Coventry exemplifies this symbolism. Clarke proposed that since man, for all his wisdom, can only make an inanimate object, he should make a chalice, because 'the wisest spiritual action he can take is to accept the sacrament'. God, however, can create life; therefore the window on the 'God' side represents a flower, growing from its bulb-like case 'through an increasingly evil world ... [to] the full bloom of God's initial conception, seen in the form of the Birth, the Death, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ'.[85]

Clarke's perception of the divine nature of creation is apparent even in works not produced for an ecclesiastical context. The iron *Symbol* (1955; LS117), for example, shows the complete cycle of nature – germination, growth, maturity and decay – within a single work, through the complementary relationship of two plants.[86] In autumn a spiralling weed chokes the host plant just as it releases its seed; by winter the seed has developed a root, but the weed has left a scar in the shape of a cross. A related work for Newnham College, Cambridge, *The Four Seasons* (1958; LS125), makes Clarke's allegory explicit: the plant symbolises man; the cross on the root, his soul.[87] The deployment of symbols for spiritual, organic growth even in the seemingly unlikely context of the Unknown Political Prisoner competition indicates the profundity – and pervasiveness – of their meaning for Clarke. As he noted,

> The green bronze shape [represents] growth, life, and together with the surface great age. The black iron cage in comparison, mechanical and new, has been placed over to suppress the growing form. The political prisoner appears often in the form of a Christian oppressed by a non-Christian, hence the implication of a cross within a figure.[88]

A counterpart to organic growth as metaphor for pilgrimage in Clarke's work is man's expression of delight in his surroundings, a parallel to the earth-worship of primitive societies. This is particularly evident in the early etchings, for instance in *Love of Nature* (1950; LP052), where man gently holds a tree or plant, or *Praise*

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[85] Clarke, in Robin Darwin, *Windows for Coventry* (London: The Royal College of Art, 1956), p. 6. Similar imagery was used for the sculpture for the chapel of Bishop Otter College, Chichester.
[86] *Symbol* (1955), sometimes known as *The Seasons* or *The Four Seasons*, was created for the Contemporary Art Society exhibition 'The Seasons' at the Tate Gallery in March 1956.
[87] Clarke, 'The Four Seasons (An Allegory)', caption for the sculpture at Newnham College, Cambridge. *The Four Seasons* was conceived concurrently with the iron sculpture, *Symbol*.
[88] Clarke, 'Details of the maquette submitted', Unknown Political Prisoner competition (1953) [Clarke archive].

(1950; LP093), where he regards a rain cloud with thanks for its sustenance.[89] Not long before Clarke produced these etchings, Paul Tillich wrote of man's spiritual need to listen to nature: to hear and understand its underlying pulse, not merely its technical workings as revealed 'through every scientific book ... every laboratory ... every machine'.[90] Tillich's viewpoint proves remarkably pertinent to Clarke's imagery. In *Woman in a Landscape* (1951; LP120), Clarke points to a profound unity between woman and nature, such that the figure grows from the supporting earth; arms and breasts mirroring the surrounding natural forms, seeds growing beneath the earth hinting at fecundity: this image might be interpreted as a basic symbol for woman's capacity for reproduction, the equivalent to an ancient goddess of fertility. However, the proximity of the plants and 'supreme force' also imply woman's subordination to external forces. (The use of terminology at this point becomes fraught. In Clarke's work both 'man' and 'woman' may be shown as part of a unity with nature, and both may be subordinated to an external, divine force. In the instance of *Woman in a Landscape*, an image concerned with fertility, it would seem fundamental that the figure being represented is a woman, yet recently, from *ca.* 2003 onwards, Clarke has consistently referred to the etching as *Man and Nature*. Clarke's differentiation between man and woman, unless they are presented as consciously contrasting symbols, is often far from obvious, seemingly because it is not the primary artistic motive.[91] The numerous images of 'man' in etchings and sculpture, particularly from the 1950s, are intended as ideological abstractions of 'humankind' – in most cases neither man nor woman, thus their titling may be seen chiefly as a reflection of linguistic usage prior to awareness of inclusivity, where 'man' or 'mankind' denoted an accepted shorthand for 'humankind', including woman.) Returning to post-war concerns with this linguistic caveat in mind, Tillich questioned whether man's need for communion with nature was congruent with his current technical domination, exploitation and restriction of 'genuine' nature to small, defined reservations.[92] The consequences of such disrespect for nature, synonymous with greed, are represented symbolically by Clarke in *Man in the Mountains* (1950;

[89] A large-scale print on this subject, *Adoration of Nature* (LP101), with two figures worshipping a tree, was used as a decorative panel on a Robin Day sideboard exhibited at the Milan Triennale in 1951.
[90] Paul Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1949), pp 78–9.
[91] When asked whether a figure in an early etching is a man or woman, Clarke is frequently unable to answer, suggesting that no differentiation was intended.
[92] Tillich, *The Shaking of the Foundations*, p. 79.

LP071), where man, having plucked three flowers, 'approaches the last and will bring about his downfall'.[93] This criticism recurs in a series of medals cast in the 1970s, where man himself is absent, but his damaging actions are implied through pairings of 'before and after'. Thus, the riches of the earth, squandered by humankind, are symbolised by fruit eaten by a serpent or simply fallen from its storeplace.

The Reconciling Image

Jung's psychoanalytical studies led to the conclusion that the human psyche consists of processes whose energy derives from 'the equilibration of all kinds of opposites'.[94] Man's 'shadow', for instance, consists of unknown or little-known attributes of the unconscious which can be revealed in dreams: it has a dark, evil side – perhaps an instinctive urge that ought to be overcome – as well as a light side, an impulse towards growth that should be encouraged. Equally, each unconscious contains a gendered opposite: the female *anima* in the male unconscious and the male *animus* in the female. Additionally, both *anima* and *animus* have light and dark sides. However, if these various opposites are reconciled, in a process defined by Jung as 'individuation', the self is reconstructed to create an ideal 'totality figure'.[95] Individuation requires the conscious engagement of the will (a will to integration): it cannot be achieved by logical reasoning, but only through symbols – produced spontaneously by the unconscious and amplified by the conscious mind – which make possible the 'irrational union of opposites'.[96]

As has already been noted, the concept of paired opposites appears frequently in Clarke's work. One purpose is to emphasise a moral point: in its most basic form, a contrast between good and evil. However, such contrasts may be viewed, further, in terms of opposing forces requiring reconciliation. Clarke's thesis, as has already been noted, refers to a concept of unity analogous to Jung's theory of individuation:

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[93] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief'.
[94] Jung; quoted in Read, *The Forms of Things Unknown*, p. 188 [exact source not cited by Read].
[95] Read, *The Forms of Things Unknown*, p. 189. Read describes individuation as Jung's greatest contribution to 'a solution of the cultural problem we are discussing'.
[96] Jung, *Answer to Job*, translated by R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), pp 175–6; quoted in Read, *The Forms of Things Unknown*, p. 191.

> Necessary is the realization that man is dependent upon external influences and one supreme force, a part of which is within him, and he has to unify this supreme force for existance [*sic*].

Questioned about Jung's theory of individuation, Clarke has agreed with its principles, as well as with the importance of harmonisation – or the reconciliation of opposites – in his own work.[97] This process can be seen in the etchings, where man's inner (unconscious) spirituality is symbolised by a cross within his head, while his quest to achieve inner and outer harmony is symbolised by his (conscious) reaching for an external cross.

The concept of paired opposites takes numerous forms: the juxtaposition of black and white, male and female, good and evil, earthly and celestial, realised either as separate, paired works, for instance a sculpture of 'woman' to balance 'man', or within the same work. In the etching *Hermaphrodite* (1950; LP045) male and female plants share a common root, the female incubating a child, while the life-bestowing 'supreme force' takes the whimsical form of a clover leaf.[98] Likewise, the iron relief *Man, Woman and Child* (1950–51; LS037) makes explicit the complementary, creative union of male and female. The exploration of opposites becomes increasingly important in Clarke's later work, where black is frequently balanced by white.[99] The 'Artist Series'(1999–2003) in particular presents a telling conflation of elements – male and female, earthly and divine – in relation to the process of creation. A dish (always white) can represent a chalice, fount of inspiration for the artist, or a womb-like vessel; the dual message becoming more explicit when the dish is filled with symbols described by Clarke as 'inspirational' but just as validly interpreted as sexual: such ambiguity adds depth to the symbols' meaning, exemplifying Jung's concept of 'numinosity'. Perhaps the most overt exposition of paired opposites within the 'Artist's Series' is found in *The Artist's Real Instrument* (LS673). The figure of the artist, ostensibly masculine on account of his towering stature and phallic wand,[100] contains a white dish holding a sphere – symbol of the

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[97] Clarke, conversation with the author (13 November 2005).
[98] *Hermaphrodite* suggests the influence of Klee, whose portrayal of hermaphrodite plants is discussed in Richard Verdi, *Klee and Nature* (London: Zwemmer, 1984), pp 126–9.
[99] One of the wooden boxes, containing artist, white dish and black sphere is titled *It Takes Both Black & White* (LS716).
[100] In notes relating to the title of this work, Clarke suggested various alternatives to 'instrument' – 'detector', 'wand', 'weapon', 'magnet' – each denoting a different creative emphasis.

female *anima*. Beside him, much smaller and in front of a board or canvas, is a shadow figure, complete with wand, but containing a dish with symbols for male genitalia. The composition could be read simply as an artist alongside a completed canvas – perhaps some kind of portrait. However, in the context of Clarke's work a more complex construct is suggested. Is the smaller figure in fact a projection of the artist's shadow, a symbol seeking reconciliation of 'irrational opposites'?

For Read, the most powerful works of contemporary art – by Kandinsky, Picasso, Klee, Mondrian, Gabo and Moore – could be equated with myths of reconciliation, as images 'beyond the limits of the phenomenal world'.[101] In fact, more explicit parallels with Jung's (and Clarke's) concept of reconciled opposites may be found in the work of composer Michael Tippett. The oratorio *A Child of Our Time* (1939–41), for instance, explores the psychological divide within man, at odds with his shadow. Tippett's notes on the draft scenario amplify the theme:

> man tells of his psychological split self which ... is on a certain plane the frustrations of his condition in the commonwealth. He has lost the relation to his soul, to the impersonal things, hence the feminine ... He projects the *anima* on his women-folk with devastating personal misunderstandings and complexes.[102]

The concluding ensemble of *A Child of Our Time* suggests the reconciliation of Jung's individuation process with the words, 'I would know my Shadow and my light / so shall I at last be whole'. Tippett's opera, *The Midsummer Marriage* (composed 1946–52, thus contemporary with Clarke's thesis) likewise explores elements of ritual, archetype and reconciliation, aiming to communicate a vision of wholeness, an integrity of 'mind, heart and body'.[103] In a tidy conjunction of events, the première of *The Midsummer Marriage* in 1955 – with sets by Barbara Hepworth – coincided with the publication of Read's *Icon and Idea*.

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[101] Read, *The Forms of Things Unknown*, p. 196.

[102] Michael Tippett, *Music of the Angels: Essays and Sketchbooks*, pp 138–9, quoted in Meirion Bowen, *Michael Tippett* (London: Robson Books Ltd, 1982), p. 48. Tippett was profoundly influenced by the theories of Jung. For a detailed examination of his beliefs and writings see David Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett: Modern Times and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Form

Form, in Clarke's work, can scarcely be separated from symbolic content; it is also fundamentally related to use of materials. However, certain attitudes can be detected which give cohesion to seemingly disparate works, whether early or late, in iron or aluminium. Of these, principal are the two-dimensional nature of much of Clarke's work, and an organic approach to form. Both of these aspects, it will be suggested, derive from the artist's spiritual and purposive conception of art.

Two-dimensionality

Clarke has conceded that a valid criticism of much of his sculpture might be its perceived two-dimensionality.[104] As is well documented, the iron sculpture originated in graphic work: in etchings, drawings and monotypes produced in the early 1950s. *Complexities of Man* (1950; LS003) illustrates this genesis, demonstrating clearly its derivation from the etching *Man [Complexities of Man I]* (February 1950; LP064). Clarke's motives in forging this new breed of linear sculpture stemmed, in part, from a shared concern to break with the tradition of Moore's volumetric carved or cast work. Yet unlike Butler or Chadwick, Clarke's iron figures scarcely 'describe space'. Instead, they present a distillation of their subject matter: less a skeleton and more an ideographical cipher for man. The justification for this lies in Clarke's determined attachment to symbolism as a means of communication and to abstraction as the means of producing the symbol. (That Clarke feels compelled to communicate through his art, on whatever level, may be ascribed to his faith.) Symbols formed by the reduction or abstraction of a concept to its simplest form are, by their nature, most likely to appear in a two-dimensional format.

The consequences of this attitude for Clarke's sculpture are wide-reaching. In the early iron works representing 'man' (1950–53), sculptures read from the front or back, or, in the case of the profiled heads, from either side: other viewpoints present a confused or misleading image. This approach applies equally to later work.

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[103] Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, p. 54.

The 'Extension' series consists of painted backboards with flat aluminium figures placed in front; the 'Artist' series takes the format of *tableaux* in glazed wooden boxes, where the only possible viewpoint is frontal. Clarke's most recent sculpture, *Consignment* (2006; LS751), epitomises the process of 'flattened' abstraction. The angular shards from which the two bolted sheet aluminium figures are constructed in fact derive from the chevrons used to decorate figures in the late graphic work (see, for example, LP207). In this way, the decorative has been transformed into the fundamental.

Most importantly, Clarke's method of producing sculpture from graphic images accounts for his frequent use of the relief format, for the iron 'fish' reliefs (1954), open-cast aluminium reliefs (for the 'Canberra' and 'Oriana' cruise liners, 1960–61), and for the aluminium 'Cumbrian landscape' (1981–3), 'Tankman' (1984) and 'Pilgrim' (1994–5) series. While such dependence on graphic imagery parallels the derivation of constructed sculpture from painting identified by Greenberg in his essay, 'Collage' (1958), again Clarke's application differs radically. Greenberg's process involves the extrusion of originally affixed elements from the picture plane to create a constructed (not sculpted) bas-relief: a new genre of sculpture freed from frontality but persistently marked by its pictorial origins.[105] Clarke's iron reliefs, pictorial yet constructed, clearly parallel the origins of this process, but later work retains the flatness of the picture plane, thereby diverging from the new art of 'joining two-dimensional forms in three-dimensional space' identified by Greenberg and exemplified by Caro.

Architectural Form

Clarke has noted, significantly, that his approach to sculptural form is 'more that of an architect's – opposite to Moore'.[106] Architectural forms begin to appear in Clarke's sculpture from 1954 onwards. These first iron sculptures present a variation

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[104] Clarke, conversation with the author (15 August 2006). The major exception to this rule is the group of works based on architectural models: the iron 'man as a fortress' sculptures from the 1950s and, from 1993, *Monument to Man's Constant Effort 1–9*, both of which are discussed below.

[105] Clement Greenberg, 'Collage' (1958), quoted in Charles Harrison, 'Sculpture's Recent Past', in Terry A. Neff (ed.), *A Quiet Revolution: British Sculpture Since 1965* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1987), p. 14.

[106] Clarke, 'John Roberts file', p. 10 [Clarke archive]. These notes are undated, but probably date from the 1990s.

on the theme of man as warrior, with man, instead, as a building or fortress. *Symbol for Man VIII* (1954; LS102), for instance, presents man symbolically in terms of angular enclosures and spikes. By the time of the landscape works, Clarke's sculpture takes the form of a vast architectural earthwork, with man not symbolised but physically able to walk inside the work. These sculptures were never realised full-scale, existing only as four maquettes entitled *Enclosure* (1969; LS329–32). The most recent architectural sculptures take the form of monuments, suggestive of man's ceaseless, spiritual struggle. *Concept for Elsewhere* (1988; LS568) initiated a series entitled *Monument to Man's Constant Effort* (1993; LS592–600), in which towers are pierced or surrounded by a bewildering complex of footholds, steps and ladders. In the same year the artist produced what might appear a final statement on the theme: *Tomb* (1993; LS604), a cube containing a recumbent figure.

A comparison between Clarke's architecturally inspired sculptures and work by the much younger British artist, Rachel Whiteread, is suggested by Clarke's sympathy with her work. After first seeing *Ghost* in 1992, Clarke wrote to Whiteread asking to meet to discuss her work and, although the meeting has not yet transpired, Clarke continues to follow her work with interest.[107] The physical purity of works such as *Ghost* and *House*, cast in plaster or concrete from real architectural moulds, has acted as a blank screen onto which viewers and writers can project their own interpretation: political, social, historical or personal. In this way they have acquired a complex associative personality, both prompted by and prompting an almost unprecedented body of critical writing for works so recent.[108] Whiteread's own comment, however, is that she views houses 'in terms of skeletons, the plumbing and electricity as nerves and blood vessels'.[109] Clarke has similarly spoken of his sculptures of man as 'storage rooms for ideas/thoughts, internal staircases leading to and from, passageways: a building before you've finished'.[110] Clarke's is, of course, a symbolic interpretation, and as ever, considered from a spiritual viewpoint. It has already been noted that *Ghost* suggested to Clarke a symbolic variant, the casting of

[107] At the time of Clarke's letter, Whiteread was working on a large commission and could not spare the time to meet. Clarke, letter to Whiteread (31 March 1992); Whiteread, postcard to Clarke (15 April 1992) [Clarke archive].
[108] On interpretations of Whiteread's *House*, see Angela Dimitrakaki, 'Gothic public art and the failures of democracy', in Chris Townsend (ed.), *The Art of Rachel Whiteread* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2004), pp 107–27.
[109] Rachel Whiteread, quoted in Melanie Mariño, 'Moving on', in *The Art of Rachel Whiteread*, p. 88.
[110] Clarke, conversation with the author (28 August 2006).

the inside of a tomb at Gethsemane. Fascinated by the inner–outer reversal process, he has recently suggested a further symbolic variant. When a cross is hung on the wall of a room, everything else stands in relation to that cross, or separate to it. Turned inside out, though, the negative impression of the cross appears, and, in Clarke's view, the whole world stands inside that cross.[111] Here, as elsewhere in his contact with anything related to architecture, Clarke's interest is focussed as much on philosophical or symbolic issues as on concerns of a formal or practical nature.

Organicism

Clarke's allegiance to organically conceived form – form reflecting not specific natural phenomena, but notions of organic growth – can be detected throughout his work, although it is most apparent in sculpture from the mid-1950s to early 1960s. Again Clarke's predilection may be traced to the symbolic representation of his spiritual belief (a mirroring of the divinely-created living, natural world, or the notion of human spiritual growth), and it is notable that many overtly organic works from this period are either for the Church or a reflection of the artist's faith: *Cruciform* (1958), *The Four Seasons* (1958), Goldsmiths' Cross (1959), the Bishop Otter College sculpture (1962), Coventry High Altar Cross and Flying Cross (1962). As earlier, a parallel with Read can be detected. Read's view of ideal form is form derived from nature, with its essential attributes of vitality and tendency towards asymmetry. In this way, the artist, taking his cue from nature, discovers not a 'dead or fixed idea' but one full of suggestions:

> The form lives, moves and has its being; like a cellular organism, it divides and sub-divides, multiplies and re-combines in an almost endless series of variations.[112]

Here Read is discussing the work of Moore, who both shaped and came to epitomise his views of the sculptural ideal. He considered Moore's approach as 'vitalist', not reproducing nature but expressing a penetration into reality.[113] However, as Read

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[111] Clarke, conversation with the author (12 March 2006).
[112] Herbert Read, *The Philosophy of Modern Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), p. 208.
[113] Henry Moore, statement in *Unit One* (London: Cassell & Co., 1934); reproduced in Read, *Modern Sculpture: A Concise History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1964), p. 163. This statement was

refined his conception of organic form, he came to perceive it as inseparable from wider issues of proportion, symbolism and Jungian archetypes. The proportions found in organic forms such as leaves, shells and flowers are demonstrably typical also of inorganic forms – crystals, atoms, molecules – and even the 'harmony of the spheres'.[114] Read argues therefore that since the universe is patterned, it is unsurprising that the 'psychic element in life *conforms* to the all-environing physical mould'. He cites Jung's likening of the archetype to a river bed, to which the stream of life may return after an indefinitely long period, but suggests that this channelled image is perhaps too restrictive: the freedom associated with creative activity is better explained as an 'apparently infinite series of variations on a relatively few fixed forms'.

Clarke's attitude to organic form in the mid-1950s is demonstrated by *Cruciform* (1958; LS124), also titled *Man as a Cross*, about which the artist produced unusually extensive notes.[115] The starting point for *Cruciform* is man, containing – latently or consciously – the spiritual and the earthly. Man both embodies the function of the cross (the intersection of celestial and terrestrial) and suggests the work's form: a unity between cross-like shafts and 'the organic shell and trunk' of man. Throughout his notes Clarke stresses his aim to create an 'organic parallel', suggesting an overtly organic metaphor for creation:

> The importance is a revitalization of what is now a symbol of the Christian world. One way to do this is to take cuttings from the old (but faithful) hulk before it finally strangles itself. – begin afresh with the same flower but new roots[116]

Clarke's notions of organic form were, although realised in an entirely different fashion from Moore, wholly consistent with Read's belief in vitalist modes of creation.

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apparently written jointly by Read and Moore. Terry Friedman, 'Herbert Read on Sculpture', in *Herbert Read: A British Vision of World Art*, p. 106.

[114] Read, *The Form of Things Unknown*, p. 59.

[115] These handwritten notes were conceived as drafts for a letter to Elizabeth Davison (Art Department, Arts Council of Great Britain), 26 April 1958 [Clarke archive].

[116] Clarke, notes for *Cruciform* (1958) [Clarke archive].

'Redfern' Sculpture (1964–5)

In 1965 Clarke exhibited at the Redfern Gallery a body of work in cast aluminium that, at first sight, appeared entirely different from preceding, overtly organic work.[117] Clarke's most recent exhibition, a decade earlier in 1955, consisted entirely of works in iron, which, although not naturalistic, were clearly identifiable as figures, heads, fish or birds. The new 'Redfern' works (1964–5), cast in aluminium using a recently developed process, had abstract forms and non-associative titles (*Two Slabs and Flat Bar*, *Block with Ten Pieces*, *Inverted Angles*, *Channel with Spheres*), suggesting a formalist approach and prompting the adoption – or at very least consideration – of a method of analysis other than Read's symbolic, Jungian viewpoint.

The problem of how to explain Clarke's new work, either on its own terms or in relation to what had come before, related to a broader critical dilemma posed by the multiplicity of approaches, techniques and materials in contemporary British sculpture. In 1963, writing about the Battersea open-air sculpture exhibition, Read had clung to the notion of a coherent national school stemming from Moore.[118] By 1965 most critics at least acknowledged the existence of stylistic diversity, although they struggled to codify it. The issues were thrown into relief by the Tate's large-scale exhibition 'British Sculpture in the Sixties' (1965), which, as the *Times* critic noted, caught sculptors of the 1952 Venice Biennale generation in the midst of trying to adapt to a new situation, seeking 'a new objectivity, ease and contentment' but paradoxically succeeding only in creating work that appeared strained and uncomfortable, struggling to reconcile material with content.[119] One reason for this unease, as Charles Harrison has noted, was the relocation of modernism from Paris to New York, wrong-footing in mid-career those sculptors who had looked to European models for inspiration and critical sanction. Younger artists, in contrast, could look

[117] The description '"Redfern" sculpture' is applied to the body of work created in 1964–5 regardless of whether it was included in Clarke's Redfern Gallery exhibition in 1965: as will be seen from the catalogue (Appendix A), sculptures from this period have a distinct, formal character.

[118] Herbert Read, 'Introduction' to *Sculpture: Open-air exhibition of contemporary British and American works* (London: London County Council, 1963). Read contrasted the 'coherently national' British sculptors with the American 'individualists'. In fact, the catalogue illustrations indicate that there was as much connection between individuals of different nationalities as between those of the same nationality.

unhindered to the US (a country already attractive for its consumer novelties and mass-entertainment) for 'models of authentically modern high culture'.[120]

The year 1965 has traditionally been viewed as a watershed in the history of British sculpture, the point after which sculpture took a radically new direction. As sculptors from the 'New Generation' turned to new materials (plastics, welded and painted steel) and non-associative forms, they sought to dissociate themselves from the previous generation. William Tucker, for one, characterised the earlier period as one where 'form was sacrificed to texture and autonomy of structure to a cheap and melodramatic imagery'.[121] The new dominance of Greenberg's criticism, defining and elevating the sculpture of Caro and his pupils (in contradistinction to Read and his favourites), emphasised this notion of disjunction.

Yet it is equally possible to consider the work of the New Generation in terms of development and continuity.[122] Lynne Cooke's identification of two attitudes to abstraction in the late 1950s provides a useful model: for some artists, abstraction constituted a goal in itself, a non-referential language necessary for revitalising sculpture; for others abstraction itself was not the central issue, but 'a means of producing a new kind of subject matter, one more suited to the contemporary ethos'.[123] If Caro fits neatly into the first category, Clarke might be considered as belonging to the latter. Viewed in this way, Clarke's Redfern works continue the preoccupations of his earlier sculpture subject to a heightened degree of abstraction and a transformation in materials – both of which contributed to a more 'contemporary ethos'.

This evolutionary construct can be tested by returning to some of Clarke's earliest cast aluminium works, created for the 1963 Battersea Park open-air sculpture exhibition. By the artist's admission, these three sculptures respond to Moore's reclining figures.[124] Clarke had created a reclining figure in 1951 (LS040), a two-part iron sculpture presented as a linear reduction but with a clearly defined head. In the

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[119] 'British Sculptors at a Time of Adaptation', *The Times* (25 February 1965). For example, the 'large and spreading horizontal sculpture which Mr. Geoffrey Clarke [attempted] in bronze [*sic*]' was considered 'better realized by Mr. Anthony Caro with girders and pipes'.

[120] Charles Harrison, 'Sculpture's Recent Past', p. 12.

[121] William Tucker, *The Language of Sculpture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), p. 83.

[122] See John Glaves-Smith, 'Sculpture in the 1940s and 1950s: the Form and the Language', in Sandy Nairne and Nicholas Serota (eds), *British Sculpture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1981), p. 125.

[123] Lynne Cooke, 'New Abstract Sculpture and its Sources', in Nairne and Serota (eds), *British Sculpture in the Twentieth Century*, p. 167.

Battersea works the process of abstraction is more extreme: an unusually large number of brass maquettes shows the whittling away of physical references to such an extent that the original subject is scarcely discernible. The final sculptures consist of horizontal bars supported at the 'head' by a single prop, 'legs' from folded, curved or stacked slabs, with gender suggested by vestigial breasts and phallic protrusions. It is perhaps not surprising that contemporary reviewers overlooked the figurative derivation of *Battersea I–III* (LS165–7) to focus instead on the works' resemblance to weaponry or agricultural machinery.

A single work in the Redfern exhibition – first in the catalogue – shares its title with the large-scale Battersea sculptures. The smaller *Battersea I* (1962; LS165b) retains its parent's generic identity but is formally abstracted to two vertical slabs pierced by a horizontal bar; surface texture, including organic references, is almost eliminated. Once this formal lineage is identified, many of the other Redfern sculptures may be seen as variations on the Battersea theme: a horizontal bar combined with slabs, angles and troughs – sometimes supported, sometimes not. A review described Clarke's new sculpture in terms of 'simple formal units – slabs, bars, and blocks – locked in equally simple relationships': components ordered in different configurations to create formally autonomous structures.[125] The shadow of Greenbergian terminology, with its reference to sculpture in terms of syntactical relationships between horizontal and vertical planes, axes, rectangles and enclosures, is apparent. Yet no contemporary critic chose to analyse Clarke's sculpture further in terms of formal syntax, and it seems likely that the many distinctions between Clarke's work and the sculpture of Caro (epitomising, in its 'radical unlikeness to nature', the Greenbergian ideal)[126] militated against the analysis of their work in similar terms. Because of its grammatical physiognomy, Caro's sculpture was perceived by Greenberg as 'gestural', gesture liberated by the work's seeming weightlessness – its spreading effortlessly into space despite being located directly

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[124] Clarke, conversation with the author (2003).

[125] 'Formal Units in Sculpture', *The Times* (24 March 1965).

[126] Clement Greenberg, 'Contemporary Sculpture: Anthony Caro', *Arts Yearbook* 8 (1965); reprinted in Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, Vol. 4, p. 206. Peter Fuller sought to equate the form of Caro's sculpture with the redefinition of God that formed part of the 'Honest to God' debate: God as 'radically abstracted, rendered horizontal rather than vertical, private rather than public'. Peter Fuller, 'An Interview with Anthony Caro', in *Beyond the Crisis in Art* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative Ltd., 1980), p. 206.

on the ground.[127] Clarke, too, dispensed with plinths in his new (larger) aluminium work, but his forms remained essentially compact and earth-bound; retaining perhaps more in common with Read's notion of 'tactility' than with Greenberg's 'opticality'.[128] The very fact that Caro, through his sculpture's spreading presence, was concerned with spatial issues distinguished him from Clarke, who, by his own admission has never been interested in the 'description of space'.[129] (Issues of construction are necessarily involved here, Clarke's method of casting favouring compact, pre-conceived forms, while Caro's assembled work could evolve sequentially, allowing one element to inflect another – arguably a prerequisite of syntactical construction.) Most importantly, however, there was a strong suggestion, evident in Hodin's 1965 catalogue essay,[130] that Clarke's forms remained organic symbols, and were therefore in breach of Greenberg's notion of 'self-criticism'.

Leaving aside the 'Battersea' variants, the remaining sculptures at the Redfern exhibition derived from a limited set of sources, all with their roots in the 1950s. The notion of slabs suspended from a bar, realised on a large scale in Basil Spence's organic 'Beaulieu' sculpture (LS162), gave rise to the geometric *Four Slabs and Plane I* (LS198a).[131] The chalice, or vessel, subject of many etchings and reliefs, recurred in the abstract *Channel with Spheres* (LS214b).[132] Most intriguingly, the table, Clarke's symbol for the earth, appeared in two works, *Table with Thirteen Pieces* (LS228) and *Table with Eleven Pieces* (LS226), where the organic worldliness of roughened iron was replaced by gleaming cubes and rods of aluminium. The catalogue refers to the table as landscape, 'with objects on the landscape the moon or the sun, a catastrophy [*sic*]: monolith (figures) some standing, or collapsed, some broken, represented by bars or blocks or slabs in various sizes'.[133]

Without overt reference to Caro, Hodin's catalogue essay identifies the difference in intent between the two artists. Clarke's sculpture, although it can be

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[127] Greenberg, 'Contemporary Sculpture: Anthony Caro'; reprinted in Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, Vol. 4, p. 208.
[128] Greenberg, 'Contemporary Sculpture: Anthony Caro', p. 208.
[129] Clarke, [Notes: 'from John Roberts file'] (*ca.* 1993), p. 10 [Clarke archive].
[130] J. P. Hodin, 'Geoffrey Clarke's Recent Works', *Geoffrey Clarke: Recent Sculptures 1965* (London: Redfern Gallery, 1965).
[131] Formally, the idea is akin to Paolozzi's bronze *Forms on a Bow* (1949), although without its menacing overtones. Clarke explored similar shapes through sketches in the 1950s, and in one iron head whose features are suspended within a bow form (LS026).
[132] For example, vessels feature prominently in the Castrol House relief (1959; LS149), a photograph of which was reproduced on the inside cover of the Redfern catalogue.
[133] J. P. Hodin, 'Geoffrey Clarke's Recent Works'.

considered as pure form, nonetheless bears imprints of its derivation from organic sources. It also embraces the irregularity introduced by the artist's direct involvement in the process of creation, in the carving of polystyrene prior to casting. In Hodin's words,

> Clarke's signs are not constructions – they are not the expression of anything mechanical or machine-like. They are alive and the ardent desire of the artist is that they should have life in them.[134]

Hodin's view of the continuity of Clarke's work is supported by an interview given to art student, Tim Holding, in December 1963. Holding states that Clarke's early work was informed by an appreciation of pure, natural forms, used in conjunction with a vocabulary of symbols. He continues:

> The 'pure forms' of nature are now more important to [Clarke] when designing sculpture than are the forms developed from his own symbol alphabet. ... His interest in 'pure form' as he calls it is a comparatively recent development and is not only linked with his interest in natural forms but also a fascination for off-cuts from the shapes of polystyrene that he cuts on the heated wire![135]

Clarke undoubtedly perceived the Redfern exhibition as an opportunity, independent of commissioned work, to consider formal issues,[136] especially a desire 'at this moment' for simplicity.[137] In retrospect, this period in the mid-'60s, coinciding with the heights of Greenbergian formalism, marked a peak in Clarke's exploration of abstraction, his search for forms aesthetically satisfying irrespective of associative meaning. Confirmation, if needed, is suggested by his subsequent titling of a series of sculptures, *Post Inert Phase II* (1968; LS316–22). These works, cubes, pyramids and discs – but crucially sprouting tubes or pipes – confirm a renewed commitment to organic forms after the relative severity of the Redfern works.[138]

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[134] Hodin, 'Geoffrey Clarke's Recent Works'.
[135] Tim Holding, 'Technique and Method in the Sixteenth and Twentieth Centuries' (unpublished thesis, Newcastle University, 1964), p. 41.
[136] Sturt-Penrose, 'Geoffrey Clarke: Profile', *The Arts Review*, Vol. XVII/4 (6–20 March 1965).
[137] Clarke, ['Notes'], dated 22 November 1964 [Clarke archive].
[138] Clarke described the *Post Inert Phase II* series as 'inorganic material with an outward stirring of life'. Undated notes [Clarke archive].

Conclusion

Clarke's choice of symbols with which to communicate his beliefs about man, nature and reconciliation reflects imagery widely used in the late 1940s and early '50s and is strongly inflected by models suggested by primitivism and psychoanalysis. Clarke's purpose in using symbolism, as stated in his thesis, is to encourage the viewer to glimpse (spiritual) truth through a state of pure contemplation, a state in which internal and external forces are reconciled. This relationship – between created work and beholder – would in itself become an area of enquiry, as represented in the *Extension* series (1988–9) by placing a figure sculpturally outside the picture plane. Clarke explained,

> A painting is incomplete without a viewer. But then, a real viewer intrudes, whereas a symbolic viewer completes, & creates, by extension, the aesthetic, the real indefinable, the essence, which exists, not in the painting or the figure but as a result of the combination.[139]

Crucial here is the notion of a bridge between viewer and object, which allows the revelation of 'the other dimension ... the spiritual dimension', through aesthetic extension. The ideal viewer, one who instinctively responds to Clarke's work, its encoded message, and thence to a deeper understanding of his own situation, can be equated with the 'symbolic' viewer in the *Extension* series. Again parallels can be noted with Kandinsky, who identified art as a power to be directed to 'the refinement and improvement of the human soul'. Should the chasm be bridged, art and its inextricably linked complement in the human soul both grow in strength. Conversely, when the human soul is stifled by materialism, art loses purpose and is described as 'art for art's sake'. In this scenario, Kandinsky foresees the artist and spectator drifting apart, the spectator turning his back on the artist or viewing him merely as a juggler worthy of applause.[140] Clarke, too, has frequently alluded to such a predicament, describing the artist's futile exertions as 'aesthetic gymnastics'.

Clarke's motives in using symbolism are paralleled, as elsewhere, in writings by Jung and Read. Clarke stated:

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[139] Clarke, 'Extension / Observer' (handwritten notes, undated) [Clarke archive].

> It is up to the artist to think again. Perhaps to realise his point as a medium. Proceeding with care, because he certainly must not be a medium between politician and public. Rather a medium between man & his subconscious.[141]

Jung defined the role of the artist as to translate archetypal images into contemporary terms in order to effect reconciliation.[142] Read, too, argued – in language closest to Clarke's – that the images of wholeness created by an artist out of his own inner contradictions are at the same time 'symbols of reconciliation for the conflict of instinct and spirit in a people'.[143] In relation to Klee's *On Modern Art* he observed that revelations of the unknown are not necessarily part of common discourse, therefore the artist cannot complain if his particular symbols remain unrecognised, unappreciated. This has proved a problem with Clarke's symbolism, which critics have frequently failed to understand.[144] Clarke's response is to encourage persistence on the part of artist and viewer: the message may in time become clear. Read's conclusion is similar, that the artist's task is to attempt to 'construct bridges between our disparate personalities, or between his particular personality and universal values'.[145]

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[140] Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, p. 54.

[141] Clarke, [Notes] (*ca.* 1970?) [Clarke archive].

[142] 'Therein lies the social significance of art ... The unsatisfied yearning of the artist reaches back to the primordial image in the unconscious which is best fitted to compensate the inadequacy and one-sidedness of the present. The artist seizes on this image, and in raising it from deepest unconsciousness he brings it into relation with conscious values, thereby transforming it until it can be accepted by the minds of his contemporaries according to their powers.' C. G. Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*; translated by R. F. C. Hull (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), pp 82–3.

[143] Read, *The Form of Things Unknown*, p. 198. Read lacked conviction, however, in contemporary society's desire to acknowledge or appreciate such symbols.

[144] See, for instance, M. H. Middleton, 'Art', *The Spectator* (18 April 1952).

[145] Read, *Icon and Idea*, pp 123–4. Clarke's only criticism of Read's wording is in the concept of a bridge, which he considers too large a concession for the artist to make – he has instead suggested the image of a thin, gossamer strand, reaching out towards the viewer. Clarke, conversation with the author (27 September 2006).

Chapter Three:
Craftsmanship: Materials, Processes, Applications

Introduction

Clarke is unusual for having created work in such a wide variety of media, and particularly for having mastered the majority of associated techniques of production. Several of these media – particularly stained glass, enamels, silver and iron – have traditionally been categorised as 'craft', a term which in itself raises a number of issues. In the first instance, craft, the skill of making individual objects by hand, was by the mid-1950s perceived in certain circles as outmoded. In architecture, craft, or more specifically the process of creating and finishing by hand, was seen as incompatible with new methods of production, such that in 1953 the *Architectural Review* updated the name of its review section from 'Craftsmanship' to 'Skill'.[1] Sculpture traced a parallel movement, whereby artists working in iron (a metal associated with 'primitive' artefacts, decorative wrought-work or historical methods of construction) turned towards materials with progressive resonances (aluminium, plastics) and techniques not traditionally associated with craftwork. Secondly, the term 'craft' could imply a value judgement, that craftwork is not 'art', and is inferior to work produced by artists. Ken Baynes discussed the problem in a review of the 1960 'Creative Craftsman Exhibition', where he considered some of the humblest objects, such as rugs, the best and those with pretensions to fine art the worst.[2] Sculpture, that 'fatal hinterland between art and craft', exemplified the latter: why was a crucifix by Skelton shown and not work by first-rate sculptors such as Moore, Butler, Hepworth or Clarke? The problem, as Baynes saw it, stemmed from the craftsman's blinkered attachment to tradition, ignoring possible benefits from scientific advances, the result of which was unimaginative work 'at one remove from intellectual integrity'. Clarke, as demonstrated by early notes on the subject of stained glass, agreed on craft's stultifying dependence on tradition, but attributed this

[1] 'The word 'craftsmanship' has become impossibly dated. Why? From its association with handicrafts? From its unsuitability as a definition of precision building and architecture? Possibly.' *Architectural Review*, Vol. 114 No. 682 (October 1953), p. 265.
[2] Ken Baynes, 'What are the Crafts doing?: notes on the Creative Craftsman Exhibition at the R.I.B.A.', *Crafts Review* (1960), pp 9–15.

– controversially – to the craftsman 'not being in one sense creative' and therefore having to turn to his predecessors for designs.[3] In thus distinguishing between craftsman and artist (or artist-craftsman, who makes his own work), it is impossible not to detect a value judgement. Meredith Hawes (Principal of Birmingham College of Art) acknowledged the distinction openly:

> It is fitting that only a relatively small number of the best students should attain the status of 'designer' as the trade can, and should, only employ the outstanding creative designers as such. Many more will find posts as fine craftsmen with high standards of taste and technical skill. It does not matter whether a student becomes a DESIGNER-craftsman or a CRAFTSMAN-designer providing they are the right type of man or woman with the right training.[4]

The terms 'artist', 'craftsman' and 'designer' also demand clarification, not least because their changing usage is indicative of wider issues involving function, form and production. In the interwar years, Read, as others, such as Gropius at the Bauhaus in Germany, had promoted an inclusive view of art encompassing both utilitarian and non-utilitarian or 'significant' forms. In rejecting the Renaissance separation of 'art' from 'craft' they sought to restore the medieval definition of art as simply a well-constructed artefact fit for its purpose, with artists responsible also for designing functional items. This approach, which underpinned the foundation of the DIA in England in 1915, was largely successful in effacing boundaries between the fine and applied or industrial arts: a single umbrella term, 'design', encompassed all.[5] Yet by 1945, largely for economic reasons, the distinction between (fine) artist and (industrial) designer had been restored. Read's vision of the artist as necessary 'in every practical activity ... to give form to material'[6] was replaced by a new breed of designer conversant with modern techniques of industrial production. Darwin's restructuring of the RCA in 1947–8 proved the shift in emphasis: three separate departments were retained for the fine arts and ten for branches of industrial design,

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[3] Clarke, ['Notes on stained glass'] (*ca.* 1952?) [Clarke archive]. The notes may have formed the basis of a lecture or essay.

[4] Meredith W. Hawes, 'On Training Craftsmen for Industry', *Art & Industry* (March 1948), p.109. Clarke's archive contains all issues of *Art & Industry* published between March 1947 and August 1948, indicating perhaps that he was reading the journal in preparation for his studies at the RCA.

[5] Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, p. 61 ff.

the latter equipped with machinery and a technician to assist with production.[7] In one sense – aiming to recruit and train designers of sufficient calibre to influence industry – Darwin was following the example of the Bauhaus, as promoted by Gropius and Read.[8] Yet the RCA's separation of fine art and industrial design ran exactly counter to Bauhaus ideals of integrating the artist into 'the workaday world of realities'.[9]

Clarke's own stance, that of 'designing' and producing his own work, drawing inspiration from materials and techniques but not allowing these to become more important than the finished object, shares elements in common with both fine art and design, but fits neither category neatly.[10] Nor does his attraction to modern processes – such as casting from polystyrene – align him easily with traditional concepts of craft. A more appropriate definition (evoking again a medieval comparison) is offered by John Gloag in *The English Tradition in Design* (1947). Describing designers and architects Gordon Russell, Wells Coates, Frederick Gibberd and Maxwell Fry, Gloag suggested:

> In common with the executant craftsmen-designers of the Middle Ages, they exhibit a familiarity in the handling of the materials they select which is neither contemptuous or arrogant, and they sustain their mastery of plywood and steel, aluminium alloys, plastics and glass as lightly and easily and untyrannically as the smiths and carpenters and masons of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries who worked with iron and oak and stone.[11]

If, as Gloag proposed, modern techniques and materials could be used to enrich craft, the converse was also true: aspects of craft could be appropriated to invigorate 'modernism'. Chris Stephens has demonstrated how Ben Nicholson's carved white reliefs, rather than simply epitomising a modernist purity indebted to continental

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[6] Herbert Read, *Art and Industry* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934), p. 40.
[7] Robin Darwin, '"A Royal Workshop"', *The Ambassador* (Coronation 1953), pp 80–83.
[8] The aims of the Bauhaus had been propagated by Read's highly influential *Art and Industry*, in which he quoted extensively from a lecture given by Gropius to the DIA in May 1934 (Read, *Art and Industry*, p. 57).
[9] Gropius, lecture to the DIA (May 1934), quoted in Read, *Art and Industry*, p. 57.
[10] Clarke was unwilling to design for industry because of the restrictions it might place on his own work. He recalls that Darwin's reforms were not much in evidence during his student years (Clarke, conversation with the author, 19 September 2005), although by 1953, of the fifty students graduating, thirty-five took jobs in industry, eight went into teaching and five became free-lance designers. M. H. Middleton, 'Art', *Spectator* (7 August 1953).
[11] John Gloag, *The English Tradition in Design* (London: King Penguin Books, 1947), p. 35.

models, relate equally to a tradition of English vernacular craft, admitting the possibility of 'a radical Englishness which might be seen to have conjoined with modernist practices for the refreshment of both'.[12] In Nicholson's case, native influences derived from pottery (Bernard Leach and W. Staite Murray), his mother's Celtic ancestry and a sympathy for English rural domesticity. Clarke's outlook was likewise coloured by his background, consciously or otherwise. The craft of stained glass (as well as traditional ecclesiastical wrought ironwork) had been on the 'periphery of his imagination' since childhood through the work of his grandfather.[13] Some of Clarke's early sculptures in iron were completed with the use of a power hammer borrowed from the smithy at the cotton mill near Bolton managed by his father-in-law. Clarke's early etchings were made following his father's example (if not his traditional 'English topographical style'), using his father's press and technical manual. Thus, while Clarke's work in glass, iron and even printmaking was demonstrably influenced by modernist models (modern glass mosaic from France; iron sculpture and aquatints by Picasso), it is equally important to recognise its origins in traditions of English vernacular craft.

Stained Glass

> Stained glass, almost miraculously, has come alive again—and not only for ecclesiastical purposes.
>
> Geoffrey Clarke, perhaps our most gifted artist in the medium, proves this conclusively ... He is at the head of a group of students, past and present, who have set out to interest architects in its domestic applications.[14]

On Clarke's arrival at the RCA in 1948, the Stained Glass Department was newly headed by Lawrence Lee (*b* 1909), a practitioner whose own studio work was characterised by a rather cautious approach. Clarke learnt the basic techniques of stained glass in a matter of weeks, largely with the assistance of a technician, since

[12] Chris Stephens, 'Ben Nicholson: Modernism, Craft and the English Vernacular', in David Peters Corbett, Ysanne Hold and Fiona Russell (eds), *The Geographies of Englishness: Landscape and the National Past 1880–1940*, Studies in British Art 10 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 226.
[13] Clarke, 'John Roberts file', p. 5 [Clarke archive].
[14] Anon., 'Flashing a comeback', *House & Garden* (May 1957), p. 73.

Lee attended the department infrequently.[15] However, the Stained Glass Department was undeniably entering a new phase, enriched by a talented intake of students after the war, and keen to publicise its progressive approach. An article by Lee in 1951 emphasised his students' awareness of modern artists working with glass (Rouault, Matisse, Léger) and of recent technical developments such as *dalle de verre* (the embedding of layers of glass in concrete or plaster).[16] Lee also stressed the College's research into applications for stained glass in non-ecclesiastical situations. The works illustrated were leaded windows and glass mosaic by three students: Clarke, Jean Edwards (a third-year student) and Keith New (*b* 1926, a contemporary of Clarke's).[17]

Leaded Glass

The division of labour between designer and craftsman in the creation of traditional, leaded stained glass is historically rooted: Read and Lee both suggest that medieval glass would have been designed by illuminators (who possessed a complete knowledge of iconography and a facility for creating images to fit specified dimensions) and realised by specialist craftsmen.[18] Such division, as Read noted, rendered the art 'impersonal' and free from sentimentality: the craftsman was subordinate to the artist, and the artist to the authority of Church doctrine.[19] This relationship continued into the Gothic revival of the nineteenth century, where Morris supervised the production of stained glass in his studio, but turned to the finest contemporary artist he knew – Edward Burne-Jones – for designs. By 1926 (the date of his monograph on stained glass), however, Read lamented the state of the medium for its lack of contact between glass-painters and significant contemporary

[15] Clarke, conversation with the author (20 September 2005). Clarke's enrolment for Graphic Design and almost immediate 'self-demotion' to Stained Glass are well-documented. It seems likely that Clarke's attraction to Graphic Design was guided by Grimshaw's assignments – illustrative work and projects to devise signage – rather than an awareness of the RCA's emphasis on typography. Consequently Richard Guyatt's first assignment – to design a Roman alphabet – seemed depressingly unimaginative. Clarke's use of the word 'demote' itself indicates an awareness of the status of stained glass in the RCA hierarchy.

[16] Lawrence Lee, 'Modern Secular Stained Glass: a decorative technique being developed at the Royal College of Art', *Architectural Design* (May 1951), pp 143–4.

[17] An illustrated panel by Clarke, *Still Life* (1949), won the rare honour of a first year Silver Medal. Robin Darwin, 'The Genesis of the Windows', *Windows for Coventry* (London: The Royal College of Art, 1956), p. 1.

[18] Herbert Read, *English Stained Glass* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926), p. 24; Lawrence Lee, *The Appreciation of Stained Glass* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 6.

artists and for its 'relapse into a servile and lifeless imitation of mediaeval mannerisms'.[20] While this situation would change, particularly post-1945 when painters such as Matisse, Léger, Chagall and Piper would work with expert craftsmen in stained glass, a different approach – and one which Clarke would follow – was also afoot. Christopher Whall (1849–1924), who had begun by designing for major London firms, became dissatisfied with the traditional division of labour in stained glass: he learnt the techniques of cutting, painting and firing glass, as well as the processes of glazing and installation, and set up his own studio.[21] Whall was influential through his teaching, at the Central School from 1896 and RCA from 1901, and through the setting up by his pupil, Mary Lowndes, of a studio to provide facilities for artists to work in the 'Whall' spirit.[22] From Whall a direct line can be traced through Martin Travers (1886–1948, teacher at the RCA) to Travers's pupil and successor, Lee, and thence to Clarke.

Clarke's RCA training ensured that he studied all aspects of the production of a window.[23] His thoughts were further clarified through discussion with Eric Rothwell, vicar of Warton, with whom he remained in contact. From notes by Clarke, Rothwell compiled two essays which he envisaged as forming part of a book on the medium (amplified with illustrations and a 'final chapter dealing with a plea for the use of mosaic in glass').[24] In these, Clarke can be seen as formulating opinions on what constituted acceptable practice in stained glass, from technical considerations to the appropriateness of a window's imagery and its harmony within the church environment. For instance, he considered that a correct use of the medium precluded bubbly or streaky glass (described by Clarke as 'tricky') for decadent effects such as the folds of a cloak. Such glass could be used within a design, but was difficult to incorporate convincingly. Similarly, paint or enamel, modifiers of light, should be used cautiously, both for their physical instability (in the case of enamel) and for the

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[19] Read, *English Stained Glass*, p. 25.
[20] Read, *English Stained Glass*, p. 225.
[21] Tanya Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 90.
[22] Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century*, p. 92.
[23] Evidence of Clarke's studies is provided by essays and watercolour copies of 'historical' stained glass [Clarke archive]. Formative influences would have included the reading of books such as Read's *English Stained Glass* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926) and discussion with other students, in addition to the teaching and technical advice available. In 1951 Clarke was awarded a bursary to study stained glass in France, although it appears from his photograph album and travel diary that he saw little apart from Chartres Cathedral.
[24] Eric Rothwell, letter to Clarke (1 February 1951). This letter, the notes and typescript essays (with annotations by Clarke) remain in Clarke's archive.

temptation to use them to improve a design ('if the design be perfect for its medium then theoretically pure glass would be used & paint unnecessary').[25] These opinions derived from a consideration of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century glass, either dark and lifeless through the overuse of black or brown paint, or reacting against this, using little paint and colours which are 'watery in effect and lacking in richness' to let in as much light as possible (the 'thin school').[26]

'Matting' – the painting of a series of matt washes over glass – can be used to emphasise areas of a design, to alter the character of a colour (suppressing its radiance or the radiance of an adjacent colour) or as a counterpoint across areas of different tones and colours.[27] Clarke used the technique extensively (in all but one of his leaded windows), to impart an often dark, aged effect, through which the colour of the glass glows in the polished areas. This shading is achieved by means more varied than the majority of stained glass artists, ranging from sponge roller, to badger brush, to (in the case of Coventry) specially invented 'dabbing' tools: pads of cotton, up to ten inches long by three and a half inches wide, with a wooden handle nailed to the back. Such tools allowed the artist to cover ground quickly, on a grander scale and with a less fussy effect than a brush; the technique also produced half-tone as well as speckles of black.[28] Reyntiens described Clarke's method of matting as 'less spontaneous, but [producing] an effect of greater integration ... by those artists who are attracted by extremely clear and firm linear design', further noting that 'great delicacy in the use of successive tonal washes can produce an extremely sombre and rich effect'.[29] This aptly describes Clarke's realisation at Coventry of a tonally integrated design through which the rich colours of the glass glow darkly. Reyntiens himself, as shown by his realisation of Piper's design for the baptistery window at Coventry, favoured a technique leaving more to chance, applying only sufficient paint to subdue the glass and give a heightened 'play and glitter' to its surface.

Clarke's preference was to use 'antique' glass, handmade by traditional methods by the Sunderland firm, Hartley Wood & Co. This was supplemented occasionally by cheaper, industrially produced German glass, rather thin (⅛ inch

[25] Clarke, ['Notes on stained glass'] (*ca.* 1952?) [Clarke archive].
[26] Clarke and Rothwell, 'Stained Glass' (1951?) [Clarke archive].
[27] Patrick Reyntiens, *The Technique of Stained Glass* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1967), p. 68.
[28] This technique was also used to paint the final, jointly designed window, in order to provide continuity. Clarke, conversation with the author (19 August 2006). See also Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century*, p. 360. Clarke was filmed using the 'dabbing' technique in *An Act of Faith ...Coventry Cathedral*, broadcast on BBC TV on 22 May 1962.

thick) and disappointing in surface texture, but which included colour shades not available in England. Clarke's use of colour, like his use of paint, is distinctive. His preference is for rich colours which help to balance the contradiction between lead (a dead, opaque medium) and glass (a medium of light), an approach modelled on that of medieval glass makers. Yet his palette of colours, and consequently the effect, is quite different. The preference in medieval glass is for strong, primary colours; glowing blues and reds in combination, or reds and emerald greens with yellow. This tendency is characteristic of Piper's glass designs, as seen in his windows for Oundle Chapel or for Coventry Cathedral's baptistery. In contrast, Clarke favours purples, less brilliant greens, shades of turquoise, rose and occasionally gold. Grimshaw describes this approach to colour as 'discreet obscurity', the avoidance of shock tactics, tracing Clarke's inspiration to the wild, Northern landscape, 'the drama of the elements, or ... a detail closely observed in the bed of a stream'.[30] Again, Grimshaw's analysis appears close to the mark, and it is worth remembering Clarke's fascination with light, from sun-cast shadows to the hardened glitter of crystal, which underpinned his love of glass as a medium. These were the same, natural qualities emphasised by Ruskin, and quoted by Read:

> Nature herself produces all her loveliest colours in some kind of solid or liquid glass or crystal. The rainbow is painted on a shower of melted glass, and the colours of the opal are produced in vitreous flint mixed with water; the green and blue, and gold or amber brown of flowing water is in surface glassy, and in motion 'splendidior vitro'. And the loveliest colours ever granted to human sight – those of morning or evening clouds before or after rain – are produced on minute particles of finely-divided water, or perhaps sometimes ice.[31]

Clarke's belief, like Whall's, is that the design of a window forms no more than an indication of the finished article, and that if the artist cannot realise it himself he should supervise, or at the very least provide a sketch using techniques which can easily be copied:

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[29] Reyntiens, *The Technique of Stained Glass*, p. 65.
[30] Ronald Grimshaw, 'Geoffrey Clarke', *The Painter & Sculptor*, Vol. 2 No. 2 (Summer 1959), p. 23.
[31] John Ruskin, *Lectures on Art*, § 173, quoted in Read, *English Stained Glass*, p. 12.

> To expect a craftsman to trace meticulously a stroke which the artist has created in one sweep whilst his concentration & tention [*sic*] were vitally alive is obviously going to fail & result in deadness. (The mediaevals traced but then technique & design etc made more allowance[.)][32]

Clarke's leaded windows for churches – of which he produced ten between 1951 and 1969 – demonstrate the freedom with which he responded to the potential of the medium. The vitality of these windows derives from a number of factors: designs which fill the windows, across mullions or tracery; the use of leading (and size and shape of glass) to reinforce the design; the use of colour; and of paint. A good example of these issues is the 'Trinity' window for All Saints', Stretford (1957; LG019). The window itself is rectangular, filling the wall behind the altar, and Clarke's design (a recumbent figure of eight) spreads across its entirety, defeating the evenly spaced vertical aluminium mullions by its horizontality and the irregularity of its outline. The design is reinforced by the leading and shapes and sizes of glass used: splinters radiating from the cross and dove within the figure of eight, and parallel above and below the figure of eight. The effect is of stasis (the outer area) and interruption (the central motif), from which derives the vitality of the design.[33] (This in turn reinforces the symbolic message, of the power of the Holy Trinity.) The glass used is turquoise, pale blue and amethyst, and again 'matting' is used to modify light, both softening the glare of the glass and emphasising the symbolic shaft of light at the design's centre.

Glass Mosaic

From his earliest work Clarke has been concerned to relieve the 'uninteresting surface' of traditional leaded glass. His first experiments were in plaster mosaic, a medium in common use by RCA students from 1949 onwards, but which took several years to become widely adopted in England.[34] In this technique, the design is

[32] Clarke, ['Notes on stained glass'] (*ca.* 1952?) [Clarke archive].
[33] In the context of the windows for Coventry Cathedral, a collaborative project, Clarke was criticised for using widely varying sizes of glass, which contrasted with Keith New's and Lawrence Lee's approach.
[34] In 1957 G. S. Reynolds referred to a similar method being developed by Whitefriars Studios, whereby thick coloured glass was embedded in cement: a window using this technique had recently

drawn on a plate of backing glass, then built up with plaster, with layers of glass embedded as the plaster is built up, so that the surface texture forms a 'relief sculpture';[35] the plaster is then painted a dark grey or black to integrate with the design. The effect of this process, as described by M. H. Middleton, was to produce 'heavy encrustations', with the vital turbulence of early glass, but smouldering rather than bursting into flame': it was both admired and criticised by writers in the 1950s.[36] A handful of these early mosaics in the artist's collection demonstrate both the technique and its startlingly modernistic effect. The heightened palette of *Priest* (1949; LG007), in particular, suggests the influence of Rouault and contemporary French glass.

Like Lee, Clarke was interested in new uses of glass in buildings. An early *dalle de verre* study (glass and plaster, 1949) was intended as a maquette for a large-scale work in concrete and glass, which, unlike traditional stained glass, Clarke felt would combine 'sympathetically with modern architecture'.[37] Lee described such work in 1951 as 'a hint of the future': '[Clarke's] shape and content are unusual; the rhythmic pattern of smallish pieces of deeply coloured, stained and enamelled glass (mostly in blues) must be unique in modern decorative art.' [38] Six years later, an article in *House & Garden* featured a number of small, experimental glass mosaic panels – including Clarke's – 'incorporated in the fabric of the house'.[39] Although glass mosaic bound by plaster was by its nature fragile and not suited to large-scale projects, Clarke never attempted the process using concrete. In the late 1980s a commission for panels at the Majlis, Abu Dhabi (LG034), prompted experimentation with mosaic constructed from three-inch thick slab glass and silicon resin.[40] The brightly coloured geometric designs, unlike anything else in Clarke's *oeuvre*, were suggested by books of Islamic art supplied by the architect.

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been installed at the John Knox Church, Stepney. G. S. Reynolds, 'Stained Glass Windows. Trends in Design and Modern Application', *Building Materials* (January 1957), p. 4. A later development, in the early 1960s by Clark & Eaton Glass, was 'Crystalcrete' – 'pre-moulded glass segments set in specially prepared and reinforced concrete panels ... made in scores of colours and to practically any shape'. Full-page colour advertisement in *Architectural Review* (October 1963).

[35] Clarke, 'Transparent Glass Mosaic' (*ca.* 1957) [Clarke archive], possibly written in connection with the article 'Flashing a comeback', *House & Garden* (May 1957), p. 73.

[36] M. H. Middleton, 'Art', *The Spectator* (18 April 1952).

[37] Clarke, 'Transparent Glass Mosaic' (*ca.* 1957).

[38] Lee, 'Modern Secular Stained Glass', p. 144.

[39] Anon., 'Flashing a comeback', *House & Garden* (May 1957), p. 73.

[40] Waterproofing was essential as the architect's intention was for water to run down the outside of the panels. Eight of the nine panels were made in Italy; the remainder, with an image of an falcon, was

'Sculptural' Glass

Following mosaic, the second, more unusual, approach adopted by Clarke to produce surface texture was to combine glass with metal. Early examples took the form of iron reliefs with coloured glass fixed behind, ranging in scale from small panels to the commission for the Festival of Britain's 'Transport Pavilion': *Icarus* (1951; LS031). Later, Clarke produced his first three-dimensional work in metal and glass. The innovative *Round Window* (1956; LG018), commissioned by architect Frankland Dark for his newly converted London flat, consisted of concentric, protruding circles in lead set with irregular pieces of coloured glass: it attracted considerable critical interest and appeared as a colour cover illustration for *Vogue* (September 1957).

With Clarke's mastering of open-casting in his own foundry followed sturdier examples in glass and aluminium (*Study*, 1960; LG024), but with the adoption of the full-mould casting process in the early 1960s (discussed below) he was finally able to produce fully 'sculptural' windows. Clarke was inspired to use full-mould casting by a commission for twelve hexagonal windows for Crownhill Church, Plymouth (1961; LG025): the small scale of the windows – less than two-foot across – meant that each could be cast in one piece, and the third dimension could be used to underline the symbolism of the design. For example, a window depicting Christ's saying, 'I am the door' (LG025e), features two angled doors through which light can be seen if the viewer stands centrally in front of the altar (from the sides the light is obscured).[41] Clarke further exploits the possibilities of multiple viewpoints in the slatted 'I am the truth' (LG025g), which presents an irregularly shaped white light as the church is entered; from the west this becomes less irregular and resembles a chalice, but from the east side of the altar it becomes a perfect cross. A further benefit of Clarke's new approach was that, whereas traditional stained glass has no impact from the reverse, Crownhill's windows are of almost equal sculptural interest when seen from the outside. Clarke's largest sculptural window design was for the lantern at Liverpool's

made at Stowe Hill, where the glass used had to be smashed with a hammer. Clarke, conversation with the author (19 August 2006).

[41] Had the window been at eye level, Clarke's intention was to hinge these doors so that they would create a shaft of light, if, as he commented, 'someone had been bothered to open them'. Clarke, in *Crownhill Parish Church: The Church of the Ascension of Our Lord: A short history of the building and embellishments* (n.d.). The idea of viewer interaction was repeated in the window for Manchester Art College (1969), where aluminium slats could be rotated for altered effect.

Roman Catholic Cathedral, where he envisaged a deep internal and external aluminium relief of 'cumulative' design, set with stained glass and crystals, in pale satin finish to enhance the interplayed reflection of coloured light. By day the light would constantly alter as the observer moved; by night the aluminium would provide interest as a relief sculpture.[42]

Clarke continued to experiment with the medium of glass until the late 1960s, when he received a potential commission for windows in the hall of Christchurch College, Oxford. Clarke proposed a new technique, to be researched and produced by his students at the RCA:

> The glass can be furnace softened into relief form to a design naturally sympathetic with the surroundings or I should say architecturally orientated design. Various degrees of obscurity can be selectively obtained according to the techniques used during melting. Tinting can be employed by choice of glass & that used to form double glazing.[43]

Clarke's experiments in this direction, as demonstrated by documentary photographs, were applied to clear plastics, which were softened using heated air and tinted with cigarette smoke. A sample panel using glass was installed at Christchurch but not approved. The commission was awarded several years later to Reyntiens, who adopted an approach close to pastiche: leaded glass incorporating vignettes of notable college alumni.

Printmaking

The quantity of Clarke's printed graphic work allows it to be studied both as a reflection of his developing artistic style and an exploration of the technical possibilities of the medium. To date, Clarke has produced 224 prints (excluding monotypes). The majority are etchings, of which 78 were created in his most

[42] Clarke, proposal for the Lantern, Liverpool Catholic Cathedral (13–14 November 1961) [Clarke archive]. Architect Frederick Gibberd awarded the commission to John Piper, whose design was executed by Patrick Reyntiens using *dalle de verre* in glass and concrete.
[43] Clarke, notes for commission for Christchurch College, Oxford (1969–70) [Clarke archive]. From 1968 to 1973 Clarke was Head of Light Transmission and Projection (formerly Stained Glass) at the RCA.

productive year, 1950. The remainder includes 26 lithographs[44] and, most recently, a screenprint from a computer generated graphic (*Samurai*, 2003; LP224).

Etching

Clarke's earliest etchings, made in 1949 in his London flat with his father's small printing press, are tiny, linear images of figures and animals, with depth suggested by hatching. At this date, neither the images nor the use of the medium is distinctive. A change occurs in 1950, where Clarke begins to explore an inner world, mirroring most closely that of Klee (an acknowledged early influence). Clarke owned two books on Klee, one of which – a translation of Klee's *On Modern Art* – proposed a powerful credo of the artist's need to look beneath the surface of nature 'to the source of creation'.[45] Clarke's etchings reveal a parallel microcosm in which man is indissolubly a part of his natural world. Thus, in *Men in the Mountains* (LP082), man is constructed from the same lines – ruled, in homage to Klee – as the trees, which, fallen, form further, recumbent figures. The physical presence of these prints reinforces the impression of a universe in miniature. Small plates are crowded with detail; delicately burnished areas imply mountain ranges, halos or (in *Man and Nature*; LP067) amoebic, numinous shrouds; thin paper responds to the sensitive inking of the plates. Even the plates themselves, steel instead of zinc or copper, contribute: tiny surface burrs – unless polished away – lend a vital, grainy texture to the images.[46]

Also in 1950, inspired by seeing reproductions of Picasso's Buffon prints and guided by a manual belonging to his father, Clarke began to explore the rare technique of sugar-lift.[47] He used rolled steel plates instead of copper, producing surface texture without the need of an aquatint ground, and painted with a heavy sugar-lift line. The result was a rich black image (foreshadowing the effect that

[44] Clarke's lithographs will not be discussed, since they were produced, by a printer, from monotypes created by the artist. Clarke has never shown any interest in the technical process of lithography.
[45] Paul Klee, *On Modern Art*, translated by Paul Findlay with an introduction by Herbert Read (London: Faber, 1948), p. 51.
[46] See Judith LeGrove, 'Man and Nature', catalogue essay (London: Fine Art Society, 2006).
[47] Picasso had been introduced to the technique by Parisian printer, Roger Lacourière. Buckland-Wright noted that 'it was only on the publication of Picasso's plates for Buffon's *Natural History* [in 1942] that the sugar-lift aquatint was generally brought to the attention of artists'. John Buckland-Wright, *Etching and Engraving: Techniques and the Modern Trend* (London: Studio Publications, 1953), p. 130.

would be achieved with iron) on a textured, grainy background. John Buckland-Wright, who taught printmaking at the RCA, cited Clarke's discovery as proof that 'etching is not a matter of expensive materials and meticulous scientific procedure, but a normal process, that once understood, can be carried out with almost any materials that come to hand'.[48] However, Clarke did not restrict himself to one technique within a print. Analysis reveals a combination of sugar-lift, etching, drypoint, burnishing, as well as an exploration of the different crackly lines which could be produced by scratching through 'Brunswick black' (stopping-out varnish): considerable variety could be produced simply by contrasting a painted sugar-lift line with one incised or scratched. Clarke's plates are often deeply bitten, producing a considerable degree of surface texture. Extending this, he also produced a number of embossings in 1950: deep, quasi-sculptural relief etchings printed blind.

In 1956 Clarke was commissioned to produce aquatints on a much larger scale by Robert Erskine, whose St George's Gallery (established 1955) specialised in modern prints. Erskine's support for etching, rare in a field dominated since the war by lithography, resulted in a number of unusually large prints on bold subjects: antidotes to the intense detail of the 1920s–30s' etching revival. Clarke used the opportunity to explore a much freer graphic idiom using painted sugar-lift line. In the artist's archive, images of women, warriors and landscapes painted in dripping black paint on rolls of outsize paper document the genesis of these prints. (It is tempting, given the coincidence of dates, to link this new sense of liberation in Clarke's images with the Tate's first sizeable showing of Abstract Expressionism, 'Modern Art in the United States', in January 1956, which Clarke is known to have admired.)[49] Clarke etched the outsize steel plates in his studio and drove them to Paris to be proofed and printed in August 1956 by Jean Frélaut at the Atelier Lacourière.[50] A comparably large colour print, *Study for Sculpture [I]* (1956; LP166), was produced using *poupée* and editioned at the RCA by Richard Fozard. The use of 'dabbing tools' rather than separate colour registration relates to Clarke's painting of stained glass, and it is clear that work in one medium fed the other.[51]

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[48] Buckland-Wright, *Etching and Engraving*, p. 132.
[49] Clarke, conversation with the author (July 2006).
[50] See particularly *Warrior I* (LP169). Atelier Lacourière was Picasso's printer from the 1940s to '50s; Clarke met Miró there briefly in August 1956. Clarke, conversation with the author (19 September 2005). It was during this visit to France that Clarke saw Le Corbusier's chapel at Ronchamp.
[51] Nevile Wallis described how Clarke's 'abstract colour prints gleam like stained glass' (*Observer*, 15 July 1956), and an anonymous reviewer noted that 'Study for Sculpture, with its slanting panes of

Clarke's printmaking in the 1950s brought him, like Paolozzi, into contact with the applied arts – textiles, wallpaper and furniture. In 1951 Clarke produced a large black and white etching, *Adoration of Nature* (LP101), specifically to form a laminated decorative panel for a sideboard by Robin Day.[52] Clarke also designed wallpaper using lithography for Hugh Casson's interior design exhibition 'Flat '56', in association with Sanderson, as well as textured samples using etching. Two designs were reproduced as textiles by Edinburgh Weavers (*ca.* 1955); one incorporating two etchings (*Head*, LP042, and *Man*, LP064); another using the etching titled *Solitary* (LP097).[53] The commissioning of artists such as Clarke, Kenneth Rowntree, Keith Vaughan and Ben Nicholson by the Edinburgh Weavers was prompted by the influential ICA 'Painting in Textiles' exhibition in 1953, in which Clarke participated. However, Clarke later regretted his decision (through lack of time) to reuse existing etchings and not to produce designs specifically inspired by the medium.[54]

Monotype

Clarke's prints during the early 1950s were the equivalent of drawings or sketches, developing ideas but creating finished artworks at the same time.[55] Increasingly, however, Clarke favoured a quicker and more spontaneous printing technique – monotype.[56] The popularity of the monotype in the 1940s stemmed from its speed and ease of production, requiring no specialist equipment: awareness of its techniques and potential were spread in London by the arrival in 1943 of Jankel Adler, who had learnt from Klee. Two main types of monotype exist. In the first (most widely used), an image is painted on a plate in ink and a unique print made either by hand pressure on the paper or by using a press. In the second (used by

translucent blues and greens about a dark knot of spearheads, seems to echo a passage from one of his windows for Coventry Cathedral' (*Lady*, 2 August 1956).

[52] Exhibited at the Milan Triennale, Day's interior setting won a gold medal.

[53] The former was titled 'Dolmen', screen-printed on cotton, the latter 'The Grape', screen-printed on linen. Geoffrey Rayner, Richard Chamberlain, Annamarie Stapleton, *Artists' Textiles in Britain 1945–1970* (Woodbridge: The Collectors' Club, 2003), pp 48–9.

[54] Clarke, conversation with the author (July 2003).

[55] 'The basic principles of iron sculpture were worked out two dimensionally in the form of aquatints. I still find more satisfaction when working out a new sculpture to make the preliminary drawings things in themselves'. Clarke, ['Notes'], (*ca.* 1950–51), [Clarke archive].

[56] 'A monotype method ... gives me a fairly close feeling of the final medium, without completely satisfying the idea & thus killing it'. Clarke, ['Notes'], (*ca.* 1950–51), [Clarke archive].

Klee), a plate is completely inked, paper laid and drawn upon, picking up a slightly fuzzy line from the ink. Clarke used both techniques, the first to experiment with ideas suitable for iron sculpture, and the second principally for aluminium sculpture. For instance, in the early 1950s he developed a process of painting a design in oily ink, soaking up most of the ink with dry paper, then printing the rest, resulting in an uncanny, almost photographic representation of the texture of iron. These '3-D' monotypes, as Clarke describes them, were particularly effective in sketches for the Unknown Political Prisoner, where heads or figures appear imprisoned inside cages. However, the transfer technique, also known as 'offset drawing', was the one used most by Clarke, to produce as many as 2,000 prints between 1950 and 2006. Where Clarke's transfer prints differ from others is in his use of thin tissue paper: this allows the image (which is never drawn as a guide beforehand) to be seen evolving as it shows through from the inked side. The lightness of the paper minimises the picking up of extra ink from the plate and maximises the delicacy of the effects it is possible to achieve, whether a fine line produced by a sharpened point or soft shading by the pressure of a finger. Monotypes from the 1960s onwards, connected with the aluminium works, exploit these shading possibilities to emphasise volume.

Sculpture

In 1948 the RCA Sculpture Department was dominated by Frank Dobson (Professor of Sculpture, 1946–53) and John Skeaping (teacher from 1948, Professor, 1953–9). As carvers, both had been associated with the 'truth to materials' movement. Dobson, like Gaudier-Brzeska and Epstein, insisted that sculptors should have direct contact with their materials; Skeaping took particular delight in carving rare or exotic stone or wood and allowing the materials to influence his work.[57] By the late 1940s, however, the tide was turning against the severity of the direct carvers[58] and Clement

[57] Dobson in conversation with Kenneth Hare, *London's Latin Quarter* (London: John Lane, 1926), reprinted in *Carving Mountains: modern stone sculpture in England 1907–37*, Kettle's Yard exhibition catalogue (1998), p. 14; John Skeaping, 'Contemporary English Sculptors', *The Architectural Association Journal*, Vol. XLV No. 516 (February 1930), p. 302, in *Carving Mountains*, p. 18. Tanya Harrod noted a parallel, obsessive 'truth to materials' movement among craftsmen during the interwar years. Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century*, p. 145.

[58] Henry Moore noted, 'When I began to make sculptures thirty years ago, it was very necessary to fight for the doctrine of truth to material ... I still think it is important, but it should not be a criterion of the value of a work.' *Sculpture and Drawings by Henry Moore*, Tate Gallery exhibition catalogue (1951), in Alan Wilkinson (ed.), *Henry Moore: Writings and Conversations* (London: Lund Humphries, 2002), p. 202.

Greenberg identified the emergence of a new sculpture, which he described provocatively in terms of Boccioni's *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture*.[59] Greenberg's 'new sculpture' abandoned traditional stone and bronze in favour of materials 'more flexible under such modern tools as the oxyacetylene torch: steel, iron, alloys, glass, plastics [with] no regard for the unity of its physical medium and ... any number of different materials in the same work'.[60] Crucially, too, Greenberg described the creator of this work as a 'sculptor-constructor', and located its origin in the bas-reliefs of Picasso.

Clarke used to walk through the Sculpture Department on his way to Stained Glass, and attended (in the background) several project proposal meetings given by Dobson to his students.[61] The type of work being encouraged, modelled clay or plaster or carved 'hunks of stone', proved of no interest. When, following a suggestion by Darwin, Clarke turned to iron, he was literally on his own: there was no teacher in the Sculpture Department either competent or disposed to instruct him. The RCA therefore paid for Clarke to attend a four-week British Oxygen Company welding course at Cricklewood in the summer of 1950.[62] During evenings in 1950 Clarke began to use the new forge and anvil, intended for making furniture, in the RCA's Wood, Metal and Plastics Department. The equipment was later relocated to an old Ministry of Works hut behind Imperial College, but Clarke remained its sole user.

Iron

In the early twentieth century iron was invested with a paradoxically avant-garde image, principally through its association with industry. The result was the material's adoption – in music as well as in sculpture – as a symbol of the progressive, post-war era. Inspired by the Futurists and Constructivists, composers increasingly sought to reflect the ethos of the machine age in their music, particularly in Paris, and especially through a new, modernistic use of percussion. An expatriate American in Paris, George Antheil, composed his sensational *Ballet mécanique* (1926) for the

[59] Umberto Boccioni, *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture* (1912), reprinted in Umbro Apollonio (ed.), *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1973).
[60] Clement Greenberg, 'The New Sculpture' (1949), in Greenberg, ed. O'Brian, *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, Vol. 2, 1945–49 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 317.
[61] Clarke, 'John Roberts file', p. 5 [Clarke archive].

percussive forces of eight pianos, eight xylophones, pianola, two electric doorbells and aeroplane propeller. The following year, Sergei Prokofiev's *Le pas d'acier* (*The Steel Step*) was premièred in Paris by Diaghilev's ballet company. Also in 1927, the Russian composer Aleksandr Mosolov finished his ballet, *Steel*. The work is now lost, but one of the surviving episodes, 'The Foundry', aroused controversy through its use of a metal sheet to simulate the sound of clashing iron and steel.[63] English literature paralleled this fascination with the metal. A cursory trawl through novels published in the 1920s reveals a glut of titles including 'iron' or 'steel': to mention a few, *The Iron Cage*, *The Iron Mask*, *The Steel Grubs*, and not least, *The Iron Man and the Tin Woman, and other Futurities*.[64]

The choice of iron – or steel – as a medium for sculpture brought with it a multiplicity of associations. In the mid-eighteenth century, when techniques of mass production were developed, iron played a vital role in the Industrial Revolution as a construction material for bridges and railways. Over a century later steel became an important building material (often used to reinforce concrete) and was used in the manufacture of cars, tools and furniture. For its association with arms and warfare, iron was invested with notions of brutality.[65] Yet, in contrast, wrought iron also evoked 'craft': the making of decorative or ornamental works – gates, screens, items of domestic furniture such as pokers or hatstands. At the beginning of the twentieth century, therefore, iron and steel were associated either with heavy industrial processes or with homely, functional items. In contrast, bronze and precious metals had been sculpted into fine art for many centuries, giving these materials a pedigree, a respectability. It was in part these traditional resonances that sculptors sought to escape when they chose to work in iron.

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[62] This welding course was also attended by Lynn Chadwick.

[63] Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: a concise history from Debussy to Boulez* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), pp 104–8.

[64] Leonard Cooper, *The Iron Cage* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1928); J. G. Sarasin, *The Iron Mask* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1928); Ernest Elmore, *The Steel Grubs* (London: Selwyn & Blount, 1929); Stephen Butler Leacock, *The Iron Man and the Tin Woman, and other Futurities* (London: John Lane, 1929).

[65] For example, González wrote: 'The age of iron began many centuries ago by producing very beautiful objects, unfortunately for a large part, arms. ... It is time this metal ceased to be a murderer and the simple instrument of a super-mechanical science. Today the door is wide open for this material to be, at last, forged and hammered by the peaceful hands of an artist.' Julio González (undated). First published in Andrew Carnduff Ritchie: *Sculpture of the Twentieth Century* (MOMA exhibition catalogue, 1952: p. 30), quoted in *Picasso and the Age of Iron*, p. 65. David Smith echoed, 'Possibly steel is so beautiful because of all the movement associated with it, its strength and functions ... Yet it is also brutal: the rapist, the murderer and death-dealing giants are also its

The interest in iron as a sculptural medium occurred later in Britain than in Paris, Russia or the United States. In 1953, Lawrence Alloway wrote a landmark text, 'Britain's new Iron Age', which attempted to establish reasons for the post-war choice of this medium, discussing the work of Adams, Armitage, Butler, Chadwick, Clarke, Sarah Jackson, Meadows, Paolozzi, Rosemary Young and Turnbull.[66] These sculptors were described as independent of the preceding generation, considering – unlike Moore and Hepworth – 'that carving is suitable for a leisured culture, but is inadequate to modern needs ... plaster, iron and wax are the mediums in which the tension and fugitiveness of the twentieth century can be appropriately expressed'.[67] In fact, Clarke's, Butler's and Chadwick's were the only iron sculptures discussed, and Alloway acknowledged that the most important characteristic of this new sculpture was actually its *linearity*, its taking 'possession of space with the gestures made possible by light and sinewy materials'; bronze could equally be used, but stretched into 'slender configurations'. Furthermore, not even all work by these sculptors was linear. Butler's and Clarke's sculpture was, but Adams', Turnbull's, Paolozzi's and Armitage's – though 'still nervous and tense' – was not. Alloway's 'new British Iron Age', then, constituted not so much a revolution in materials as a new formal and emotional language (Read's 'geometry of fear'),[68] of which iron was a provocative outward symbol.

The technical model for the majority of these new sculptors in iron was undoubtedly skilled Catalan metalworker-turned-sculptor Julio González, who collaborated with Picasso in the creation of iron sculpture in Paris in the 1920s–30s.[69] For those outside Paris, González's work became known principally through the medium of reproductions in *Cahiers d'art* between 1934 and 1952, while Picasso's work in iron was accessible through photographs in Kahnweiler's book, *The*

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offspring.' From Elaine de Kooning, 'David Smith Makes a Sculpture', *Art News*, L (September 1951), p. 40.

[66] Lawrence Alloway, 'Britain's new Iron Age', *Art News*, (Summer 1953), pp 18–20, 68–70. A second article discussed the use of iron in America (Alloway, 'U.S. Modern: Sculpture', *Art News & Review*, Vol. VIII No. 1 (4 February 1956), p. 3).

[67] Alloway, 'Britain's new Iron Age', pp 19–20. This quotation is cited as originating in a statement by Reg Butler in a broadcast discussion between Butler and Hepworth on the BBC Third Programme.

[68] Herbert Read, 'New Aspects of British Sculpture', exhibition catalogue for The British Pavilion at the XXVI Biennale, Venice (1952).

[69] González's father had owned a business specialising in decorative metalwork, such as flower stands and screens, one of numerous forges in Barcelona at the end of the nineteenth century. Julio González mastered oxyacetylene welding towards the end of the First World War and thereafter assisted both Gargallo and Picasso in the construction of iron sculpture. See *Picasso and the Age of Iron*,

Sculptures of Picasso.[70] A formal rather than material influence was presented by another sculptor of the Parisian avant-garde, Giacometti. Both Turnbull and Paolozzi visited Paris in 1947, Paolozzi staying until 1949, while the strengthening links between England and France were emphasised in two ICA exhibitions, 'London–Paris. New Trends in Painting and Sculpture' (1950) and 'Young Sculptors' (1952). Referring to the latter exhibition, James Hyman noted a 'British assimilation of French sources ... the surrealism of Giacometti, the welding of González and the construction of Picasso'.[71]

When Clarke began to work in iron he was apparently unaware of work in that medium by González, David Smith or Butler.[72] He is also unlikely to have encountered Chadwick's work in iron prior to attending the same welding course in 1950. Clarke's attraction to the medium appeared to be threefold. First, he considered, like Butler, that iron was appropriate for the modern age.

> Is stone or wood right in our present age? Surely metal construction would be more honest ... our minds, compared with our forebears are like machines – & if we turn towards the organic we are escaping & avoiding the issue.[73]

Secondly, the technique of working with iron, whereby a form is built up – as opposed to pared away, as in carving – suited Clarke: he saw the former as an essentially positive process and the latter as negative.[74] Thirdly, the medium (like stained glass) was ideal for the linear forms that Clarke felt had yet to be exploited.

Guggenheim exhibition catalogue (1993) and Josephine Withers, *Julio Gonzalez: Sculpture in Iron* (New York: New York University Press, 1978).

[70] Anatole Jakovski, 'Julio Gonzalez', *Cahiers d'art*, Vol. 9 (1934), pp 207–9; [illustrations], *Cahiers d'art*, Vol. 11 (1936), pp 201–2; Jean Cassou, 'Julio Gonzalez', *Cahiers d'art*, Vol. 22 (1947), pp 135–41; P.-G. Brugière, 'Julio Gonzalez: Les étapes de l'oeuvre', *Cahiers d'art*, Vol. 27 (1952), pp 19–31. Daniel Henry Kahnweiler, *The Sculptures of Picasso*; with photographs by Brassaï (London: Rodney Phillips & Co., 1949).

[71] James Hyman, 'Henry Moore and the Geometry of Fear', essay in exhibition catalogue of the same title (London: James Hyman Fine Art, 2003), p. 7.

[72] Clarke, conversation with the author (January 2004). That Clarke had seen work by neither Butler nor González is supported by a comment in a near-contemporary source, Alloway's article 'Britain's new Iron Age' (1953), p. 69. According to Charles Harrison, Smith's work was virtually unknown in England until at least 1959, and there was no substantial showing of his work in London until 1966. Charles Harrison, 'Sculpture's Recent Past', in Terry A. Neff (ed.), *A Quiet Revolution: British Sculpture Since 1965* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1987), p. 12.

[73] Clarke, ['Notes'], (*ca.* 1950–51), [Clarke archive].

[74] 'The iron grows[,] gathers momentum, as does the growth of nature, the stone decays'. Clarke, ['Notes'], (*ca.* 1950–51), unpaginated [Clarke archive].

> As much of my work is based on the principle of growth[,] I use a line with purpose & direction ... to form a shape ... often which cannot be cut from stone. ... Iron sculpture is the perfection of linear expression – as stone sculpture is the perfection of fruitfulness. ... stone carving, sculpture in the accepted sense of the word has been extensively exploited, the solid drawing carried further & put on a monumental basis. The essentially linear form of expression, though used to perfection by many artists by means of pen brush & needle, has been comparatively ignored in the more satisfying art.[75]

The nature of the medium itself encouraged an exploration of new forms. Iron, noted for its strength, is not easily worked. Sheets of iron can be cold-hammered to create small-scale, brittle works – a technique known as *repoussé* – or heated until they become plastic, and hammered so that they bend, stretch or thicken. Rods or bars of iron can be heated, held by tongs and twisted. For larger pieces, elements can be joined by hammering (or forging) together under heat, producing a strong, fused, join, but requiring a large area of contact. With the oxyacetylene torch, burning oxygen and acetylene at high temperatures, iron can be fused by heat alone – creating a strong joint with a small contact area and no need for hammering.[76] Alternatively, elements can be brazed by introducing a molten metal alloy along a seam: this 'glueing' process is capable of attaching elements with minimal contact area, but gives a less sturdy result.[77] The physical force required for forging militates against the creation of large-scale works, and, more significantly, makes it impractical to attempt rounded sculptural forms. Iron sculpture therefore falls into two main categories: Cubist or Constructivist structures welded from sheet metal, or, often smaller linear forms forged from rods of iron. Picasso's iron sculpture was a primary and liberating influence, particularly for the forged metalworkers from Barcelona.

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[75] Clarke, ['Notes'], (*ca.* 1950–51), [Clarke archive].

[76] Oxyacetylene welding was developed by 1916 and used widely during the First World War. Electro-welding, or arc welding, was discovered in the late nineteenth century, but not developed until the Second World War, when it was needed for rapid construction work.

[77] Another application for brazing is to add a coating of metal (usually brass) to a structure. Clarke brazed his iron *Stations of the Cross* to give them a 'superior finish'. Clarke, conversation with the author (10 August 2004).

Through Kahnweiler's superbly illustrated book on his sculpture, published in 1949, Picasso also inspired a new generation of British sculptors, among them Clarke.[78]

Clarke used iron chiefly in two ways: for works built largely from iron rods, and for works constructed from thin sheets of iron welded together. The two approaches indicate a chronological divide. Works produced predominantly using iron bars date from 1950 to 1953; those using sheet metal from 1954 to 1956.

Clarke's use of the iron rod as a unit of construction relates closely both to Butler's technique and to the early works of Chadwick. Butler was the earliest of the three to start making iron sculpture, having trained as a blacksmith and agricultural engineer in Sussex during the Second World War, when oxyacetylene welding was just being introduced:[79] he was definitely working with iron by 1948, and his early work was exhibited at the Hanover Gallery in 1949.[80] Robert Melville's article on Butler in 1950 recognised González as a model, but played one artist off against the other. González was criticised for a tentative forging technique using short elements 'curved and angled on the anvil without modifying the section' – leading to 'lapses in the vitality of his figures'. In contrast, Butler treated the iron bar like modelling clay, refashioning every inch of his raw material under the hammer to give his forms 'a tautness and vibrancy'.[81] However, Butler's dependence on the iron bar as a structural unit definitely limited the forms it was possible to create and, in particular, to support. For example, *Woman* (1949) balances precariously on two legs, presumably bolted to its plinth; while *Head* (1948–9) and *The Birdcage* (1951) both rely upon a tripod base construction.

In Clarke's early sculpture the iron rod is frequently used in upright clusters to represent 'Man'. For example, *Complexities of Man* (1950; LS003) consists of a slender forged iron figure surrounded by rods, each ending in a tiny iron ball; the head being a larger iron ball closely surrounded by a halo. Clarke's usual solution to the problem of stability was, as shown in the etchings, to place his figures on a

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[78] Kahnweiler, *The Sculptures of Picasso*. Clarke recalled the impact of this book, which remains a treasured possession, in an interview with Robert Burstow (4 November 1992).
[79] Claude Culpin, *Farm Machinery*, 2nd ed. (London: Crosby Lockwood & Son, 1944), quoted in John Glaves-Smith, 'Sculpture in the 1940s and 1950s', *British Sculpture in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Sandy Nairne and Nicholas Serota, Whitechapel Art Gallery exhibition catalogue (1981), p. 126. Robert Melville emphasised the continuing tradition of the blacksmith's craft in his description of Butler's sculpture. Melville, 'Personages in Iron', *The Architectural Review* (September 1950), p. 147.
[80] *Paintings by Justin O'Brien, Sculptures in iron by Reg Butler, and Monotypes by Massimo Campigli*, Exhibition Catalogue (London: Hanover Gallery, 1949).
[81] Melville, 'Personages in Iron', p. 147.

supporting platform, or 'table'. (*Complexities of Man* uses a table with stabilisers in order to attach it to the side of a stone.) It could be argued that this device is as limiting as Butler's tripod construction, although in Clarke's work the table has an additional symbolic function – to represent the earth. Other early works, such as several 'Heads' (1951) and *Man* and *Woman* (both 1953; LS066, LS078) depend structurally on a skeletal core: this takes either the form of a vertical spine, to which ribs may be fixed, or a crescent, to which linear facial features are attached. *Man* and *Woman* also constitute the closest equivalents to the welded iron ribcages of Chadwick's *Inner Eye* series (1952–3).

The second period of Clarke's work in iron, 1954–6, is characterised by more 'boxy' forms constructed from thin sheets of metal. Stylistically, these works are more diverse than the earlier iron sculpture, and the influence of Picasso is clear, particularly in the 'Heads', 'Birds' and collaged reliefs of 'Fish'.[82] The construction technique used in these later iron works is illustrated by *Man* (1954; LS091), formed from extremely thin sheets of iron, 'tack-welded'. The trunk consists of a hollow cone on top of an inverted tripod of iron rods. At the top of this structure, curved, pointed sheet iron forms the head. Suggesting an architectural analogy, the body is shielded on two adjacent sides by walls cut from a section of wheelbarrow, and there is a third section of iron at mid-height. The base of the work is a further rectangular sheet of iron, less than a millimetre thick and so delicate around the edges that it almost appears to flake at the touch. This use of improbably thin sheets of metal can be seen at its most extreme in the corroded collages of fish, of which Clarke made perhaps as many as ten.

An interest in surface texture aligns Clarke's iron sculpture with the distressed patina of the Venice Biennale sculpture (Read's 'patina of pathos') and its Parisian counterparts (Giacometti, Germaine Richier). Clarke preferred to use second-hand metal for its more interesting texture. The reliefs *Man, Woman and Child* (LS037) and *Icarus* (LS031) were cut from the bottom of an Esso storage tank, discarded at Purfleet. Later small iron reliefs were constructed from corroded metal found in scrapyards. When Clarke was forced to use new iron, as for instance for the sculptures constructed from rods, he built troughs from blocked-off guttering, filled

[82] At least one of the 'Heads' relates closely to a sculpture by Picasso illustrated in Kahnweiler's book.

these with nitric acid (with added chemical pellets to make the acid boil), and immersed the rods until a fiercely bitten, irregular finish was achieved.[83]

Clarke was undoubtedly sensitive to the symbolic associations of iron as a medium. He has since written of steel as 'hard & resistant, more like the geometry of a material',[84] and of its timely inevitability: 'reflecting skeletal forms of [the] aftermath of war whilst reconstructing the thorn, symbol of man's inhumanity to man'.[85] Such expressive potential is demonstrated by a perhaps atypical early work, *Flower* (1951; LS023). A hammered dish forms the flower head, beneath which is an encrustation of tiny scraps fused by the heat of the torch; a slender stem is created by stretching a heated piece of metal, with the thicker section near its base bulked out by fused and partially melted scraps. The texture is left rough, with no attempt to mask joints or the fluid forms of the molten metal, and the surface is pitted – emphasising the effect of fragility. Finally, the piece has been darkened by rubbing with linseed oil and blackening with soot.

Aluminium

As a result of improved extraction processes, world production of aluminium soared from the late 1930s; its price plummeted, and accordingly, the metal began to be exploited increasingly in fields from industry, to art, to the home. Aluminium's lightness and strength made it ideal for aircraft, road and railway vehicles, and also for architecture.[86] Appropriately, it was used in 1951 for the 365-foot roof of the Festival of Britain's Dome of Discovery, the largest structure built from the metal at that date.[87] Aluminium does not rust or react with most common materials, making it a suitably durable material for outside structures. From the 1920s onwards its hard, silvery finish was also favoured for 'modern'-looking tableware and furniture.[88]

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[83] Clarke, conversation with the author (7 August 2006).
[84] Clarke, 'Geometry of Fear' (*ca.* 2000) [Clarke archive].
[85] Clarke, 'John Roberts file', p. 10 [Clarke archive].
[86] The first all-aluminium aeroplane was built in the 1920s, and aluminium remains the principal aircraft material to this day. From the 1930s onwards aluminium was used for road and railway vehicles, where its lightness allowed greater speeds to be attained.
[87] Elain Harwood and Alan Powers (eds), *Festival of Britain.* Twentieth Century Architecture No. 5 (London: The Twentieth Century Society, *2001*), p. 73.
[88] For example, designer Robin Day used aluminium for a set of executive office accessories (wastepaper bins, desk trays etc., 1959–63), while Charles Eames's classic Model 105 chair (1958) was characterised by its polished aluminium frame. The wide-ranging use of aluminium was the subject of the exhibition 'Aluminum by Design: From Jewelry to Jets', Carnegie Museum of Art,

Aluminium's predominantly industrial applications made it attractive to artists for the same reasons that had made iron, rather than bronze, attractive. Like iron, aluminium was an anti-traditional medium for fine art. However, unlike iron, which had age-old resonances, aluminium suggested scientific progress, speed, and – most attractively at the time – prototype space travel.[89] The Russian–American race to conquer space, fuelled by the successful launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957, was reflected in popular culture by a vogue for science fiction and depictions of robots, alien figures, or to use contemporary language 'Bems' (bug-eyed monsters). Obvious examples are Paolozzi's 'robots', created from the impressions of cogs and pieces of machinery, and John McHale's collages of automata, while in the 1956 exhibition 'This Is Tomorrow' one of the most popular exhibits was Robbie the Robot from *The Forbidden Planet*.[90] Although the imagery of science fiction is not apparent in his work, Clarke was an avid reader of authors such as John Wyndham, Isaac Asimov, Fred Hoyle and Arthur C. Clarke in the 1950s and early '60s.[91] His interest can be attributed to a number of factors, in addition to the popular curiosity about space exploration at the time. Much of the writing explores psychological concerns which have always interested Clarke. At one end of the spectrum, John D. Macdonald's *Planet of the Dreamers* (1951) plots man's secret development of spaceships against the invasion of earth by thought control from a distant planet. More plausibly, perhaps, Wyndham's *The Chrysalids* (1955) examines the consequences of a world split by genetic mutation, and in *The Kraken Wakes* (1953) Wyndham refers overtly to Cold War anxieties by suggesting that explosions at sea (caused by extra-terrestrial activity) might be attributed to the Russians.[92] Clarke was undoubtedly intrigued by the notions of science which underpinned many of these plots, and has remained fascinated by any research which might be applied to sculpture. (Such interest accounts for his acquisition of Jack Burnham's *Beyond Modern Sculpture*,

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Pittsburgh (2000); touring. The exhibition catalogue was compiled by Sarah Nichols (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000).

[89] Jules Verne had suggested the idea of aluminium for a space capsule as early as 1865, in his novel *From the Earth to the Moon*. Available in modern edition (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1995), pp 38–9.

[90] Clarke drafted notes on 'This Is Tomorrow' in preparation for a radio discussion (BBC Third Programme, 17 August 1956). After concentrating on the architectural contributions he noted, 'but suddenly one is shocked back to reality by an object which is perhaps the truth of our times – Robby the Robot'. [Clarke archive].

[91] This substantial collection, stored separately from Clarke's 'art books' in boxes above the foundry, has only recently been rediscovered.

with its examination, amongst other subjects, of kinetic or robotic sculpture.)[93] Reflecting the spirit of the times, Clarke's new method of casting aluminium in the early 1960s immediately branded him a 'space age' sculptor.[94]

The adoption of aluminium as a medium for sculpture from the mid-1950s onwards coincided with a decline in interest in iron as an 'avant-garde' medium, and a move away from linear forms.[95] Iron, or rather steel, continued to be used for box-like constructions by Caro, Smith and others, but it virtually ceased to be used in the forged manner of Butler's early work. Each of the British 'iron' sculptors sought a different solution to the problem of creating sculpture with greater bulk. Butler turned to bronze, in what Heron described as a process of 'defeating the linear'.[96] Chadwick first used iron armatures filled with Stolit, a concrete-like artificial stone compound of gypsum and iron powder, but later also turned to bronze.[97]

Clarke's move towards aluminium was precipitated by practical as well as aesthetic considerations. Iron, as proved by the corrosion of *Sirens* (1956; LS119), was clearly not a suitable medium for outside sculpture; neither was it possible capable of producing the solid forms towards which he was gravitating. By 1955 Clarke was also beginning to receive regular architectural commissions. Aluminium appeared ideal for its 'economy[,] excellent durability[,] comparative handling ease (weight, fettle, melt)' and because it was 'architecturally more sympathetic & less cosy than bronze'.[98] An abstract relief by Clarke, sand-cast in 1955 may well have been the first example of the 'new aluminium age' in sculpture.[99] Other British sculptors, principally Dalwood, Wright and Paolozzi, soon followed.[100]

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[92] Clarke did not necessarily read these books when they were first published: many are reprints dating from the mid-'50s onwards.

[93] Jack Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1968).

[94] 'Space Age Sculptor at Work: Styrocell Patterns Set New Artistic Trend', *Formula* [House Journal of Shell Chemical Company], No. 8 (July 1961).

[95] Before 1957, aluminium was rarely used as a sculptural medium. Two notable instances, however, are Alfred Gilbert's statue of *Eros* (1892) for Piccadilly Circus, and Epstein's *Christ in Majesty* (1954) for Llandaff Cathedral, where the statue's size and position, surmounting a stone arch, required as light a material as possible.

[96] Patrick Heron, *The Changing Forms of Art* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955), note 45, p. 226, quoted in Martin Harrison, *Transition: the London Art Scene in the Fifties* (London: Merrell Publishers Limited in association with Barbican Art Galleries, 2002), p. 69.

[97] Dennis Farr, *Lynn Chadwick* (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), pp 28–35.

[98] Clarke, ['Notes for *A Sculptor's Manual*'] (*ca.* 1967) [Clarke archive].

[99] For these purposes, Clarke's, Paolozzi's, Dalwood's and Wright's extensive use of aluminium in the early 1960s is considered as distinct from isolated examples such as Epstein's *Christ in Majesty*. An early indication of the popularity of aluminium as a 'new' material appeared in the *Architectural Review*: 'This is an age of many new materials and it is hardly likely that the text books of the future will find a convenient label for it to compare with those of the 'bronze age' or the 'iron age'. But if

Each sculptor used the medium differently. Paolozzi adopted a new approach, 'industrial collage' (as he called it), whereby he distanced himself from the act of creation. Thus anonymous, machine-inspired sculptures, such as *Mechaniks Bench* (1963) were constructed from castings from machine parts and from shapes designed by the artist. Paolozzi asked Clarke to manufacture these aluminium components, but on Clarke's refusal collaborated with two industrial companies: W. L. Shepherd of London, a non-ferrous foundry that made industrial patterns, and C. W. Juby Ltd. of Ipswich, a precision engineering works. Dalwood's early works in aluminium were produced, using traditional techniques, from clay or plaster models cast by the industrial North Road Foundry at Ferrybridge.[101] Wright too began by casting modelled forms, but in 1964 began to construct sculpture from cut and welded sheets of aluminium.[102] Clarke was alone amongst British sculptors in pioneering a recently invented technique to cast aluminium. Characteristically he maintained direct involvement in the creative process, developing methods of working by which all stages of creation could be carried out within his own foundry.

The transitional work between Clarke's iron and aluminium 'periods' was a commission in 1955 to provide sculpture for a new Principal's House at Newnham College Cambridge, designed by Louis Osman. Clarke's *Four Seasons* (LS125) was intended to be constructed from metal and coloured glass; however the choice of metal proved problematic. To date, Clarke had worked only with iron in combination with glass, but since these sculptures would be mounted in tall glass panels, their weight was critical. Aluminium had been used extensively by Osman – for the corrugated roof and window fixtures – and Clarke decided to echo his choice. The forms of his sculpture, however, remained similar to his work in iron, and the problem of translating them was solved only by a rather crude process: Clarke made models of the sections (possibly from plaster) which were cast by an agricultural

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any metal were picked in this way, aluminium would be well up in the running.''Trade and Industry', *The Architectural Review* (February 1953), p. 136.

[100] Chris Stephens was perhaps unaware of Clarke's work when he stated: 'Though there are precedents, [Dalwood] is probably the first British artist to use aluminium at that time and others soon follow.' Chris Stephens, *The Sculpture of Hubert Dalwood* (London: The Henry Moore Foundation in association with Lund Humphries Publishers, 1999), p. 18. Dalwood's first works in aluminium date from 1957, Wright's from 1961 and Paolozzi's from at the latest 1963.

[101] Stephens, *The Sculpture of Hubert Dalwood*, p. 18.

[102] James Hamilton, *The Sculpture of Austin Wright* (London: The Henry Moore Foundation in association with Lund Humphries Publishers, 1994), p. 43.

company in Bury St Edmunds. The sections were then welded together by Clarke and the coloured glass fixed in place.[103]

Open-casting

Clarke was concerned to find a technique for producing metal sculpture that could be used with minimal assistance at the foundry set up in outbuildings at his house in Suffolk. Initially this was solved by installing a small furnace and sand-beds for open-casting aluminium reliefs. The technique of open- or sand-casting is essentially straightforward: objects are pressed into a bed of sand to produce an indented image, molten metal poured on top and an impression taken. One of Clarke's earliest open-cast works was *Fragment* (LS112), an aluminium relief which seems likely to have been cast late in 1955.[104] Two years later he produced a series of five open-cast panels entitled *Square World* (1958; LS129–33). These too are simple works, consisting of plain backing panels with protruding rectilinear symbols to represent the forces of religion and the world. Their surface is pitted from the crude casting process and powdery white from the oxidised aluminium (a process accelerated by immersion in salt water).

Clarke's first large-scale commission to use open-casting was the 1000 sq ft relief, *Extraction and Refining of Oil* (1959; LS149), for the ground floor, mezzanine and upper floor stairwell of Castrol House, Marylebone Road. The design for each floor level was mapped out in its entirety in the sand-beds.[105] Due to the size of the crucible, only 70lb of molten aluminium could be poured at one time. Therefore the image was divided into irregular panels by ⅛-inch steel straps, with the size of each panel estimated according to how much area the aluminium would cover to a depth of ½-inch thick (where the relief was deepest, more metal would be required). The result is a broadly conceived image constructed from panels of an easily manageable size, an ingenious solution to the problem of producing a large work within the restrictions of a small foundry. The panels acquired a grey, leaden appearance

[103] The welding technique at this date would most likely have been aluminium rod and flux.
[104] *Fragment* was created at the request of Hugh Casson to provide a focal point to a room setting 'instead of a fireplace' and was intended to form part of *Flat '56*, an exhibition of wallpapers and fabrics at Sanderson's early that year. Elements of the interior were contributed by RCA students (Clarke also designed wallpaper) and the most discussed aspect was Casson's television pit, a 'sunk, white-carpeted well'. See 'Flat '56', *Architect's Journal* (2 February 1956).

through dipping in a lead tank filled with hydrochloric acid – the surfaces taking on lead from the tank walls.

Full-Mould Casting

Clarke's search for new casting techniques was driven by a need to produce three-dimensional work quickly and on a large, economically viable scale. Creating the 80-ft sculpture for Spence's Thorn Electrical office building (1958–61; LS164), professionally cast in bronze from a wood and fibreglass model, proved time-consuming, artistically unsatisfactory (in that much of the production process was subcontracted) and financially unrepeatable. Open-casting could produce panels from start to finish in Clarke's foundry, but did not solve the three-dimensional problem, since the depth of projection is restricted to the indentation possible in sand before it collapses. In 1959 or 1960 Clarke was notified by a sculptor at Newcastle University of a new casting technique using expanded polystyrene.[106] This 'full-mould' casting process appealed immediately because of its speed, directness, and 'sense of wonder' – the element of magic whereby a block of expanded polystyrene could be transformed, almost instantly, into metal sculpture.[107]

The original patent for full-mould casting was granted in America to Harold F. Shroyer on 15 April 1958.[108] Basically, the technique involves the use of a cellular material to make a pattern, which is packed in a mould of green sand, or sand with a binder.[109] A vertical cavity (or sprue) is introduced, molten metal poured in, and as the metal comes into contact with the pattern, it vaporises to leave a precise metal casting. The process became possible because of a relatively new cellular plastic – expanded polystyrene – from which models could be formed.[110] In 1951 the

[105] The sand used was foundry sand from Nottingham, which included some clay: this provided the moisture necessary to ensure a well-defined image.
[106] The sculptor in question has not yet been identified.
[107] Henning B. Dieter wrote to Clarke: 'There is no disputing the fascination of this new technology. Even innocent bystanders are amazd [*sic*], as if we were performing some magic trick, witchcraft or alchemy. Are we?' Dieter, letter to Clarke (31 October 1963) [Clarke archive].
[108] Harold F. Shroyer, 'Cavityless Casting Mold and Method for Making Same', US Patent No. 2,830,343.
[109] 'Green' sand is natural sand combined with water and organic additives, e.g. clay, to a proper consistency for creating a mould.
[110] To manufacture expanded polystyrene, pure polystyrene beads and a volatile hydrocarbon (expanding agent), such as petroleum ether are required. The expanding agent is forced into the beads, which are then expanded, usually by steam, to a maximum of seventy times their original volume. Since the beads are contained during this process, they fuse together to give a 'foam' of homogeneous,

Badische Anilin und Soda-Fabrik (BASF), Ludwigshafen, launched their brand of expanded polystyrene, 'Styropor'. A similar product known as 'Styrofoam' (or 'Styrocel'), foamed polystyrene used for packaging, was manufactured by the Dow Chemical Company, Michigan, from 1954. 'Styrocell', the British version of 'Styrofoam' was manufactured by Shell Chemical Company from at least 1958. Clarke obtained further information on the full-mould casting process from US sculptor Alfred M. Duca,[111] free samples of Styrocell from Shell, and began to experiment by casting small test pieces in aluminium. Patterns were drawn onto the polystyrene block, or cardboard or plastic templates attached as guides, prior to cutting with an electrically heated wire. For larger models blocks of expanded polystyrene were joined with adhesives, and cracks filled with polyurethane foam.[112]

Clarke's first large free-standing sculpture cast from polystyrene, two pillars supporting a rod and suspended slabs (1961; LS162), was commissioned by Spence for the grounds of his house at Beaulieu. The surface is carved roughly using the heated wire, in keeping with the work's organic form, with no attempt to disguise the sculpture's material origins. In later aluminium works, from 1964 onwards, a greater formal simplicity is reflected by a reduction of surface texture: sanding the polystyrene before casting and contrasting smooth polished areas with areas retaining a degree of roughness.[113] The technique of sand-blasting offers a range of finishes, from the smoothness produced by powder to the deep pitting caused by pieces of gravel. With advice from J. Goddard & Sons Ltd (suppliers of domestic and industrial polishes), Clarke developed a wax treatment that could darken the roughened areas, heightening the effect of light and shade. Early on he considered the possibility of colouring his work, but found anodising unsuitable for cast work;

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cellular structure. Information from *Styrocell: Expanded Polystyrene Insulating Boards* (London: Shell Chemical Company, June 1959) and Prof. A. Wittmoser, 'Full Mould Process: Polystyrene for a New Moulding and Casting Procedure' [typescript translation] (19 Novembe 1962), pp 3–4 [Clarke archive]. Clarke later exploited the above process by expanding polystyrene beads in a pressure cooker. The resultant clusters of beads were attached to polystyrene stems and cast as miniature 'trees' for the 'Plant a Tree for '73' celebrations.

[111] The information from Alfred M. Duca (1920–97) was apparently in the form of a booklet, although this item (predating the *Art Casting* report described below) has not yet been traced. In 1959 Duca had produced what is reputed to be the first sculpture to use the 'foam vaporization' process: *Pegasus*, carved from a block of Styrofoam and cast in bronze.

[112] *Expanded Polystyrene in Art* (London: Shell Chemicals U.K., 1965), p. 4.

[113] British expanded polystyrene was coarser then the American version – which could be sanded until no grain was visible. 'A New Material for Art Casting', *The Times Science Review* (Summer 1962), p. 9. In 1963 Clarke wrote to Dow Chemical Company (U.K.) Limited to request samples of 'Styrocel', but was told that this was not possible and that there were no plans to manufacture the product in

samples anodised gold were patchy and the colouring's permanence was not guaranteed.[114] It also proved difficult to find companies willing to assist with such experiments.

Owing to the frequency of commissions, Clarke was able to employ foundry assistants from 1962 until the end of the decade.[115] To construct a work of the scale of the Guards' Chapel screens (LS186), two assistants were needed to guide the polystyrene while carving with the heated wire, and a further assistant to help with packing the model sections. The largest quantity of aluminium that could be handled at one time was about 700lb, therefore large pieces would be cast in sections and jointed together by 'peg systems' or 'dove-tail' joints.[116] Foundry assistants would help with welding and anything else from drawing up installation plans to the translation of Clarke's sketches into polystyrene models.

The full-mould casting process necessarily produces unique works, since the original model is vaporised during casting, therefore in order to produce 'editioned' pieces the model must be carved the requisite number of times. To indicate this, several of the works shown at the Redfern Gallery in 1965 were listed as 'Semi Unique Edition 6', although each actually was unique in that it was a newly carved form. Concepts of authorship and authenticity are challenged further in that some of these multiples were not carved by Clarke; also, as the editions were not completed at once, further copies may have been made at a later date from the artist's sketches and recorded dimensions. The result is that sculptures within an edition vary in dimensions, and inevitably to a small extent in effect. However, a number of Clarke's assistants were students from the art college in Ipswich, and Clarke considered that a lack of inhibition contributed beneficially to their freeness in carving the polystyrene. With the decline in architectural commissions in the late 1960s, Clarke was forced to let his assistants go, and with them his ability to fulfil large-scale projects, an important factor in forcing his work into new directions.

Britain. Miss F. MacLean (Dow Chemical Company (U.K.) Limited, letter to Clarke (17 June 1963) [Clarke archive].

[114] While working on the Newnham commission Clarke contacted British Celanese Limited for advice on coloured finishes.

[115] The largest commissions were mostly undertaken prior to 1964. In its busiest years, Clarke's foundry provided work for five assistants, at least two of whom could be employed 8 hours, 6 days a week. After 1964 the number of assistants was cut to two, working much reduced hours and often not at the same time.

[116] 'A New Material for Art Casting', *The Times Science Review* (Summer 1962), p. 9

The significance of Clarke's use of full-mould casting, enabling him to fulfil more large-scale commissions than any other sculptor of his generation while yet maintaining direct involvement, has not yet been recognised. Clarke not only mastered this new casting technique but introduced notable practical modifications. In his archive are copies of a number of articles and reports charting the development and possible applications of the full-mould process, as well as a 'bibliography' compiled by Henning B. Dieter. These documents provide an important indication of Clarke's knowledge of the technical aspects of the new process.[117] Clarke's interest in exploiting the full potential of the process also brought him into contact with industry, in particular with the manufacturers of 'Styrocell', Shell Chemical Company.

The process of full-mould casting had first been researched in relation to art casting by Duca, the joint author of a fifteen page report on the subject.[118] Thereafter, interest focussed on potential applications to industrial patternmaking. A significant technical advance occurred with T. R. Smith's discovery in 1960 that dry sand (with no binder) could be used, with the advantages of lower cost, greater ease of filling and emptying the mould, and the possibility of reusing the sand after it cools.[119] Henning B. Dieter, a Texas foundry manager (and expert on dry sand), explained the process: the sand keeps its shape because as the metal replaces the foam, a vapour forms and passes into the sand, where it condenses to form a temporary binder; when the casting cools, heat causes the condensate to vaporise again, leaving the sand clean.[120] Castings in aluminium were particularly successful because the density of the metal is closest to sand, but good results were also produced using brass, bronze and iron. However, there was a lack of technical knowledge about pouring metal into dry sand moulds: Clarke found that his first pour 'carried a pint of sand with it

[117] Copies of the following articles exist in the Clarke archive in files marked 'X.P. Process': '"Lost" Pattern Process ...', *Modern Castings*, No. 37/6 (1960), p. 54; Henning B. Dieter, 'Foamed Plastic Pattern Left in Mold Is Vaporized by Incoming Metal', *Foundry*, No. 88 (1960), p. 118; 'Polystyrene Pattern Simplifies Casting of Statuary', *Foundry*, No. 88 (1960), p. 290–93; 'Fine Arts in the Foundry', *Engineering News* (1960?), p. 12; 'New Casting Method: Foamed Polystyrene Replaces "Lost Wax"', *Light Metal Age* (April 1960), pp 15, 33; 'Foamed-plastic Patterns for making Art Castings?', *Foundry Trade Journal* (14 April 1960), p. 463; C. H. Waxman, 'Polystyrene, a Material for Patterns', *Foundry Trade Journal* (7 December 1961), pp 709–18; W. Büchen, 'Kunstgußmodell aus Polystyrol-Schaum', *Giesserei* (29 October 1960), p. 590; Raymond A. Hagstrom, 'Foam Pattern Simplifies Prototype Casting', *Electronics* (4 November 1960), pp 86–9; V. H. Furlong, 'How would you do the casting?', *Canadian Metalworking* (April 1961), pp 38–9.

[118] Alfred M. Duca, Merton C. Flemings and Howard F. Taylor, *Art Casting* (MIT, 1962).

[119] Private Communication from T. R. Smith (the Maytag Company, Newton, Iowa), 1960; reported in Duca, Flemings and Taylor, *Art Casting* (1962), pp 12, 15.

through the downgate', and Dieter concluded that although the technique was suitable for making prototypes, further research was needed to produce consistent results.[121]

A technical correspondence between Clarke and Dieter began in 1963 after Dieter saw a notice about Clarke's sculpture for the Physics Department of King's College, Newcastle (LS179), and wrote to Clarke to ask for details.[122] The impact of Dieter's knowledge on Clarke's work is clear from a letter to Glyn Owen in which Clarke describes his modifications to the 'X.P.D.S.' (Expanded Polystyrene Dry Sand) process:

> Henning B. Dieter wrote to me for information on the Newcastle Sculpture which he reckoned was the largest displacement casting in the world ... he wanted to know if I had used the dry sand method. I hadn't. He let me have the theory which he had off pat: my contribution was perfecting it.
>
> The main secret or solution seems to be the inclusion of the X.P. in the tube.
>
> Secondly the tube itself. [123]

As Clarke discovered, the use of dry sand improved casting definition and made it easier to pack the models: this, combined with his improvements to the feeder system, enabled him to produce castings of 600lbs as opposed to Dieter's 30lbs. Clarke was also impressed by Dieter's suggestion that mass-produced polystyrene models could be packed in bottomless buckets ('lift up, sand falls away revealing casting').

The letter to Owen indicates that Clarke was seriously looking towards collaboration with Shell: he believed that the full-mould process could be extremely lucrative and that it would well repay Shell to finance his foundry 'as a sort of back

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[120] H. B. Dieter, 'Binderless Dry-sand Moulds', *Foundry Trade Journal* (10 December 1964), p. 757.
[121] Dieter, 'Binderless Dry-sand Moulds', p. 757
[122] Henning B. Dieter, letter to Clarke (28 February 1963) [Clarke archive]. Clarke's sculpture for Newcastle was illustrated in *Light Metals* (January 1963).
[123] Clarke, draft letter to Glyn Owen, Shell Chemical Company (30 July 1963) [Clarke archive]. Clarke appended a four-page illustrated description of his modifications to the Shroyer casting method. It seems likely that this description was intended for the Shell booklet *Expanded Polystyrene in Art* (1965).

room research dept'.[124] Yet there was a problem: the patent. Shell had hoped, with Clarke's help, to take out their own patent, the originality of the process hinging on Clarke's inclusion of expanded polystyrene in the feeder. Clarke's uneasiness about existing patents is indicated both by a note under his explanatory diagram ('note re. other patent – this isn't a pattern cut from X.P. for casting – it is no more the end product than a breather or sprue') and a request for Shell's patent department to visit him.[125] Early in 1964 Owen responded that the patent on 'investment casting' using expanded polystyrene was not valid in the UK, so Clarke had nothing to fear.[126] Dieter, however, was unsure. He cited the case of US sculptor John Rood, who evaded the Shroyer patent by burning the pattern out of the mould before pouring ('or by claiming to do same').[127] As Dieter knew, Shroyer (in the US) and Professor A. Wittmoser (in Europe) had about twenty licensees for the patent, although there were apparently many other illicit users. Shell did not proceed with their patent application, and although Clarke was contacted in 1968 by Wittmoser, he has no recollection of ever having obtained a sub-licence for using the process.[128]

The liaison with Shell – while it lasted – had important implications for Clarke in terms of publicity. An early report of Clarke's work with polystyrene appeared in July 1961, in *Formula*, the house journal of Shell Chemical Company. Headed 'Space Age Sculptor at Work: Styrocell Patterns Set New Artistic Trend', the article stressed the newness of both product and technique, amplifying a non-technical description with photographs of the polystyrene model and finished window for Ipswich Civic College, together with Clarke's endorsement of the casting process.[129] In 1964 Shell made the first in a series of one-reel films intended to introduce new products and processes. *Cast in a New Mould*, 'a film about the use of plastics in sculpture',[130] illustrates Clarke's use of expanded polystyrene through the casting of

[124] Clarke, draft letter to Owen (30 July 1963) [Clarke archive].
[125] Clarke, draft letter to Owen (30 July 1963) [Clarke archive].
[126] Glyn Owen (Shell Chemical Company Limited), letter to Clarke (14 January 1964) [Clarke archive]. This in itself is curious, since 'investment casting' implies the creation of a ceramic shell, from which the model is burned out, and Clarke did not use this variation.
[127] Dieter, letter to Clarke (29 June 1964). Dieter also informed Clarke that T. R. Smith was expecting a patent on the use of dry sand.
[128] Clarke, conversation with the author (27 April 2004). Preliminary correspondence from Metalaids Ltd and Wittmoser about granting a sub-licence in 1968 exists in Clarke's archive.
[129] 'Space Age Sculptor at Work', *Formula* No. 8 (July 1961), p. 6.
[130] *Cast in a New Mould*: Shell film note, 1-page typescript [Clarke archive]. *Cast in a New Mould* (1964), 35 mm, colour, 10 mins, by Alan Fabian (camera), Alvin Bailey (editor), Michael Heckford (director) and Adrian Cruft (composer), was premiered on 14 May 1964. The date of filming is not

his screens for the Guards' Chapel in London. More artistic than accurate,[131] the film's target audience, according to Shell, was 'industrial' or 'general ... interested in the world of art'.[132] For this 'general' audience, the documentary was beautifully crafted, maintaining a sense of wonder and suspense. For the 'industrial' audience, however, success was partial. *Foundry Trade Journal* pointed out that it was unclear that the pattern remained in place while the metal was poured, and that pouring the metal from such a height would produce turbulence and dross in the casting 'that is seemingly of little concern for the type of art castings being made'.[133]

Shell compiled a final publicity tool: a booklet, *Expanded Polystyrene in Art* (1965), demonstrating Styrocell's relevance to architecture and applied decoration by illustrating expanded polystyrene patterns for cast sculpture, concrete reliefs cast *in situ*, carved and painted museum models and, at Leeds College of Art, expanded polystyrene panels which had been subjected to selective attack by solvents – leading to 'exciting results and decorative possibilities which ... could equally grace a board room or a fish and chip shop'.[134] Clarke described the publication as 'technically vague, but showing quite well art applications'.[135]

Shell clearly regarded its image as a pioneering patron of the arts, promoting the relationship between industry and the artist-craftsman, as a valuable marketing tool.[136] For his part, Clarke received support in the form of materials (expanded polystyrene), financial sponsorship to create a large aluminium and acrylic window for Manchester College of Art, and the mutually beneficial medium of publicity.[137]

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known, but extra sound effects were recorded by Bailey with Clarke's help on 19 February 1964 (letter from Shell to Clarke, 20 February 1964, [Clarke archive]).

[131] For instance, the title sequence features Clarke's open-cast *Fragment* (1955), while subsequent sculptures include the iron *Sirens* and Canberra reliefs (also open-cast). Most misleadingly, the film describes the recent commission for the Guards' Chapel but simultaneously shows footage of the carving and casting of the cross for Langley Church, Manchester.

[132] *Cast in a New Mould*: Shell film note [Clarke archive].

[133] 'Film Reviews', *Foundry Trade Journal* (21 May 1964). The *Journal* recommended that for seriously-minded foundry audiences a sequel was needed to show the making of an industrial casting by the same process. Watching the film in April 2004, both Geoffrey and Jonathan Clarke commented that aspects of the casting process had been enhanced for dramatic effect; however, this was presumably not evident to the general public.

[134] *Expanded Polystyrene in Art*, p. 16. The booklet, to be launched at the International Plastics Exhibition in June 1965, included a sheet of expanded polystyrene paper supplied by Telcon Plastics Ltd.

[135] Clarke, annotation to Henning B. Dieter's typescript 'Casting Bibliography' [Clarke archive].

[136] The Shell film note stated: 'The prestige derived from the association of Shell with the pioneering of new techniques and with the promotion of the arts, coupled with the reference to many varied uses of plastics in every day life, make the film suitable for sales promotion usage.'

[137] It seems probable that the awareness of Clarke's work through media publicity helped to fuel demand for his sculpture, at least in terms of architectural commissions, in the 1960s.

However, Clarke's ambition to work more closely with Shell to research potential industrial uses for the full-mould process (at the same time funding a foundry better equipped for sculpture) remained unfulfilled.

Wood

Clarke's work since 1996 has been revitalised by the adoption of a new material, wood, to explore new issues. In turning to wood as a material for art, parallels may again be sought in the works of others. Natural materials, and wood in particular, have been used notably by David Nash and Andy Goldsworthy, although in a fundamentally different way from Clarke. Both Nash and Goldsworthy have chosen to work 'with' the materials to suggest concerns implicit in or related to nature. Nash, for instance, has worked since the 1970s with reclaimed or found wood, brought into a gallery space untouched or roughly sawn and assembled; he has also worked with trees, as at Grizedale National Forest in Cumbria, to create living, growing sculptures.[138] Goldsworthy's field of enquiry into nature is wider, drawing on wood, leaves, stones, flowers, and the elements of ice and water, transformed by hand using delicate, craft-inspired processes such as weaving, stitching, stacking, piecing. Yet his work's intricacy is inspired and fundamentally related to the internal geometry of its materials: the complexity and symmetry of nature.[139] Clarke, instead of deriving formal or subject matter from wood, has used it as a constructive element to depict something quite foreign. However, it would not be true to say that the properties of wood have had no bearing on his work.

The chronological placement of Clarke's work in wood at the end of his career stems in part from practical concerns: the artist's desire to continue producing his own work when casting was no longer possible. By the late 1990s Clarke's son had taken over the foundry to produce his own work and wood, an easily managed material, provided the opportunity to explore ideas in a less pressurised manner. Works from this period are diverse in format. The first set of sculptures, the 'Sticks' or 'Umbilical' series (1996; LS661–2, 665–7), are among the most abstract in Clarke's *oeuvre*. Wall-mounted polystyrene 'canvases' painted with circles, black or

[138] See Graham Beal, 'David Nash: "Respecting the Wood"', in Neff (ed.), *A Quiet Revolution*, pp 134–55.

white, suggest (as from Clarke's earliest work) 'The Spot. The initial conception. The beginning. The basis. A statement'.[140] Wooden batons connect these circles to the ground, illustrating:

> The line. Progression from one point to another. The amplified statement.
> Definite relationship between two points. ... The vertical line. Channel for the overflow of desire from the earth on the one hand, and strength from the Eternal power on the other.[141]

The wood chosen is white pine, cleanly sawn and thus bearing as little resemblance to a living substance as possible. Yet the choice of wood over metal is clearly significant. In this instance wood may be interpreted as organic symbol, a linking between earth and the spiritual.

The works in wood which follow the 'Umbilical Series' number sixty-four in total. Most are produced on a small scale, but some, such as *Solarplexus of the Mind* (LS680), *Conclusion* (LS736), *Embracing Chaos* (LS737) and *Pilgrim* (LS739) are over-life-sized. In *Solarplexus of the Mind*, materials and methods of construction relate particularly closely to the form and subject matter of the sculpture. The artist, engaged in painting on a high, wall-mounted canvas, is assembled from beams of oak as a massive easel structure. The grain and knotted texture of the wood are left exposed at the lower part of the structure, but progressively 'greyed-out' by thinly applied acrylic paint towards the upper areas. This sense of progression towards intense creative activity is reinforced by numerous details: the rhythm by which the wooden components become progressively more slender; a leather, entrail-like strap which changes from black to white as it ascends; the hectic clustering of rods around the artist's head. In this work, for almost the first time, a virtue has been made of construction techniques. The pegged method by which the struts resting on the canvas are attached to the wooden beam (the artist's 'arm') signals their ability to rotate, suggesting at once mobility and industry. Some of the rods at the artist's head are embedded into the trunk, showing their origin within the artist but also their

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[139] See Terry Friedman and Andy Goldsworthy (eds), *Hand to Earth: Andy Goldsworthy Sculpture 1976–1990* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2004).
[140] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief'.
[141] Clarke, 'Exposition of a Belief'.

capacity to act as part of a sensitive, radiating nerve complex – a creative solar plexus. The undisguised use of carpentry techniques clearly suggests the artist's belief in the craftsmanship of the creative process, a process which in this sculpture, as never before in the artist's work, has been laid bare.

Clarke's 'Artist Series' explore this theme of creativity on a scale which was influenced, early on, by the discovery of small glazed Ikea boxes which could serve as a method of presentation. The *tableaux* are assembled using a glue-gun from figures made from tiny pieces of wood, cut using a band saw, and simple forms – spheres, cones and dishes – modelled from unfired dough. The wood itself is painted in muted tones, enough to subdue the warmth of the wood, but applied so lightly that the grain, texture and underlying colour show through. As before, an argument for these works ignoring the properties of the medium seems misguided. The artist has chosen wood firstly for the speed with which it can be crafted on a small scale, which accords with the spontaneity of creativity – the subject matter depicted in the 'Artist Series'. Secondly, wood is chosen for its approachability, its calmness and softness.[142] None of these attributes belongs to aluminium, whose physical presence when cast from carved polystyrene is often characterised by angles, sharply defined outlines and deep shadows.

Clarke's most recent large-scale sculpture, *Consignment*, continues the use of wood and undisguised methods of construction. In this instance, the pair of figures is assembled from sheet aluminium, cut into arcs and circles and bolted together, with a separate mast welded from progressively narrower box sections of aluminium. These elements are hand-finished by filing (each of the bolt heads has been ground to create a less industrial, more 'crafted' finish) and gradated grey waxing, and presented in white pine transit crates. An intriguing paradox presents itself: the industrial aspect of sheet aluminium is tempered by hand-waxing; the seemingly mass-produced crates are in fact beautifully handcrafted, with rope handles and hand-applied paint stencils. The same is true of the 'Artist Series', whose materials themselves are the antithesis of fine art, their assembly using a glue-gun the antithesis of fine craftsmanship. Their method of presentation in glazed boxes from Ikea appears to confirm the notion that Clarke is interested in the concept – the imagery – of the

[142] Clarke, conversation with the author (21 September 2006).

work rather than its material presence.[143] This is not to say that the *tableaux* inside are not extremely well crafted for their purpose: the lack of sophistication underscores the subject matter, the process of creation, whereas a slickness of finish would have run counter to it. The constituent elements also clearly bear the imprint of the artist, evident in a quirky unpredictability that vitalises the work.

The interface between Clarke's use of wood and that of Nash lies in a shared concern with issues of craft, the process of making by hand. Tanya Harrod's inclusion of Nash in her survey of crafts signals Nash's habitation of the ambiguous area between art and craft, recognised by his inclusion in the Ikon Gallery's 'Furniture↔Sculpture' exhibition (1979) and the Crafts Council's *The Maker's Eye* (1981).[144] (The comparison with furniture is not idle: the form of Clarke's larger work in wood, such as *Conclusion*, has prompted the nickname 'sideboard'.) Nash, as Harrod identifies, is a 'species of land artist', whose work in wood has grown temporally from that movement. Clarke's work in wood, occurring significantly later, does not exhibit the same 'respect' for the material which might lead him to incorporate it unmodified in his work rather than to use it principally as a construction material. Yet, as has been demonstrated, it would be far from true to claim that the properties of wood have not had a significant influence on the form of these late works.

Conclusion

Clarke's approach to materials is driven by a desire to explore their properties, master their associated methods of production, and where possible to push these processes to their limits. This is shown in particular by Clarke's development of the new full-mould casting process, and in general by his book, *A Sculptor's Manual*, which gives guidance on working with plaster, metal, stone, wood and plastics.[145] Despite his interest in applying pioneering methods of production to his work,

[143] Clarke has described the Ikea boxes as a useful practical solution: ready-made, economic and with the glass edges already smoothed to make them safe. Clarke, conversation with the author (20 August 2006).

[144] Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century*, pp 406, 435. Harrod includes a photograph of Nash's *Table with Cubes* (1971), which (in the context of this study) is impossible to view other than as a pine version of Clarke's aluminium *Block with Eight Pieces* (1965; LS190) or *Table with Eleven Pieces* (1965; LS226).

[145] Geoffrey Clarke and Stroud Cornock, *A Sculptor's Manual* (London: Studio Vista, 1968). Most of this book, with the exception of the section on full-mould casting, was written by Cornock.

however, Clarke has remained wary of the artist-craftsman's pursuit of innovation *per se*:

> The feeling that movement forward, progress, and search are paramount, must be placed in perspective and scale. Scale – perhaps only a fresh combination of weaves, glazes or joints for instance. Perspective – ten years is nothing and need perhaps reveal little change.[146]

In defending the causes of craftsmen, artist-craftsmen and artists (the last expected to perform 'aesthetic gymnastics' to produce something new for each show), Clarke implies an allegiance to traditional methods of creation, with their concomitantly slow evolution. From this perspective, his use of full-mould casting, crucial aspects of which were, after all, carving and the 'lost wax' (*cire perdu*) method of casting,[147] could fruitfully be regarded as a modernist variation on age-old techniques. Clarke has also, in keeping with principal tenets of the 'truth to materials' movement, always maintained an inherent respect for each medium, not trying to force it against its nature. Writing recently about iron, Clarke noted that it 'doesn't end up in nice cuddly dollops[;] it is rigid hard & resistant'.[148] This respect for the material may be seen to influence the physical form of the work: for example, the process of cutting polystyrene with a heated wire can be seen reflected in the curves and cursive forms of the cast aluminium sculpture.[149]

Technical mastery in fields such as stained glass and iron has led naturally to the categorisation of Clarke's work as craft rather than fine art, and hence to a plethora of labels such as designer, designer-craftsman or artist-craftsman. Perhaps the only useful function of such labels, in relation to Clarke's work, is as indicators of associated purpose. Shortly before the London 'Creative Craftsman' exhibition in 1960, an exhibition of 'British Artist Craftsmen' opened in America, containing in all

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[146] Clarke, letter to *Crafts* (November/December 1974), p. 45.
[147] An ICA exhibition , 'Lost Wax: metal casting on the Guinea Coast' (March 1957) included a description of the technique by ethnographer William Fagg; it is described in *A Sculptor's Manual*, pp 28–37.
[148] Clarke, 'Notes' (2005) [Clarke archive].
[149] Whether or not the link between process and form is unduly strong in the case of the cast aluminium work is open to debate: Tim Holding has questioned whether such sculpture presents 'polystyrene in the hands of Clarke or Clarke in the hands of polystyrene'. Tim Holding, 'Technique and Method in the Sixteenth and Twentieth Centuries' (unpublished thesis, Newcastle University, 1964), p. 48.

but the displays of carpets, ceramics and tapestries, an overwhelming majority of works on religious themes.[150] The sculpture section itself was titled 'Altar Furniture and Religious Sculpture', and included work by sculptors – Georg Ehrlich, Epstein, Hepworth and Moore – not usually described as 'craftsmen'; the section 'Architectural Wall Panels' included further religious work by Dalwood and Elisabeth Frink. In demonstrating the creation of functional items with a moral purpose and (according to the catalogue's foreword) the reintegration of the artist (painter, sculptor, designer or craftsman) as 'an honoured member of the community',[151] the exhibition suggested the persistence of attitudes prevalent some thirty years earlier. Clarke's work, ranging from religious sculpture in iron to silver altar furniture and stained glass, undeniably sat comfortably within this context, drawing on native traditions, such as ironwork and stained glass, to revitalise a version of British modernism. Clarke's most important contribution to the technique of sculpture, the perfecting of full-mould casting, epitomises such harnessing of the old to the new: an allegiance to carving and hand-finishing aligned with a process made possible by modern materials.

[150] 'British Artist Craftsmen: an exhibition of contemporary work', circulated by the Smithsonian Institution (1959–60).

[151] Sir Gordon Russell, Foreword to 'British Artist Craftsmen' catalogue (1959–60). Gordon Russell, chairman of the Council of Industrial Design (established in 1944), championed the idea of aesthetics in relation to industrial design, but drew a distinction between the industrial designer (working as part of a team to produce quantities of goods) and the artist (producing individual, 'intensely personal' works of art). See Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, p. 167.

Chapter Four: Architectural and Design Projects

Introduction

In 1963 Edwin Mullins singled out Clarke for his prolific contribution to modern architecture and his versatile flair for design, providing an exception to the 'dreary pattern of mediocrity' in post-war architectural sculpture.[1] Mullins cited Clarke's contribution as thirty-five commissions in the eleven years since leaving the RCA; a full list of commissions to the year 2006 would treble this number.[2] Clarke's involvement with commissioned work has been sustained by a number of factors. Regular commissions have ensured financial security and freedom from having to supply work to galleries.[3] Clarke derives creative inspiration from the specific challenges of each new commission, and from the necessary process of collaboration. Architectural commissions (in contrast with the isolated environment of the gallery) have also provided a public forum, a context in which the symbolic nature of his work finds added purpose.

However, as elsewhere, a paradox exists. Clarke's commissioned work has been fostered by patrons (architects, clergymen or company directors) who either believe in art's life-enhancing properties or, particularly in the 1960s, who see the presence of sculpture as a visible sign of prestige or financial prosperity. The result in both instances is the same: the embellishment of buildings with contemporary sculpture, painting or glass. Conversely, Clarke's own approach to architecture – indicated by his projected *House of the Future* as well as by designs for many unrealised buildings – shows function dictating form, and form precluding decorative elements. Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, Clarke's philosophy of 'the ideal ... the possible ... the probable' comes to bear.[4] At one extreme, the 'ideal' is represented by Clarke's (or the artist's) total authorship of architectural design, unity being ensured by a singleness of vision. The 'possible' suggests open collaboration; artist, architect and patron working to achieve a creative, not necessarily predetermined result. The

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[1] Edwin Mullins, 'Sculpture Out of Air', *Sunday Telegraph* (29 December 1963).
[2] The total number of architectural commissions identified to date is 112; this breaks down into 88 commissions for metalwork (sculpture, doors, screens, gates), 17 commissions for glass (a total of 47 individual windows), 4 commissions for textiles (tapestry or embroidery designs) and 3 for work in mosaic.
[3] In contrast with his enjoyment of the challenge of commissions, Clarke has always disliked the pressure of having to produce work to order for exhibitions.
[4] Clarke, notes on architectural sketches (*ca.* 1962) [Clarke archive].

'probable' reflects, most commonly, the artist's invitation to fulfil a brief prescribed in terms of materials, siting or subject matter. Clarke's practicality and aptitude for design accounts for his ability to work within such briefs, while yet flexing their boundaries to assert his own creative voice. While the quantity of work produced precludes individual discussion, selective analysis may serve to illustrate the ways in which Clarke's spiritual belief, his use of symbolism and his approach to materials have all fed into his commissioned work.

Interconnected Spheres: Architecture, Sculpture and Symbolism

The points of contact between sculpture and architecture have far-reaching implications for Clarke's work, such that one can be seen to inform or interact with the other on a variety of levels. As has been discussed with regard to symbolism, sculpture may be framed in terms of architecture, such that 'man' is depicted in the form of a building or fortress. Architecture may also be approached sculpturally, so that further decoration is rendered superfluous. Where sculpture is commissioned to be placed in relation to architecture, however, the process involves a delicate balance between architect, sculptor and or painter, requiring the architect's sympathy for his commissioned artist and, at the least, the artist's consideration for the destination of his work. This collaborative model will be considered with particular reference to the architect Basil Spence, one of the most important patrons of Clarke's work.

Attitudes to Collaboration

The principal problems of sculpture conceived in relation to architecture were voiced by Moore in 1952 as a restriction of creative freedom, the difficulty of siting works effectively and the risk of sculpture being used as mere embellishment to a building.[5] To ameliorate this, Moore (like Clarke, later) advocated liaising with architects at an early stage, so that sculpture could provide a focus for a building, 'inseparable from the design, structurally coherent and aesthetically essential'.[6] The shifts of power associated with such collaboration can be seen in Moore's two sculptures for the Time-Life offices in Bond Street, one assimilated into the fabric of the building, the

[5] Henry Moore, 'The Sculptor in Modern Society', lecture at Unesco, International Conference of Artists, Venice 1952, in Philip James (ed.), *Henry Moore on Sculpture* (London: Macdonald & Co., 1966), pp 84–90. Herbert Read apparently assisted Moore with writing this speech. Roger Berthoud, *The Life of Henry Moore* (London: Faber & Faber, 1987), p. 435.
[6] Moore, 'The Sculptor in Modern Society', p. 88.

other placed in relation to it. Changing his mind too late about the carved stone screen, Moore remained dissatisfied with its effect on top of the building.[7] Conversely, he succeeded in realising his vision of placing a figurative sculpture, *Draped Reclining Figure*, on the terrace against the brief for a fountain or water piece. Margaret Garlake suggests that both sculptures work in defiance of the architecture, the screen asserting its identity in contrast with the austere façade and the figure supplanting, in surrealist mode, the conventional with the fantastic.[8] *Draped Reclining Figure*, in particular, represents Moore's assertion of creative freedom, a quest for a solution rather than one imposed by dictation.[9] Yet Moore also revealed an awareness of the sculptor's obligation to consider, as part of his contribution to the architectural whole, the possibility of 'utilitarian functions ... didactic and symbolic functions of sculpture ... inseparable from the architectural conception itself'.[10] This contradicts the generally held view of Moore's resistance to architectural collaboration[11] and approaches more nearly Clarke's own pragmatic attitude to commissions. Moore and, significantly, Read were committed to the notion of sculpture as a public, monumental art: a degree of flexibility in negotiating form and location was therefore necessary.

Clarke's interest in collaborative working, as will be demonstrated by his brief membership of Groupe Espace, went beyond the immediate issues of providing sculpture for a given site to consider the ideal working relationship between sculptor, painter and architect. From the 1930s until late 1950s the concept of collaboration was widely discussed, and the desirability of breaking down boundaries between the separate arts generally agreed upon.[12] The single most important source for this mode

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[7] Moore, 'Time-Life Screen and Reclining Figure 1952–53', in Philip James (ed.), *Henry Moore on Sculpture* (London: Macdonald & Co., 1966), pp 230–8.

[8] Margaret Garlake, 'Moore's eclecticism: Difference, aesthetic identity and community in the architectural commissions 1938–58', in Jane Beckett and Fiona Russell (eds), *Henry Moore: Critical Essays* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003), pp 184–5. Garlake suggests that Moore's eminent reputation and familiarity with architects gave him the confidence to flout the design brief for the terrace sculpture.

[9] Moore, 'The Sculptor in Modern Society', p. 88.

[10] Moore, 'The Sculptor in Modern Society', p. 88.

[11] This view stems from a quotation in which Moore described collaboration as 'humiliating subservience'. However, he was referring specifically to his prejudice against relief sculpture – a form commissioned unthinkingly by architects wanting 'surface decoration' – prior to undertaking the *West Wind* relief (1928–9) for the London Underground Headquarters. Moore, 'Sculpture in the open air', British Council lecture, 1955, in Philip James (ed.), *Henry Moore on Sculpture*, p. 97.

[12] In 1958 J. M. Richards introduced a RIBA discussion with, 'This is yet another meeting about architecture and the other arts. I emphasise ... "yet another meeting", because the subject has been endlessly debated in recent years producing usually a general agreement that architects, painters and sculptors ought to collaborate closely; but nothing more conclusive otherwise.' 'Architecture and the Other Arts', *RIBA Journal* (February 1958), p. 117. This collaborative ideal underpinned other creative ventures in the 1930s and '40s, notable the Group Theatre and English Opera Group, both of which

of thinking was perhaps Gropius's Bauhaus manifesto of 1919 – urging the breaking down of barriers between arts and crafts to create a building of the future combining architecture, sculpture, and painting in a single form.[13] The Bauhaus method of teaching was promoted in England by Read's *Art and Industry* (1934), and Gropius, arriving in London that year, proved an influential figure for the newly formed MARS (Modern Architecture Research) Group.[14] In 1949 a symposium, organised by the MARS Group and ICA and held at the RIBA, specifically discussed the problem of collaboration between painters, sculptors and architects: those involved included painters Patrick Heron and Graham Sutherland, sculptor F. E. McWilliam, architectural writer J. M. Richards and architect Maxwell Fry.[15]

To what extent Clarke was aware of these discussions is difficult to establish. However, when in 1955 Paule Vézelay asked him to join the British branch of Groupe Espace – a new society of 'modern Architects, and Non-Figurative Painters and Sculptors' – Clarke was sufficiently tempted to overcome his usual dislike of organised groups.[16] At the heart of Groupe Espace, founded in Paris in 1951 by André Bloc, was the concept of collaboration between different branches of the arts,[17] and the conditions for the first British exhibition in October 1955 invited the submission of paintings, sculpture, architectural models or 'works made in collaboration by two or more members'.[18] Clarke's main contribution, in conjunction with architect Frankland Dark and painter Ronald Grimshaw, was presented as 'an architectural probability of the future ... a creative experiment, existing as sculpture in its own right'.[19] The *House of the Future* (1955; LS113), as the maquette became known,[20] was constructed by Clarke and consisted of a glass globe containing a

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united contemporary literature, painting and music. See Jenny Doctor, Paul Kildea and Judith LeGrove, *Staging History* (Aldeburgh: Britten–Pears Library, 2001).

[13] Walter Gropius, 'Programme of the Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar', 1919, in *Programmes and Manifestos on Twentieth-Century Architecture* (London: Lund Humphries, 1970), p. 49.

[14] MARS was a group of predominantly young British architects formed to take part in events organised by CIAM (Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne). Gropius lived in Hampstead, near Herbert Read.

[15] 'Painting, Sculpture & the Architect': extracts from the speeches at the symposium organised by the Institute of Contemporary Arts and the MARS Group at the R.I.B.A on September 2, 1949. *The Architect and Building News* (16 September 1949), pp 283–4. This symposium followed the CIAM conference in Bergamo in July 1949, on the same subject.

[16] Groupe Espace papers (1955) [Clarke archive].

[17] Branches of Groupe Espace were established in Switzerland, Italy and Sweden prior to the founding of a British group by Paule Vézelay (*née* Marjorie Watson-Williams) in February 1955.

[18] Conditions for Groupe Espace Exhibition at the Royal Festival Hall (1955) [Clarke archive].

[19] Clarke and Grimshaw, 'Title: ELEVATION (First Approach) Subject: HOUSE' (1955) [typewritten caption, Clarke archive]. Since non-members were not allowed to exhibit, both Dark and Grimshaw were required to join Groupe Espace.

[20] This title, used since at least 1994 (*see* Peter Black, *Geoffrey Clarke: Symbols for Man*), links the model with Peter and Alison Smithson's *House of the Future*, created for the 1956 Ideal Home

smaller sphere on a shaft, the whole supported by an iron table – Clarke's characteristic representation of the earth.

Crucially, as its caption indicated, the *House of the Future* was 'sculptural', in contradistinction to more conventional architectural models. The debate that led to its creation is documented in notes by Clarke, which, characteristically, return to first principles in order to explore new possibilities for collaborative working. In Clarke's words,

> 1st the Scientist makes the material then:
> The Architect becomes the Engineer
> The Sculptor becomes the Architect
> The Painter becomes the Sculptor but uses LIGHT.
> (ie) replaces the sculptors [*sic*] normal functions.[21]

Dark's suggestion was that 'architects should work with artists to plan buildings and ... be called builders', and Grimshaw's that no applied colour be used in the house, colour being obtained from 'the effect of changing light on the outer and inner transparent shells and from the metal of the supports and the central tower'.[22] Thus the future architect might be purely a technical and practical adviser, mediating between aesthetic and functional requirements and making no attempt to design. In contrast, the sculptor and painter (who might be indistinguishable) could be the designer of everything. This conclusion, deviating radically from the norm of an architect (or patron) presiding over a project and commissioning art only once building plans are completed, realised Gropius's dream of combining architecture, sculpture and painting in a single form.

An intriguing postscript to the *House of the Future* can be found in Clarke's notes on the exhibition 'This Is Tomorrow' in 1956. The exhibition itself stemmed from a proposal by Vézelay to explore collaboration between painter, sculptor and architect. However, Vézelay withdrew from discussions with members of the Independent Group after a conflict of vision, preparing her own Groupe Espace exhibition at the Royal Festival Hall in October 1955 while Colin St John Wilson, Victor Pasmore, Robert Adams, Roger Hilton and Theo Crosby staged their far more

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Exhibition, and perhaps accounts for the misdating of Clarke, Dark and Grimshaw's work as 1956 rather than 1955 in Black's and subsequent publications. Clarke's *House of the Future* was not included in the Ideal Home Exhibition.

[21] Clarke, sketches and notes for *House of the Future* (1955) [Clarke archive].

[22] Wilma Moy-Thomas, 'Yes, it's a HOUSE!—and only 20 years away', *News Chronicle* (28 January 1956).

ambitious project at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in August 1956.[23] Clarke was not included in 'This Is Tomorrow', no doubt because of his isolation from London, his lack of connection with those involved (principally members of the Independent Group), and his concurrent, albeit brief, association with the rival Groupe Espace. However, his *House of the Future* was definitely conceived with the project in mind,[24] and his comments in a broadcast symposium on 'This Is Tomorrow' are therefore relevant. Photographs of the twelve collaborative contributions reveal a lack of integration and Clarke singled out Groups 10 (Adams, St John Wilson, Frank Newby, Peter Carter) and 11 (Adrian Heath, John Weeks) as the only two successful entries.[25] In his view the Heath–Weeks submission, an irregular brick wall, contained 'the essence of sculpture, the sensibility of a painting & by an undeniable construction, the knowledge of an architect'. The Adams–Wilson submission, however, represented complete collaboration, encouraging the viewer to participate in the created atmosphere and 'perhaps to find a small symbol for something greater than everything'.[26] Intriguingly, Clarke dismissed the entry by Nigel Henderson, Paolozzi and the Smithsons, 'Patio and Pavilion', which represented the 'necessities of the human habitat in a series of symbols': the head (for man himself, his brain and his machines), artefacts and pin-ups (for man's irrational urges), the tree (image for nature), the rock and natural objects (for stability and the decoration of manmade space), the wheel and aeroplane (for locomotion and the wheel).[27] Clarke's fundamental disagreement was with the collaborative approach in 'Patio and Pavilion', that architects should provide the basic spatial organisation and that artists should add human interest:

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[23] As Lawrence Alloway recalled, '['*This Is Tomorrow*'] developed out of the failure of a proposal to hold an exhibition organised on the lines of orthodox integration recommended by la groupe espace in Paris. The English artists and architects would not submit to the dogmatic ideas of synthesis held by la groupe espace. We can take it, then, that the variety and complexity of this exhibition is not accidental but part of the present design situation in England'. Lawrence Alloway, 'Design as a Human Activity', introduction to *This Is Tomorrow* exhibition catalogue (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956), [p. 11].

[24] Clarke, conversation with the author (October 2004).

[25] Clarke, notes on 'This Is Tomorrow' (1956) [Clarke archive]. The discussion, with Peter Smithson, Colin St John Wilson, William Turnbull, Richard Hamilton, Anthony Hill, Theo Crosby and David Piper, was broadcast on the BBC Third Programme on 10 August 1956. Colin St John Wilson has recently spoken of his involvement in 'This Is Tomorrow' at a fiftieth anniversary conference at Pallant House Gallery, Chichester (23 September 2006).

[26] Clarke, notes on '*This Is Tomorrow*' (1956) [Clarke archive]. For the broadcast, Clarke read his notes, but omitted the final sentence. See transcript of broadcast symposium in Tate Archive, TAV234B.

[27] *This Is Tomorrow*. Exhibition Catalogue (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1956), p. 59. David Hulks has recently discussed 'Patio and Pavilion' from a psychoanalytical viewpoint, as an 'outsider' or 'oppositional' work, 'an afocal piece that matches the descriptor "schizoid" on several counts'. Hulks, 'The dark chaos of subjectivism: Splitting and the geometry of fear', in Brandon Taylor (ed.), *Sculpture and Psychoanalysis* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), p. 109.

> There are inevitably extremes of taste within the exhibition – from the pure sophistication & tastefulness of the Goldfinger Pasmore stand to the primitive vitality & basic reasoning of the Paolozzi Smithson environment – but I feel that the Adrian Heath wall and the passage like form by the Adams Wilson group give quite the most constructive contribution ... Referring back to Smithsons "sparking off", can, I think, only be successful AFTER a closer integration has come about, such as has occurred in these two exhibits.[28]

Clarke's belief in unity (complete collaboration) as the ideal framework for symbolic communication is significant, as is the addition – in the concluding, unbroadcast sentence of his review – of the 'philosopher' to the team of painter, sculptor and architect.[29]

The Ideal: Architecture as Sculpture

Despite his interest in the possibilities of collaboration, Clarke's description of the *House of the Future* as a 'vast piece of sculpture' reveals a belief in the primary role of the sculptor in the collaborative process.[30] Furthermore, it suggests a link with Le Corbusier, whose recently completed chapel at Ronchamp (1950–55) could scarcely be viewed as anything other than a monumental sculpture. In this sense, Le Corbusier's chapel embodied the conclusion of his theoretical writing, 'Synthèse des arts majeurs. Architecture, peinture, sculpture' (1944), that all productions in the visual arts 'were to be carried out under the aegis of a unified language of space and form'.[31] Clarke was fascinated by the form of Ronchamp, by what he describes as its 'freedom without looking organic' or excessively governed by nature.[32]

Early in 1955, perhaps inspired by reports of Ronchamp, Clarke was planning his own small chapel, to be built on land at his home in Hartest.[33] He described the project in a letter to Grimshaw: the altar would be shaped 'to hold one man in a semi

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[28] Clarke, notes on 'This Is Tomorrow' (1956) [Clarke archive]. Interestingly, the Smithsons later described their approach as anti-teamwork, in which the group resisted a cohesive stance. Hulks, 'The dark chaos of subjectivism: Splitting and the geometry of fear', p. 110.
[29] Clarke, notes on 'This Is Tomorrow' (1956) [Clarke archive].
[30] Moy-Thomas, 'Yes, it's a HOUSE!'.
[31] Le Corbusier (1944), cited in Christopher E. M. Pearson, 'Authority figures: sculpture in Le Corbusier's projects for public buildings, 1928–1938', *Sculpture Journal*, Vol. XIII (2005), p. 69.
[32] Clarke, conversation with the author (21 September 2006).
[33] Clarke finally visited Ronchamp in the summer of 1956.

prone or kneeling position – only large enough for that purpose'.[34] Sketches indicate that the building would be cruciform, with the altar at the crossing. No side windows are shown; light enters from above the altar and from beyond, and further sketches suggest that a crystal near the altar would diffuse the light.[35] Clarke's plans for the chapel, which remain unrealised, relate to the *House of the Future* in a number of ways. Firstly, the manipulation of light is perceived as integral to the conception. Secondly, the chapel – sited on sloping land, in the shape of a cross – suggests a fundamentally 'sculptural' aesthetic. Thirdly, a symbolic, religious purpose is indicated by both projects. In the case of the chapel, this is inherent in the cruciform shape, the central placing of the altar and the use of a crystal to diffuse light from above. Symbolism in the *House of the Future* is less overt but can be detected in the creation of an organic, naturally symmetrical form 'to counterbalance the scientific tendency towards calculated materialism'.[36] A further statement clarifies that this ideal counterbalance (symbolised by the organic) can be derived from religion: 'The designers relate the project to man himself, with his spiritual difficulties in a scientific age'.[37]

Through conversation with Clarke, it becomes clear that Grimshaw was responsible for helping to mould Clarke's philosophical way of thinking, from his student days, through the creation of the *House of the Future* and beyond.[38] The debt to Clarke's father, the architect, is harder to quantify, since no plans of his for buildings were realised and he appears to have left little in the form of writings. However, it is worth considering the influence of one of Clarke's father's circle of colleagues, W. R. Lethaby, in order to conjecture the type of discussion that may have helped shape Clarke's ideals with regard to architecture.

Lethaby, architect and author of *Form in Civilization*, designed relatively few buildings himself, but was significant both for his highly developed views on architecture and for his communication of these ideas through his teaching and writings.[39] He shared many of the Arts and Crafts movement's ideals – belief in the

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[34] Clarke, letter to Ronald Grimshaw (2 February 1955) [Clarke archive].
[35] Several contemporary sketches in the artist's archive explore this idea of directed light.
[36] Clarke and Grimshaw, [typewritten caption for *House of the Future*] (1955) [Clarke archive].
[37] Moy-Thomas, 'Yes, it's a HOUSE!', *News Chronicle* (28 January 1956).
[38] Clarke, conversation with the author (20 September 2006).
[39] W. R. Lethaby was the first art adviser to the Technical Education Board of the London County Council, first (joint) principal of the Central School of Arts and Crafts and first Professor of Design at the Royal College of Art. He was also surveyor of Westminster Abbey from 1906 to 1928 and worked for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings for nearly forty years. Godfrey Rubens, 'Introduction', in W. R. Lethaby, *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth* (London: The Architectural Press Ltd, 1974), p. vii.

importance of good materials and fine craftsmanship and a conviction about the essential utility of objects – and, like Pick, his upbringing had encouraged an awareness of social and moral responsibility. Convinced that architecture should be stripped back to its essentials in order to renew itself, he identified three principles. In first place, the 'needs and desires of men' should dictate the functionality of architecture. Secondly, materials, 'the physical laws of their erection and combination', should influence form. In third place, however, was what Lethaby described as 'style, nature'. This, it transpired, was a fundamentally symbolic and spiritual approach to architecture:

> the influence of the known and imagined facts of the universe on architecture, the connection between the world as a structure, and the building, not of the mere details of nature and the ornaments of architecture, but of the whole – the Heavenly Temple and the Earthly Tabernacle.[40]

Lethaby's *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth* (first published in 1891) draws on anthropology and mythology to examine the origins of architecture in an approach consistent – both in its field of enquiry and its exhaustiveness – with Frazer's *Golden Bough*, the first volume of which had appeared in 1890. Lethaby's conclusion was that symbolism is essential to architecture, but that it must be relevant, or 'immediately comprehensible by the great majority of spectators'.[41] The resonance with Clarke's thinking should be immediately apparent. Yet, the generational divide is also significant, largely in its implication for the observer. While in Lethaby's day the use of symbolism (in particular in relation to the Christian church) was still for many a living tradition, by Clarke's time such familiarity was waning, and with it the capacity or willingness to decipher coded imagery such as Clarke's new or revitalised symbols.

The symbolic approach to architecture which underlies work by Lethaby can, intriguingly, be detected equally in Clarke's unrealised chapel and in two sets of unrealised plans for Coventry Cathedral by future associates of the Independent Group (Alison and Peter Smithson, Peter Carter and Colin St John Wilson).[42] To

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[40] Lethaby, *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth*, p. 3.
[41] Lethaby, *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth*, p. 7.
[42] The common ground between the Independent Group and the notional group of 'medieval modernists' (including Lethaby) has been noted by Saler, significantly including the notion of art as encompassing everyday commodities and fine art, of art as having a social function, and of

consider Lethaby's work first, a chapel at Melsetter in Orkney (1900) exemplifies his approach to architecture and symbolism. As Trevor Garnham argues, this chapel – more than elsewhere – provided an opportunity for Lethaby to draw on traditional symbolism but still be assured of the legibility of his intentions.[43] The overall form of the building derives from that of an upturned ship, appropriate both as a Christian symbol (the church as ship of salvation) and for the chapel's location in a fishing village. Inside, a structurally functionless stone archway marks the symbolic passage from nave to chancel, or sanctuary. The chapel grows from the same rubble stone as the kitchen garden wall, suggesting a symbolic link with its natural surroundings, or, as Garnham proposes, a vision of the chapel as a vessel nurturing a seed – the sacred mystery of the cycle of life in nature.

The Smithsons, in their rejected proposal for Coventry Cathedral, also allowed symbolic concerns to shape their design. The building was envisaged as raised above the sloping site with a soaring curved roof from white marble aggregate. Internally, the volume was divided into distinct zones for the clergy and laity, with a further 'archaeological' zone preserved for remembrance: this segregation according to function is a clear precursor of 'Patio and Pavilion'. Notable too was the location of the congregation 'equidistant from the altar rather than progressively further away', the treatment of the organ according to liturgical function, and the ancillary chapels' opening on to a single, centrally placed altar. [44] Wilson and Carter (another future pairing for 'This Is Tomorrow') also conceived their structure symbolically and sculpturally. The sloping site was used to create a subterranean Chapel of the Resurrection below the High Altar; in place of traditional internal decoration the use of geometry (particularly the Golden Section) was intended to create visual excitement and ecclesiastical clarity. In addition – further anticipating 'This Is Tomorrow' – the whole was devised in conjunction with an engineer. Materials, too, were modern: curtain walls of glass, steel columns, box girders and polished aluminium louvres.

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consumption as a form of cultural production. Michael T. Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England: Medieval Modernism and the London Underground* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp 172–3.

[43] Trevor Garnham, 'William Richard Lethaby: Melsetter House, Orkney, Scotland 1898', in *Arts & Crafts Houses I* (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), [unpaginated]. The chapel was completed two years after the house, which Lethaby also designed.

[44] Hammond, p. 136. Hammond described the Smithsons' proposal as 'a serious and imaginative attempt to approach the problem from the point of view of functional analysis rather than from that of conventional ideas and associations'.

The tracing of a line between Lethaby's approach and Clarke's, or even the Smithson's, is not unreasonable, particularly when Lethaby's use of materials at Melsetter is also taken into account. While most of the remaining building was constructed deliberately from local materials using traditional methods, Lethaby could envisage only one method for obtaining the ship-like curve of the roof. Thus he turned to a relatively modern material, concrete (proving his view of architecture as a 'living, progressive structural art')[45] to create a sculptural, inherently symbolic form. All the examples cited above, by Lethaby, Le Corbusier, the Smithsons, Wilson and Carter, proposed a fusion of art and architecture in which decoration in the form of applied art is rendered either superfluous or of secondary importance: the 'sculptural' form of the building, its functionality and its inherent symbolism are primary. This mode of working demonstrates Clarke's ideal, paralleling the design of his own chapel to a symbolic design in concrete and glass.

Clarke's own living spaces form a practical counterpart to his idealised *House of the Future* and chapel. The Hangar at Stowe Hill, a starkly geometric building constructed in the mid-1960s with a flat above, patio roof garden, helicopter housing below and landing pad adjacent, relates structurally to Le Corbusier's model of a dwelling divided into clearly delineated units for living, eating and sleeping and raised on 'piloti' to provide garage space below.[46] Clarke planned much of the construction himself, with the result that the building is a model of functional, economic planning; spare but precisely detailed. Post-Hangar, Clarke continued to consider the ideal living and working space. In the late 1960s he bought the Martello Tower in Aldeburgh – a sculptural void – and helped to draw up architectural plans for living space above and a foundry below. Perhaps most intriguingly, however, numerous sketches exist for a possible living- and work-complex in Thetford forest, sited around an existing tower which Clarke considered buying. Clarke, in these sketches, turned to a spiritual parallel, Le Corbusier's Ronchamp, and in so doing once again underscored a conviction in the unity of art, religion and life.

> I can see a foundry working on the Ronchamp principle i.e. nitches [*sic*] for various functions with communal space (furnaces in the side chapels, sand bed the rest ...[47]

[45] W. R. Lethaby, *Form in Civilization* (London: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 1957), p. 6.
[46] See Richard A. Etlin, *Frank Lloyd and Le Corbusier: the romantic legacy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp 15–16.
[47] Clarke, sketches for workspace (*ca.* mid-1960s) [Clarke archive].

The more practical (and financially essential) aspect of Clarke's work in relation to architecture, his commissioned work, has benefited for the greater part from patronage mediated by architects. The period from the early 1950s to early 1960s, corresponding with the most productive years of Clarke's career, has been identified by Margaret Garlake as one in which the relationship between state and private patronage was radically reformulated.[48] Clarke in fact derived little support from the state, beyond provision of funding for stained glass work through the War Damage Commission (which undertook to underwrite the replacement of at least the east or principal window in a bombed church).[49] The corporate bodies which provided opportunities for the majority of Clarke's work were privately owned, including art in newly built or refurbished offices as enlightened symbols of success or prestige.[50] Clarke was fortunate too in attracting a number of commissions from the Church, in contexts that allowed him a relatively free, creative hand. In both instances, however, it was individuals who instigated or impelled commissions, and a study of Clarke's work reveals a corpus of relatively few names who were involved either in the recommendation, funding or practical facilitation of such work. The sympathy of these individuals, above all of architects such as Basil Spence, Hugh Casson and Robert Potter, is responsible in large part for the latitude with which Clarke was able to express his own ideals rather than reflecting the political, social or artistic motives of others.

The example of Spence, in particular, illustrates the ways in which the architect can foster the artist: Spence proposed Clarke for eight commissions between the early 1950s and late 1960s, including Coventry Cathedral (1953–62) which provided public recognition and financial security early in Clarke's career. Spence believed that architecture constitutes a 'frame for human existence': within this frame functional requirements must be met, but the balance towards a 'habitable and pleasant environment' is provided by artists.[51] This essentially traditionalist stance

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[48] Margaret Garlake, 'Introduction', in Garlake (ed.), *Artists and Patrons in Post-War Britain*, Courtauld Research Papers No. 2 (London: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2001), pp 2–3. This collection of essays seeks to expand knowledge of artistic patronage beyond the parameters of state funding to consider the influence of institutions such as the Whitechapel Art Gallery and support provided by the Gregory Fellowships in Leeds.

[49] Tanya Harrod, *The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 322.

[50] See Alan Osborne (ed.), *Patron: Industry Supports the Arts* (London: The Connoisseur, 1966).

[51] 'Sculpture Shapes Up for Business', *The Director* (July 1963), p. 87.

was exemplified by his design for Coventry Cathedral, a plain sandstone structure internally enriched by stained glass, tapestry and sculptural reliefs.[52] Spence's apparent compromise with modernism, stemming principally from a conscious striving to evoke continuity with cathedrals of the past but also from his acceptance of the conservative design brief, was noted in many contemporary reviews, frequently in terms of a revival of medieval practices. Reyner Banham, for instance, wrote: 'Like the Tories, Coventry is trad, Dad, but has tried to give itself a new image – a medieval long plan with aisles and off-lying polygonal or circular chapels, but executed in non-medieval materials (in part) and adorned with devotional art-work in various non-medieval styles'.[53] Spence's aim was to serve religion by uniting art and architecture in a harmonious entity, and he defended his own avoidance of modernist construction techniques in terms of religious purpose ('a cathedral should not arouse excitement, but a deep emotion ... it must express the concerns of the Christian faith').[54] The significance of Spence's religious belief in moderating his designs for Coventry, as well as in providing a context for his continuing support of Clarke, should not be underestimated. A similar spiritual tenor resonated in an article by Basil Taylor, Librarian of the RCA and friend of Clarke's, which considered, in terms of religion and medievalism, the collaborative dilemma between modern sculptor and architect:

> What is lacking by comparison with the past is any mediating belief or intention which defines the contract between sculpture and architecture – such as the medieval intention to make works to the glory of God ... The most we can achieve, at least in those societies with no dominating ideology, is stylistic sympathy.[55]

Spence agreed, with Taylor, that sculpture, undertaken in a spirit of stylistic sympathy, had the potential to enhance architecture; he also agreed with the importance of siting sculpture within its own space.[56] These fundamentals, preparing

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[52] Basil Spence, *Phoenix at Coventry: the building of a Cathedral* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1962), pp 13–14.
[53] Reyner Banham, 'Coventry Cathedral', *New Statesman* (25 May 1962), p. 768. Banham was associated with the Independent Group, and therefore unlikely to consider work such as Spence's favourably.
[54] Spence, 'The Cathedral Church of St. Michael, Coventry', *RIBA Journal* (February 1955), p. 151. Spence later contrasted the object of exhibition display ('to excite and even shock, above all to tell some story quickly and fully') and a cathedral (to embody 'continuity, unity and permanence as well as ... vitality'). *Phoenix at Coventry*, p. 13.
[55] Basil Taylor, 'The Siting of Sculpture II', *The Listener* (17 June 1954), p. 1046.
[56] 'Sculpture Shapes Up for Business', p. 90.

the ground for an openly collaborative relationship, can be seen particularly in Spence's commissions for his house at Beaulieu (1961; LS162) and for the University of Durham at Newcastle (1962; LS179). For Beaulieu Clarke conceived a large, free-standing sculpture to be placed some fifteen yards from the house (described by Clarke as 'a trapper's house') overlooking woods and the river beyond: a modern building in concrete and wood, with elevated living accommodation and outdoor barbecue.[57] Clarke's sculpture related sympathetically to Spence's design in its use of modern materials (rough-cast aluminium) and unelaborated aesthetic (simple forms suspended from a rod); a further point of contact provided by its derivation from fish skewered on a spit. Comparison in this instance could be drawn with Moore's reclining sculpture for the house of Serge Chermayeff, a humanising element mediating between Chermayeff's modernist architecture and the rolling Sussex Downs beyond.[58] A different function – that of energising space – is performed by Clarke's massive free-standing sculpture for the University of Durham, an organic swirling form animating the courtyard and austere façade of Spence's building. Taylor identified this vital property of sculpture as the power 'to populate a room, a façade, a terrace, or a park with forms which are not wholly dependent on their environment, which do not just regulate the space, but have an independent energy and meaning'.[59]

Commissions and Design Projects

Clarke's work commissioned in relation to architecture exhibits a striking physical diversity, deriving partly from an interest in materials and techniques and partly from consideration of the specific siting of each commission. Such diversity is compounded by a dichotomy between specifically functional work (gates etc.) and 'decorative' work – itself also remarkably varied – produced to enhance the aesthetic of a building. From a different viewpoint, however, it is possible to argue for an underlying unity stemming ultimately from a profound spiritual purpose. Following this argument, functional work (created as an apt, harmonious solution to a problem) may be considered as no different from work intended as 'decorative' or purely aesthetic: both can exert their influence on the viewer to positive effect. A constructive parallel may be drawn with W. R. Lethaby's contention that

[57] Alice Hope, '"A trapper's house" with an elegant touch', *Daily Telegraph* (8 May 1962).
[58] See Moore, 'Sculpture in the open air' (1960), in James (ed.), *Henry Moore on Sculpture*, p. 99.
[59] Taylor, 'The Siting of Sculpture II', p. 1046.

architecture, the place in which rituals are enacted, fundamentally affects man's development, 'the outward ... always reacting again on the inward, so that the concrete becomes a mould for the spiritual'.[60] A different kind of unity, or perhaps more specifically a symbiotic relationship, also exists between the symbolism of works produced for contexts as diverse as churches, laboratories, schools and offices. As will be shown, religious symbolism is omnipresent, coexisting harmoniously with symbolism relating to science, education and nature. Yet it is equally striking that each category, under the aegis of religion, can mingle and nurture another without conflict.

Functional and Design-led Works

> In every practical activity the artist is necessary, to give form to material. An artist must plan the distribution of cities within a region ... the houses themselves, the halls and factories ... the interiors of such buildings – the shapes of their rooms and their lighting and colour ... the furniture of those rooms, down to the smallest detail, the knives and forks, the cups and the saucers and the door-handles.
>
> Read, *Art and Industry*[61]

Read's idealistic assimilation of the artist into society corresponds neatly with Clarke's involvement in creating works of a functional nature. From the above list, Clarke has designed interiors, lighting, furniture, tankards and door-handles, in addition to gates, screens and numerous ecclesiastical fittings. A difference between Clarke's and Read's stance exists, however, in the nature of the artist's involvement. Read advocated the artist's alliance with industry, to design aesthetically pleasing products suitable for mass-production. Clarke, by choice, has remained independent: his designs are tailored to individual contexts, which have in turn provided the challenge and stimulus lacking in industrial design. In each of the categories below – ecclesiastical fittings, gates and interiors – it will be demonstrated that Clarke's designs are not only suited to their function but, where possible, consciously intended to harmonise with their environment.

Clarke's openness to collaboration on architectural and design projects can reasonably be traced to his family background. His grandfather, John Clarke, was a

[60] Lethaby, *Form in Civilization*, p. 1.
[61] Herbert Read, *Art and Industry* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934), p. 57.

church furnisher, and Clarke recalls waiting outside rectories in the Lake District while catalogues or samples of ecclesiastical fittings were discussed.[62] Clarke's father, John Moulding Clarke, trained as an architect. He was elected associate of the RIBA (1912) and after wartime service studied part-time at the Slade School of Art (1918–19) and at the RA's School of Architecture (1922). Significantly, in the early 1920s he worked in the office of Charles Holden's architectural partnership, Adams, Holden and Pearson.[63] Clarke's father designed relatively few projects: those realised include a children's play area for a church, a war memorial for South Darley near Matlock (1927) and an ornate carved oak organ screen for Upholland Parish Church in Lancashire (1931). His principal income between the wars derived from teaching at the Architectural Association, supplemented by sales of topographical etchings.[64] With the closure of the AA in 1939, Clarke's family returned to his grandparents' house in Preston and his father was employed by the Ministry of Works, inspecting war damage to buildings. The defining quality of Clarke's background is thus its practical nature. A demand for church furnishings was answered by his grandfather's brokering of off-the-peg designs, an impersonal but practical solution. Similarly, Clarke's father's work responded to given briefs. In wartime this practical engagement with human concerns – the conjunction of architecture and society, work and life – became more evident still.

The Clarkes' circumstances bear relevance to wider concerns of the 1930s, a period when functional design as an aspect of art was of critical importance and when there was a concerted move, spearheaded by groups such as the DIA, to integrate art (and artists) into society. Read's *Art and Industry* (1934) constituted the most influential exposition of such ideas, but, as Saler proves, the notion of an integrated society also permeated more popular forums such as newspaper editorials, magazines and radio broadcasts.[65] Clarke's willingness to turn his mind to matters of

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[62] John Clarke's business card advertised all manner of ecclesiastical fittings: 'Memorial Historical and Heraldic Windows, Leaded Lights ... Crosses, Candlesticks, Vases &c. ... Wrought and Cast Gates, Railings, and Grilles in Bronze, Brass or Iron, Lecterns, Reredos, Reading Desks, &c. ... Electro, Nickel and Chromium Plating ... Mosaics in Glass or Marble, Lighting, Electric, Gas, Petrol, Acetylene or Oil'.

[63] Two letters from Charles Holden to John Moulding Clarke, dated 1919 and 1920, survive in Clarke's archive. These letters are friendly in tone (one comments favourably on a request for a reference) and discuss matters relating to current architectural projects, for instance the suitability of sculpture for a war cemetery. Clarke remembers frequent mention of Holden's name.

[64] Clarke's archive contains a substantial collection of his father's etchings, accompanied by detailed records of exhibitions and sales as well as press cuttings. Several etchings of buildings were reproduced as illustrations in *The Builder* and the *Architectural Journal* during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

[65] 'To the modern artist art is not just a painted oblong of canvas to be strung on a drawing-room wall, but an impulse which can equally well be expressed in a bowl, a table, a finely printed-book, a

design (gates, screens, doorpushes as well as wallpaper and textiles) forms a direct analogy to these attitudes of the 1930s, as does his pragmatic approach to collaboration. For a stained-glass artist, working with architects and patrons was inevitable: Clarke was introduced to the issues in 1952 when chosen by Basil Spence to work with Keith New and Lawrence Lee on the windows for Coventry. And while such collaboration necessitated a degree of compromise, Clarke in 1958 described the process as 'enlightening'.[66]

Ecclesiastical fittings

In 1947, Eric Newton published a typical article detailing the condition of religious art. Against a renewed interest in 'the unseen world', providing a context for a spiritual revival, he weighed the Church's unwillingness to commit itself to anything beyond the respectable, mass-produced product of the commercial church decorator.[67] The problem was endemic in stained glass, 'mainly, insincere, pseudo-traditional work',[68] and altar furnishings. As late as 1964 the type of silverwork encouraged by Graham Hughes, Art Director for the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, was dismissed as 'experimental'.[69] Reviews of the exhibition, 'Modern Art and the Church' (Oxford, 1963), indicated that the Church's apathy in considering new, creative work was deep-rooted; they also suggested that any isolated enthusiasm was countered by the inability to discriminate between vital contemporary work and a new brand of 'anaemic' modernism.[70]

Clarke was fortunate in attracting the patronage of Walter Hussey, who, while at St Matthews, Northampton in the 1940s, established his mission to enrich liturgy and the church fabric with commissions – from Sutherland, Moore and Britten – that set a new artistic standard for the Church.[71] Hussey was unusual for a clergyman in acquainting himself with contemporary art in London galleries and approaching

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theatrical curtain. We have artists of the stature of Henry Moore, Vanessa Bell and John Nash turning quite naturally from painting a picture to designing a lampstand or a wall paper or a book cover.' 'Art and Industry', *The Listener* (1 June 1932), p. 780; quoted in Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England*, p. 127.

[66] Clarke, interview with Geoffrey Earle Wickham, *Arts News & Review* (4 January 1958).

[67] Eric Newton, 'Religious Art', *World Review* (December 1947), p. 53.

[68] Derek Wilson, 'Ecclesiastical Stained Glass', *Ark* No. 3 (October 1951), p. 26.

[69] 'Church furnishers, on the whole, don't care for it. They prefer tentative Gothic and thin-blooded baroque.' Fiona MacCarthy, 'Churchcraft', *The Guardian* (5 December 1964). An article by Edwin Mullins about the rejection of John Hoskin's altarpiece for Minster Lovell voiced similar concerns. Mullins, 'Must it Be Phoneys for God?', *The Sunday Telegraph* (14 April 1963).

[70] George Butcher, 'Modern Art and the Church', *Guardian* (20 April 1963).

[71] Hussey owned an iron relief by Clarke, *God as the Centre of Nature* (1950; LS007) [Pallant House Gallery].

artists directly, from a position of knowledge. His first major project as Dean of Chichester Cathedral, in conjunction with architect Robert Potter, was to refurbish the Chapel of St Mary Magdalene. Potter initially envisaged figures of Jesus and Mary Magdalene (by a sculptor such as Hepworth) behind a free-standing altar.[72] Subsequently he realised that colour was needed, and a painting, *Noli me tangere*, was commissioned from Sutherland to complement a plain altar in Purbeck stone. Clarke's commission, for a pair of candlesticks, therefore had to harmonise with Potter's altar and Sutherland's painting.

The chronology of the works' completion suggests that Clarke had not seen Sutherland's painting when designing the candlesticks: these were installed together with the altar in May 1960, five months before Sutherland submitted two versions of *Noli me tangere* to the Cathedral Administrative Chapter.[73] However, Clarke's archive contains a photograph of a Sutherland painting owned by Hussey, *Thorn Head* (1947).[74] Clarke admired the spikiness of Sutherland's early work, and in the Chichester candlesticks (1960; LS150) the candleholder itself appears as a thorn piercing the support. The commission specified candlesticks forged from iron, a material suited to the linearity of the design. Clarke, no longer working with iron, chose to open-cast the pair from aluminium, which he waxed black to resemble iron.[75] Their size, dark tone and simplicity of form ensure that the candlesticks read well from a distance, particularly important as the chapel can be viewed the length of the south aisle. In addition, their spikiness perfectly complements the palmate foliage in Sutherland's painting.

The high altar set for Coventry Cathedral (1962; LS175–6) presented a more exacting design brief. The cross, as specified by Provost Williams, had to include a cross of nails salvaged from the ruins of the old Cathedral; the candlesticks were to leave the altar uncluttered, so that there would be no hindrance when communion was celebrated; it was also essential that the cross should harmonise with Sutherland's tapestry, screening the figure of Christ crucified at its base. The commission was offered first to Robert Goodden, who proposed a work including the cross of nails, a radiating motif and a branching structure at the base with twenty-one

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[72] David Coke and Robert Potter, 'The Cathedral and Modern Art', in Mary Hobbs (ed.), *Chichester Cathedral: An Historical Survey* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 1994), p. 270.
[73] Coke and Potter, 'The Cathedral and Modern Art', p. 271.
[74] It seems likely that the black and white photograph was supplied by Hussey.
[75] In fact, some of the press cuttings stated that the candlesticks were made from iron. See, for example, Eric Newton, 'Commissions in Context', *Guardian* (7 April 1961). Open-casting was, of course, a far quicker process than forging iron.

creatures to symbolise the creation.[76] Goodden's design was considered unduly fussy, particularly in relation to the tapestry. Clarke's solution was a much simpler, free-standing cross mounted on a block of marble behind the altar, with the candlesticks ingeniously cantilevered to leave the altar surface free.[77] Visually, the twisted form of the cross, containing the plated iron nails, echoed Sutherland's tapestry. Yet it equally represented a continuum with Clarke's symbolic work. Vulnerability is suggested by the outer cross's sheltering form and protective sheath around its stem (recalling the 'Goldsmiths' Cross'), while the symbol's living spirit is suggested by its organic form and roughened texture.

Gates, Screens and Doors

Clarke was commissioned to create a handful of works designed to move or rotate, in which functionality was a primary factor. Of these, particularly notable are the main entrance gate to Churchill College, Cambridge (1964; LS195), and a set of screens for Newcastle Civic Centre (1968; LS314). The gate for Churchill College acts as a night barrier, blocking the passage adjacent to the porters' lodge. Clarke's design consists of stacked horizontal shafts pivoting on a central core: during the day the gate can be positioned parallel to the walls, allowing pedestrians to walk on either side; at night it can be rotated and locked in place at right angles to the walls. The construction is uncomplicated, and undisguised. The horizontal fins (each cast in one piece) are simply stacked on the central core; the aluminium's surface is left rough, showing its origin in carved polystyrene. Aesthetically brutal, the gate complements the unleavened brickwork and geometric architecture of the college. Practically, it provides an impenetrable barrier that can easily be manoeuvred by one person. The six grilles for the banqueting hall of Newcastle Civic Centre are positioned to slide inwards in pairs from the servery recesses on either side of the hall. Clarke was intrigued by the idea of creating screens with no visible frame: the support for the patternwork is concealed at each upper edge and side nearest the wall. Following from this idea, the designs of the screens are based on falling strips of metal, some curved, some straight, piling up in random formations – giving a feeling of movement to an otherwise a static context.

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[76] Spence approached Goodden in October 1958, but Goodden did not produce designs until April 1961. Goodden, letter to Spence (6 April 1961), in Louise Campbell, *Coventry Cathedral*, p. 227.
[77] Clarke also designed reflectors for the candlesticks, but these were rejected lest they obscure the tapestry. The cross and candlesticks were carved from polystyrene, cast in silver, then gold-plated.

In 1973 Clarke designed door handles and plates for glass doors in the newly renovated west entrance of Chichester Cathedral. For each door (three in total), he cast a pair of aluminium fittings, flat on one side (to be pushed) and lipped on the other (to be pulled). Each consists of vertical shafts on one side and horizontal on the other, so that a cross is formed when closed; after dark, the three crosses appear to levitate as a silver 'Trinity' against a blackened backdrop.[78] For this commission in particular Clarke balanced functionality and symbolism with the utmost simplicity and sympathy for context; the roughened finish of the aluminium contrasts with the modern plate glass, but also harmonises with the surrounding weathered stonework. The rigorousness of the solution again calls to mind Read, in *Art and Industry*, invoking the abstract artist to combine 'the highest degree of practical economy with the greatest measure of spiritual freedom'.[79]

The feeding of one area of Clarke's work into another (in itself a measure of practical economy) is most evident in certain of these design works. A commission in 1965 for aluminium door knobs (LS217), led to Clarke considering the forms as independent, free-standing sculptures, whose surface decoration was explored in the 'Plateau' series (1965–9; LS219–22, LS346–57). Three of these later works (LS346–8) stem from a further work, a relief for the Physics Department of Liverpool University (1968; LS312), where their rounded forms represent the movement and collision of atoms.

Interiors

A significant number of Clarke's commissions in the 1950s and early 1960s derived from commerce: decorative works for office buildings, banks, private companies and cruise liners. Art was manipulated as a visible symbol of prestige, as witnessed by the foundation of notable art collections by companies such as British Petroleum.[80] From the early 1950s the interiors of corporate premises began to adopt a distinct look, identified variously as 'English vernacular' or 'contemporary'. The hallmark of this style, particularly in its early stages, was its eclecticism. All manner of decorative styles – floral, geometric, ornate gilded, abstract – were confidently combined, resulting in an often confusing mixture of patterns, textures and materials.

[78] The dedication of the Cathedral is the Holy Trinity.
[79] Read, *Art and Industry*, p. 57.
[80] Norman Reid, 'Painting: No Solemn Duty', in Alan Osborne (ed.), *Patron: Industry Supports the Arts* (London: The Connoisseur, 1966), p. 45.

The origin of this approach can be traced in part to the Festival of Britain, with its support of both young and established artists and designers regardless of style or approach, while the type of work produced was frequently associated (not always favourably) with the RCA.[81]

In the immediate wake of the Festival of Britain, the Time Life offices in New Bond Street (1952–3) represented a collaborative enterprise which aimed to create a distinctly British character: a 'new vernacular' style. Designed by architect Michael Rosenauer, the interior was coordinated by Hugh Casson and involved twenty-nine artists and designers, each room being assigned to a different group. The result was praised as representing 'the advanced taste of the 'fifties as surely as the BBC interiors represent that of the 'thirties'.[82] However, almost all critics acknowledged reservations about the 'showcase' approach, the inclusion of leading exponents in each field of design and craftsmanship to the detriment of the unity of the whole. Clarke was commissioned to create 'an iron and marble wall sculpture at the head of the stairs'[83] in a reception room which also contained a wall-sized tooled leather map, a 'weather window', full-length curtains printed with classical columns, suspended lighting panels, an ornate gilded clock, a carpet inspired by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English flower prints, and a glimpse down the stairwell of an abstract mural by Ben Nicholson. Clarke's eight-foot sculpture (1952; LS050), essentially an abstracted figure within a linear cage (relating formally to both *Complexities of Man* and the Unknown Political Prisoner sculptures), exemplified what M. H. Middleton described as an RCA 'corporate' style: an idiom 'based on blobs and crescents, spiky triangles and a linear framework'.[84] The idiom in fact reflected a more general style inspired by scientific imagery – in particular the lines and blobs of molecular models – which was seen across textiles, accessories and furniture in the early 1950s and memorably described by Richard Hamilton as 'mass produced contemporary with knobs on'.[85] The *Time Life* sculpture thus provides an extremely clear example of the stylistic crossover between the applied and fine arts. It is, however, perhaps unique among Clarke's commissioned work in bearing no link, thematic or aesthetic, to the site for which it was conceived. Instead it contrasts

[81] It is notable that several RCA students and tutors contributed to the Festival of Britain, among them R. D. Russell, R. Y. Goodden, Richard Guyatt, Kenneth Rowntree, Abram Games and Frank Dobson.
[82] Lionel Brett, 'Towards The New Vernacular', *Design*, No. 51 (March 1953), p. 13.
[83] J. R. P. Moon (RCA), letter to Clarke (13 May 1952) [Clarke archive].
[84] M. H. Middleton, 'Royal College of Art Students' Exhibition', *The Spectator* (26 December 1952).
[85] Richard Hamilton, from *Design* No. 149 (1961), quoted in Mary Schoeser, 'The Appliance of Science', in Elain Harwood and Alan Powers (eds), *Festival of Britain*, p. 125.

materially and texturally – according to the logic of the interior – as just one constituent of a 'rumbustious mixture'.[86]

Similar principles of eclecticism operated in a number of other design projects with which Clarke was involved in the early 1960s. The interior of the cruise liner *Oriana* (1960), the fourth largest in the world, was overseen by the Design Research Unit, headed by Milner Gray and Misha Black.[87] In Festival of Britain style, it presented a rich artistic mixture, including a mural by Piper, a decorative glass panel by Laurence Scarfe, fabric collage by Margaret Kaye, chairs by Robin Day and Ernest Race, and six 'mural constructions' by Mary Martin. Clarke contributed an abstract open-cast aluminium relief for the first-class restaurant (1960; LS153), mounted on 'Brazilian figured rosewood' panelling in uncomfortable proximity to a utility style clock. The overall design approach, comparable with that of the Time Life interior, provoked similar concerns: namely that there was no guiding aesthetic principle, the commissioning proceeding 'on the usual eclectic "old boy" network'.[88] The result, in the opinion of one reviewer, was decorative variety, where stronger architectural feeling was needed throughout (for instance, Mary Martin's constructions were treated as 'pictures', when they demanded bolder usage as 'walls').[89] The interior of *SS Canberra* (1961), coordinated by Casson, similarly included murals by Robert Buhler, Mary Fedden and Edward Ardizzone, a relief by Robert Adams, and portraits of famous cricketers by Ruskin Spear in the 'Cricketers Tavern'. For the Tourist Class Restaurant Clarke contributed a large abstract horizontal relief (LS159), a series of smaller aluminium reliefs featuring images of vessels (LS160) and dividing screens set with coloured glass (LS158).[90]

Domestic interiors provide an informative parallel to the decoration of commercial premises. In 1956 Sanderson commissioned Casson and the RCA to design 'Flat '56', a showcase for modern textiles, wallpaper and furniture. The result featured some surprising elements (a sunken white-carpeted well for watching television), but again a mixture of styles and textures predominated: white Italian

[86] Brett, 'Towards The New Vernacular', p. 22.
[87] The director of the Orient Line, Colin Anderson, was responsible for the ethos of commissioning artists to design and furnish the interiors of his cruise liners. He supervised this process himself until 1960.
[88] 'Interior Design: S. S. Oriana', *Architectural Design* (March 1951).
[89] 'Interior Design: S. S. Oriana'. The review again noted the negative influence of the RCA, particularly in the 'abundance of expensive materials and finishes [and] capacity for endless rather niggling detail'.
[90] The format of the large horizontal relief in both *SS Oriana* and *SS Canberra* was dictated by the proportions of the rooms.

chairs, Hille storage units, geometric light fittings, gilt-framed mirrors.[91] Clarke contributed two items: an abstract wallpaper design (black and white on a grey ground; LP150) and an uncompromising open-cast relief, intended to function – in place of a fireplace – as the room's focal point (LS112).

Clarke's role in 'Flat '56', as in other interior design projects such as the Time Life building and the cruise liners, was relatively passive. He provided work as specified, to be assimilated into an overall conception over which he had no control. The resulting, often hectic, juxtaposition, constitutes the antithesis of the interiors he conceived and executed for his own home, Stowe Hill. Bought in 1954 as a dilapidated Victorian country house, Stowe Hill offered work and living space on a scale unimaginable in London. Clarke viewed the process of renovation and adaptation pragmatically: deciding what was necessary and designing fixtures in purely functional terms. A foundry was set up in the former stables; equipped initially with tools for iron sculpture, later with sand beds and crucibles for open- and full-mould casting. Within the house itself several rooms were knocked together to provide a large stained glass studio, with further studio space downstairs for constructing polystyrene models. The furniture in the living areas was designed according to function, making no concession to the period of the house. Built-in pine benches with fabric-covered foam cushioning exemplified Clarke's belief that furniture should be practical and comfortable, but should grow out of the house, not be brought in from an 'outside and alien source'.[92] Long pine workbenches and seating areas for dining (as in the breakfast room) were also built in. The elimination of extraneous 'clutter' was facilitated by numerous cupboards with sliding doors, camouflaged by being painted the same colour as surrounding walls. The colours used, predominantly white, charcoal grey and chocolate, highlighted by orange, flattered sculpture, although photographs from the 1960s show the walls frequently bare and sculpture displayed sparingly – large pieces sometimes appearing more as furniture than decoration.[93] Clarke's designs for Stowe Hill were categorised as 'purist' in Mary Gilliatt's survey of British interior design, *English Style*; thereby contrasting with other (perhaps arbitrarily defined) styles such as 'post-festival',

[91] 'Flat '56', *Architect's Journal* (2 February 1956).
[92] Mary Gilliatt, *English Style* (London: The Bodley Head, 1967), p. 31.
[93] The paint colours were chosen and mixed specially by Clarke's wife, who also made the upholstery for the furniture. Vinny Lee, 'Blueprint for Living', *The Times Magazine* (21 October 2000), p. 57.

'fantasy in decoration' and 'designer-decorator'.[94] A later article by Gilliatt also described Clarke's '*tour de force*' as designer: the Hangar at Stowe Hill.[95]

Symbolic Works

Edwin Mullins's largely negative survey of post-war sculpture in London in 1962 particularly targeted the commissioning of 'themed' sculpture to advertise company premises or illustrate industrial products.[96] The concept of 'themed' art had been fostered by the involvement of artists in the design of display stands for exhibitions such as 'Britain Can Make It' (1946). Most prominently, the Festival of Britain (1951), with its division into themed pavilions depicting 'Sea and Ships' or 'Origins of the Land', had encouraged mural painters, sculptors, furniture and textile designers to produce subject-related work sited in relation to architecture.[97] Clarke's first major commission derived from this source: a large iron and glass relief for a wall within Rodney Thomas's 'Transport Pavilion' (*Icarus*; LS031).

After *Icarus*, Clarke almost invariably referred to the function of a building in his architectural work. The desire to convey a theme in terms of symbolism has resulted most frequently, as has been suggested, in graphically derived, two-dimensional works: reliefs, windows, mosaics, tapestries. The effective juxtaposition of such works in relation to the architecture depends not, as with free-standing sculpture, on the outlining of space, but on the use of materials (to contrast or sympathise) and on the scale of the design in relation to its context – factors which are undoubtedly major considerations for Clarke. Yet it is his work's symbolic nature which distinguishes it most consistently from architectural work by other artists, and which will therefore form a primary consideration of this last section. The basic symbols in Clarke's work have already been discussed. However, his commissioned, architectural work has tended to inspire a more complex symbolic programme, encompassing religion, education, science and nature. Such intertwining of themes, resisting simple categorisation, suggests a unity of vision prefigured as early as Clarke's thesis in 1951.

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[94] Gilliatt, *English Style*, pp 29–31.
[95] Mary Gilliatt, 'Artist as Designer', *Woman's Journal* (June 1971), p. 43.
[96] Edwin Mullins, 'The Open-Air Vision: a survey of sculpture in London since 1945', *Apollo* (August 1962), p. 455.
[97] See Robert Burstow, 'Modern Sculpture in the South Bank Townscape' in Elain Harwood and Alan Powers (eds), *Festival of Britain*, Twentieth Century Architecture 5 (London: Twentieth Century Society, 2001), pp 95–106.

Works created by Clarke for educational establishments frequently depict the attainment of wisdom in allegorical terms. The viewer is presented with a symbolic vision, whose meaning can be teased out, solved, learnt from: a parallel to the medieval notion of learning leading to spiritual enlightenment. Clarke's approach provides an explicit metaphor for his own belief, while also indicating his aim of instruction and betterment through art. To this end, Read, an unwavering believer in the role of art in education, quoted Karl Jaspers:

> We see things as art teaches us to see them. We experience space through the form that the architect has imposed upon it; we experience a landscape as it has been epitomized in its religious architecture, shaped by human labour, and made a part of life by constant use. We experience nature and man only as they are reduced to their essence in sculpture, drawing and painting. In a sense, it is ... only when this is done, that things assume their characteristic form and reveal their visible quality and soul which had previously seemed hidden.[98]

In returning to Klee's precept of looking behind the façade, grasping the root of things and projecting this in (often complex) symbolic cast, Clarke's mode of expression – particularly in the context of commissioned work – stands isolated. The sample of post-war sculpture commissioned for schools and colleges illustrated in Rosenberg's *Architect's Choice* shows a variety of approaches.[99] Animal sculptures (at their worst pilloried by Alloway as 'cosy totems' for school life)[100] proved popular: Meadows produced two bird sculptures for schools in Hertfordshire and Kent in the 1950s. Moore's *Family Group* (1950) for the Barclay Secondary School in Stevenage, although closely related to his other work, offered a positive image for the identity of the building. Enigmatic works from the other members of the 1952 Venice Biennale group, for example Butler's 'ambiguous and violent' iron *Oracle* (1953) for Hatfield Technical College[101] or Turnbull's *Stargazer* (1959), could perhaps be read in the context of popular science fiction imagery. Post-1960, brightly

[98] Karl Jaspers, trans. Harold Reiche, Harry T. Moore and Karl W. Deutsch, *Tragedy is not Enough* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952), quoted in Read, *The Form of Things Unknown*, pp 43–4.
[99] Eugene Rosenberg and Richard Cork, *Architect's Choice: Art in Architecture in Great Britain since 1945* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), pp 34–51.
[100] Lawrence Alloway, 'The Siting of Sculpture I', *The Listener* (17 June 1954), p. 1044.
[101] Alloway, 'The Siting of Sculpture I', p. 1045.

coloured abstract sculpture – such as King's *Dunstable Reel* (1970) – introduced a playful dimension. However, while all of these works function as symbols of a kind, they differ from Clarke's work both in the complexity of their message and in their lack of spiritual agenda. The parallel of Clarke's thinking with medieval practice, the use of allegory and codes for the viewer to decipher, has already been suggested, but perhaps not sufficiently emphasised. Clarke's 'symbols' in the commissioned works often take the form of composite structures, where elements such as a ladder, cross, keyhole or sphere inflect upon one another to compose a message.[102]

The way in which Clarke translated notions of learning and spiritual enquiry into symbolic form is illustrated particularly well by the window commissioned for Ipswich Civic College (1961; LG027). Clarke described its symbolism in detail:

> On the left a shape which could be interpreted as a ladder, leading towards a form in the centre of which is a keyhole. This is the symbol for what amounts to the ultimate goal of the majority of people who undertake any form of study. There will be a crystal behind this keyhole (a form of bright attraction, the crock of gold). Study fashions the key and this keyhole is the way to the ultimate use of knowledge. This is invariably a conclusion.[103]

The use of a ladder to suggest ascent towards higher levels of understanding links the window with overtly religious works such as the cross for All Saints, Langley (1964; LS187), or *Beyond Materialism* (the ladder series, 1976; LS415), as well as in the relief for Haverhill Chalkstone Upper School (1977; LS419). At Ipswich it may be interpreted as a passage through education to enlightenment, although Clarke's notes indicate a further spiritual dimension. At the centre of a maze-like form are two intersecting keyholes suggesting a cross. While the two keyholes represent the two forms of knowledge necessary for access, intellect and intuition, the formation of the cross also implies the 'earthly transcended by the spiritual': the original (pre-Christian) meaning of the cross. A contemporary aluminium relief for St James's School, Farnworth (1961; LS163), also takes the image of a key to symbolise the

[102] It is perhaps not insignificant that Clarke trained as a wireless operator in the RAF and used a Morse code machine (which he still possesses). He has retained an interest in codes, and as an alternative for the Chichester Cathedral doorpushes created two lead panels (1973; LS404a–b) in which numbers can be decoded to read: 'God is within you' and 'This house is a catalyst'. The panels were intended to intrigue children.

[103] Clarke, typescript description of Ipswich window, with handwritten amendments (1961?) [Clarke archive].

unlocking of knowledge, with a cross clearly positioned above the key to indicate the relationship between education and spiritual understanding. The keyholes of the Ipswich window, symbolising (according to Clarke's notes) intellect and intuition, demonstrate a return to facets of perception first considered in 'Exposition of a Belief'. The appropriateness of their use at Ipswich is clearly their interconnection with notions of the attainment of knowledge. Clarke underscores this with an experimental approach to materials, the earliest large-scale combination of cast aluminium with glass.

The Bridge (1976; LS417), commissioned for a new police headquarters at Martlesham (Ipswich) and contemporary with Clarke's 'ladder' works, is unusual in considering concepts of learning and morality from the point of view of society. At the lowest level a coiled snake (in mosaic), represents the jungle, or the base aspects of human nature; in its midst is a functionless (aluminium) column, a remnant of abandoned, ancient laws. Above the jungle, a bridge, representing the law, is supported by an arch – the police. On either side of the jungle are steps indicating the climb from lawlessness to higher standards. However, on one side the steps continue above the bridge, suggesting that the law is not perfection: there is still further to climb. *The Bridge* undoubtedly succeeds more as a symbolic construct than as sculpture: it appears dwarfed by its proximity to trees and would have benefited from realisation on a human scale, as a bridge capable of being crossed.

The Conjunction of Science and Religion

If the parallel paths of educational and spiritual enlightenment produce relatively straightforward symbolism, with origins that can be traced to medievalism, Clarke's fusion of religious and scientific imagery proves more problematic. Science and theology had coexisted without conflict until the publication of Darwin's theories of evolution, which caused, as Charles Raven has documented, an exaggerated split between the two disciplines, each pursuing a route of discrete specialisation.[104] By the 1930s, there was a perceptible movement towards reunion – in line with similar efforts to unite, for example, fine art and industrial design (the DIA), or painting,

[104] Writing in 1943, Charles Raven quoted from F. Wood Jones's *Design and Purpose* (1942) to this effect: 'The misfortune that has overtaken the spiritual outlook of man is that as his universe expanded his conception of the deity did not expand with it'. Charles Raven, *Science, Religion and the Future.* Library of Anglican Spirituality (London: Mowbray, 1994), p. 64.

literature and music in the Group Theatre.[105] The outbreak of war in the late 1930s disrupted the process with profound consequences. At a time when there was the greatest need for unity within the Christian Church, it showed itself, in Raven's words, to be 'theologically and ethically divided and in consequence practically impotent': scientists (or anyone else for that matter) looking to the Church for guidance in formulating a new philosophy of life were met with little or no response.[106]

Recent debate in the US has exaggerated the polarisation of science and religion to the extent that Creationists, believing in intelligent design (evolution masterminded by a supreme being), are fighting to ban the teaching of Darwinian theory. Clarke's own belief, although likewise resting on the concept of a supreme force guiding creation, also accommodates an interest in scientific research, suggesting a capacity for coexistence: for congruence not conflict. Clarke has not articulated this belief in words, but his stance (indicated by free cross-currents between scientific and spiritual imagery in his work) implies a fundamental agreement with Raven's conclusions. Raven noted that whichever field he was studying – theology, biology, geology – he was constantly asking the same questions and being compelled to give similar answers: 'one looks through a stereoscope and at first sees only two blurred because separate pictures; as one alters the focus ... suddenly the two images come together and the whole scene stands out solid and in perspective'. Raven's stereoscopic vision of reality was seen from the double viewpoint of science and religion, two worlds which were, to him, one and the same.[107] Study of imagery within Clarke's commissions indicates a similar unity of vision.

The context for the majority of Clarke's science-oriented work was the building in universities of new laboratories in specially designated buildings.[108] Clarke's first such commission was for a mosaic for the Chadwick Laboratory,

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[105] John Oman's *The Natural and the Supernatural* (1931), in particular, recognised no opposition between nature and grace or science and religion, viewing the worlds of the scientist and the theologian as one and the same. See Charles Raven, *Science, Religion and the Future*, pp 74–5.

[106] Raven, *Science, Religion and the Future*, pp 78–9. Charles Raven (1885–1964) was an eminent theologian, becoming Professor of Divinity at Cambridge in 1932, but also informed in the natural sciences. His critique of religion is well-argued, and from the point of view of his background, significant.

[107] Raven, *Science, Religion and the Future*, pp 110–111.

[108] In the decade from 1960 to 1970 numbers of university students increased from 100,000 to 220,000 and universities increased from 22 to 46. Tony Birks, *Building the New Universities* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1972), p. 9. Of the eight commissions Clarke undertook for universities, four were connected with new science buildings.

Liverpool University, designed by Spence and completed in 1959 as part of a new science complex.[109] A contemporary press report described its imagery:

> To the left is the Cross, which some figures face, on which others have turned their backs; to the right are flames which in their turn fascinate and repel a group of spectral shapes; in the centre is a vortex which those figures ignoring both Cross and flames are regarding. The eye of the vortex is a keyhole ... representing what? The way to the scientist's truth, perhaps.[110]

Taking the principal constituents of the image, the cross may be read as representing religion, the keyhole knowledge and the vortex science. The Chadwick Laboratory was named after Sir James Chadwick, a scientist who helped to construct Britain's first cyclotron at Liverpool University.[111] In the context of this mosaic, the image of the vortex clearly suggests the cyclotron (an apparatus in which charged particles are accelerated by an alternating electric field while following an outward spiral or circular path in a magnetic field). Yet throughout Clarke's work the image of the vortex appears equally in purely religious contexts. For instance, one of the stained glass windows at Christchurch, Thornton (1963; LG031), represents the nativity of Christ as a swirling force, thrusting outwards. Clarke's description of the window reads: 'Nativity. Revelation of the Trinity'.[112] A similar instance of this imagery in a religious context occurs in the pair of windows for St Clements, Lower Broughton in Manchester (1960; LG024): one window represents the power of God as a swirling vortex, the other as a force cutting through air or matter.

Clarke's final 'science-based' commission was for the stairwell of a new Physics department designed by Spence at Exeter University (1969; LS333). As source material, Professor G. K. T. Conn provided theses and books illustrating the process of growing a crystal from a direct current arc – a process which fascinated Clarke. The resulting 40ft cast aluminium relief can be read as an abstract representation of the purification of contaminated material by an electric current, the three waves representing the current and the sphere the pure form, although Clarke himself suggested an oblique interpretation, nearer alchemy than science:

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[109] 'New-Look University: First steps to a city scientists' precinct', *Liverpool Daily Post* (29 April 1960).
[110] Geoffrey Moorhouse, 'Liverpool: Physics and Civil Engineering', *Guardian* (18 November 1959).
[111] Chadwick, who also discovered the neutron, held the Lyon Jones Chair of Physics at Liverpool University from 1935 to 1948.
[112] Clarke, caption for Nativity Window, Christchurch, Thornton (1963).

The old magic of creativity at a point of proximity.
A blue man and a yellow man shake hands and their hands should turn green.[113]

Alternatively, the image lies open to a religious reading: the threefold force of the Trinity resulting in the purest spiritual form – the sphere.[114] The design, spanning several floors, emphasises the proportions of the narrow, tall building: it is not easily visible in its entirety but encourages the viewer to look up or down to trace its course.

The relief at Exeter is the only instance in which Clarke has referred to the formation of a crystal, although there are many occasions in his commissioned work where he has used crystals (or the most readily available equivalent – roughly set lumps of glass formed as a by-product of melting glass). Historically, the process of crystallisation possesses strong symbolic associations. Mark A. Cheetham documents references in the writings of Kandinsky (where abstraction is referred to as a crystallisation of the absolute), Worringer (who viewed the 'crystallinic' as the purest form of abstraction) and Klee (who characterised himself as a crystal).[115] Herbert Read structured the entire third section of his novel *The Green Child* around crystals: stones highly prized for their purity, and upon the formal knowledge of which was built 'the whole concept of beauty'.[116]

In Clarke's commissioned work, crystal retains comparable notions of purity, perfection and spirituality. Each of Clarke's aumbry doors, at Shere (1958; LS134), King's Lynn (1964; LS206) and Bury St Edmunds (1988; LS576), depicts a chalice within which is set a crystal to represent the divine gift of Holy Communion. Each crystal is a different colour (amethyst, gold, green) and each is lit from behind to emphasise the symbolism. At Ipswich College the centre of the keyhole, symbolising knowledge, contains a ruby crystal. Likewise, in one of the windows at Crownhill, a spherical crystal (symbol for perfection and eternity, to represent Jesus' saying 'I and the Father are one') catches the light and shines to wherever the viewer stands. In

[113] Clarke, caption to sculpture at Exeter University (undated).
[114] Historically the sphere has been regarded as a religious symbol since it signifies a three-dimensional circle: a line without end, representing eternity.
[115] Mark A. Cheetham, *The Rhetoric of Purity: Essentialist Theory and the Advent of Abstract Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 88.
[116] After taking the opportunity to steer his argument towards a consideration of aesthetics, Read concluded his novel with the protagonists finally united in death: symbolically interlaced in the 'same crystal harmony'. Herbert Read, *The Green Child* (London: William Heineman Ltd., 1935), pp 174–6, 195.

each instance, crystal's light-transmitting properties and its traditional connotations of purity and essentialism, are used to reinforce Clarke's symbolic message.

Plant Forms

The association of the natural growth of plants with notions of spiritual growth or progression towards a higher order forms the basis of the symbolism of several commissioned works, notably one of the 'Wisdom' windows for Coventry Cathedral (1958; LG020), the *Four Seasons* for Newnham College, Cambridge (1958; LS125), and a relief sculpture for the chapel of Bishop Otter College, Chichester (1962; LS170).

The Coventry window, depicting God's wisdom in creating a living plant, presents the most complex exposition of natural symbolism in Clarke's work. According to the artist's agenda, the whole design represents a flower, with parts of the Old Testament inspiring forms within its structure. From a bulb-like case at the foot of the window issue the parting of the waves, the creation of heaven and earth and dual stems representing Adam and Eve. The path of Adam and Eve leads through an increasingly evil world (represented by thorns and growing darkness), until the Flood and the persecution of the twelve tribes of Israel by the Egyptians. Finally, at the top of the window, the full bloom of God's initial conception appears in the form of the Birth, the Death, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.[117] This convoluted construct, based on a mixture of Biblical symbols and symbols from Koch, is typical of the joint approach adopted by Clarke, New and Lee, and was consistently criticised by reviewers for its obscurity.[118] The windows present a textbook example of symbolism which may become clear only after persistent study: the works evidently contain codes and messages, but, frustratingly no written explanation is available within the Cathedral.[119] Spence's conception of the window's symbolic sequence also appears misjudged. The colour progression from green, through red and purple to gold, intended to emphasise the altar with a blaze of golden light, matches a chronological progression of man's journey from youth through maturity to the afterlife. However, due to Spence's positioning of the

[117] Clarke, in Robin Darwin, *Windows for Coventry* (London: The Royal College of Art, 1956), p. 6
[118] See, for instance, Pierre Jeannerat, 'All that glass and it's all obscure', *Daily Mail* (4 July 1956).
[119] Spence glibly commented, 'If people find that the symbolism of the windows is too difficult to understand so much the better. They can go around with a guide book and attempt to unravel some meaning and purpose'. Spence, in 'The Coventry Windows', *The Architect and Building News* (9 August 1956), p. 191.

windows in recessed angles, the sequence is visible only with the viewer's back to the altar, from which point it reads in reverse: from the afterlife to youth, and from radiant gold to the greenness of immaturity. Spence's window templates themselves presented problems, their concrete mullions being so heavy in relation to the glass that the artists were confronted either with the task of designing a window which flowed across the divisions or which presented small, compartmentalised images. Clarke adopted the first option, and succeeded through an integrated use of colour, shading and designs which, reinforced by the shapes of glass, carefully worked across the divisions. It is notable, however, that he never again attempted a symbolic design of such intricacy.

Clarke's later works using natural symbolism present far simpler allegories. *Four Seasons*, like the iron *Symbol* (1955; LS117), depicts a plant, growing season by season, to represent the spiritual growth of man.[120] The Bishop Otter sculpture likewise presents a flower growing from a table (the earth), a cross within its bloom and a keyhole within its root. This work, occupying the entire gable end of a newly built chapel, functions particularly well in its architectural context, Clarke's early approach to carving the polystyrene with a roughened finish equating well with the organic form and forming an effective contrast with the brickwork. A much later work for a church centre in Norwich, *Our Path* (1984; LS520), presents a more abstract and clearly delineated image, where natural growth parallels the passage of life: a maze suggests the contorted development of a plant, upwards towards the cross. Symbolically, *Our Path* relates to the etching, *The Seed* (1990; LP181), where a plant form both derives from the cross (the seed) and flowers with crosses. The cross should here be read not as a symbol for the crucifixion, but as an indication of spirituality: the germ from which the plant grows and which matures, as a seed, to broadcast and grow anew.

In two of the above works, the concept of 'wisdom' is also clearly invoked (the keyhole within the Bishop Otter flower contains a crystal). Such interlinking of learning, religion and nature is seen most clearly, however, in a free-standing sculpture for the primary school of St John the Baptist, Leicester (1974), where Clarke combined mosaic tiles and aluminium in a work entitled *Development*. A plant form entwined around a frame suggests the child gaining support and guidance from the established structure of education, represented by the three sides of the square firmly planted in the ground; the plant's bloom rising above the framework is

[120] Clarke, description of *Four Seasons* (1958) [Clarke archive].

offered by the artist 'as a Christian symbol'.[121] Religion and education had already been presented as indivisible in the window for Ipswich College. In this later work, nature is also admitted as a harmonious element in the overall conception.

Conclusion

A survey of even a fraction of Clarke's commissioned work reveals both its extraordinary variety and its apparently contradictory methods of approach. Many commissions for public buildings elicit a symbolic response, often on a subject related to the building's function. Such works frequently incorporate religious references, a unifying theme fundamental to Clarke's outlook. On other occasions, Clarke provides simple, functional answers. In the case of gates or door furniture, for example, he does not force a symbolic message (or unduly decorative work) into an inappropriate context. Unlike many sculptors – Caro provides an obvious example – he has been happy to contribute to interior design projects where his work is placed in juxtaposition with all manner of conflicting styles. Yet, as has been shown by the *House of the Future* as well as his own home, his preference is for complete authority over design, which itself should be spare and functional. In the 1950s Clarke collaborated over the furnishing of a small, whitewashed oratory at Bridge of Allan, contributing an iron *Madonna and Child* (1951; LS033), brazed iron *Stations of the Cross* (1952; LS049), a stained glass window and a grey-toned tapestry, *Day of Judgement.* Concurrently, he was planning his own unadorned, 'modernist' chapel in the grounds of Stowe Hill.[122]

These divergent approaches undoubtedly pose problems in trying to grasp an overall view of Clarke's commissioned work. His willingness to collaborate on design projects conforms to one definition, or aspect, of postmodernism: an acceptance of the artist's involvement in fields such as furniture, textiles and interiors, overturning hierarchical divisions between fine and applied arts.[123] The emergence in the mid-1950s of such an attitude is demonstrated by Clarke's contemporary, Paolozzi. Yet while other aspects of Paolozzi's work (for example his appropriation of advertising and cartoons for collage) reinforce a postmodernist reading, the same is scarcely true of Clarke, who has seldom referred to or been influenced by popular imagery.

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[121] Clarke, description of *Development* [Clarke archive].
[122] To this day, Clarke still discusses the possibility of building a chapel, albeit perhaps with modified design or newly available materials.
[123] For instance, see Alex Coles, *DesignArt: on art's romance with design* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005).

In fact it is an earlier model for the integration of the artist into society, proposed in the first three decades of the century by Pick, Holden and Lethaby, which in this instance affords closer comparison. (Clarke's father, through his architectural work, was directly involved in the circle of these figures and Clarke was undoubtedly aware of their influence.) Lethaby's writings continually emphasise the ideal continuum between art and life, the spiritual basis of society and the necessity of eliminating ornament, unless of a discreet, symbolic nature. Equally, in stressing the need for form to follow function they directly prefigure one aspect of Clarke's own approach to architecture. Lethaby wrote presciently that 'the house of the future will be designed as a ship is designed, as an organism which has to function in all its parts ... Our houses must be made to fit us like garments and to be larger projections of ourselves'.[124]

For the creation of his own *House of the Future* Clarke aligned himself with Vézelay and Groupe Espace, exploring the enlightened collaboration of painter, sculptor and architect.[125] Such collaboration was clearly preferable to Moore's example, of the architect requesting relief sculpture to embellish a building. Clarke suggested another model, however, in which the sculptor designed all aspects and the building itself became functional sculpture: this attitude lies at the root of the *House of the Future*, for all its rhetoric about collaboration. While the *House of the Future* may appear whimsical in terms of practicality (feasibility of construction and suitability as a living space), for Clarke it was a profoundly serious aesthetic and philosophical proposal. Such incomplete practical engagement – which has already been noted in relation to the *Landscape Reinvestigation* proposals – may be considered as one reason why Clarke never pursued his father's profession of architect, despite his continued interest in the concerns of architecture.[126] As demonstrated by his involvement in the design of buildings, the fulfilment of commissions or by his creation of sculptures based on architectural forms, Clarke's interest in architecture has always focussed as much on the philosophical or symbolic aspects of a brief as on its practical or functional requirements. This attitude lies behind his identification of the ideal attributes of those designing buildings, those of the painter, sculptor, architect *and* the philosopher.

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[124] Lethaby, *Form in Civilization*, p. 8.
[125] Clarke's involvement with (and membership of) Groupe Espace lasted only so long as it was necessary for him to take part in its exhibition at the South Bank.
[126] Clarke has spoken of his reluctance to sit the exams necessary for architecture, as well as his lack of ability in mathematics.

Conclusion

Introduction

Because of the dearth of criticism and primary documentation of Clarke's work, this study has chosen to take its cue from the work itself, from discussion with the artist and from reading the artist's unpublished writings. This approach has determined the aspects which appear most significant and which have therefore been singled out for examination: spirituality, craftsmanship, symbolism and architectural commissions. Clarke's relationship to modernism has been borne in mind throughout as part of the contextualisation of his work, and will be discussed further below.

One unexpected result of allowing Clarke's work to suggest the direction of this study has been the extent to which his sculpture – or other physical manifestations of his work – is actually discussed. The artist, through his work and through discussion, has continually suggested concerns beyond those of form, scale and materials. In this way the author has been directed towards philosophy, science and religion: fields which clearly interest the artist just as much as painting or sculpture. Religion (or spirituality) in particular has proved a subject which is essential to an understanding of Clarke's work. If this was not clear at the start, it has become increasingly so during the course of this study, such that the author would now be prepared to argue for it as the most important aspect. Another, related issue which has become apparent is what may be described (perhaps inadequately) as the unity of Clarke's outlook. This is the sense in which art, religion, science and philosophy constitute interlinked elements of an overall vision, whereby, as Charles Raven has suggested, 'images come together and the whole scene stands out solid and in perspective'.[1] Such a vision, as will be discussed below, conforms to a definition of Clarke's work in terms of modernism, rather than postmodernism.

Fundamentally, however, it is Clarke's spirituality that should be seen as lying at the root of this study. Although this aspect is rarely discussed at length by the artist, it is constantly present in his approach to life and work. Frequent, sometimes disconcerting references that appear in conversation are reminders that for Clarke

[1] Charles Raven, *Science, Religion and the Future*. Library of Anglican Spirituality (London: Mowbray, 1994), p. 110.

this spirituality is assumed as an essential (though not taken for granted) aspect of existence. This profound spirituality, it will be suggested, is the aspect which critics have found most unsettling and least possible to equate with the particular form of modernism – the form associated with post-war existentialism and expressionism – associated with the works for which Clarke is best known: the sculpture in iron from the 1950s.

Steiner's 'Nostalgia for the Absolute': Alternative Mythologies

In a series of lectures given in 1974, George Steiner outlined his notion of 'nostalgia for the absolute'.[2] Steiner's starting-point was the decline in the role of formal religion in Western society, a process unanimously agreed-upon whether attributed to the Renaissance, Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution or onset of Darwinism. The intellectual and spiritual void left by organised religion, particularly from the nineteenth century onwards, encouraged surrogate religions to emerge: a series of attempts to explain – in the absence of religion – the meaning of human history, perceptions of social justice and the relationship between mind and body. These surrogates, Steiner argues, have taken the form of 'anti-theologies', 'meta-religions', or, his preferred term, 'mythologies'.[3]

Steiner's concept of mythology, which predates Lyotard's articulation of the 'grand narrative',[4] is worth examining in detail before discussing its implication for Clarke's work. A 'mythology', for Steiner, must fulfil three main conditions. It must succeed as a totality; that is, it should allow no exceptions to its stated principles. It must have an easily recognisable form containing a beginning (a moment of revelation embodied in canonical texts) and development (where disciples perpetuate the vision of the master). It must also have its own language, a set of symbols, rituals or metaphors, and will generate its own body of myths. The mythologies of recent history identified by Steiner are Marxism, Freudian psychoanalysis, anthropology

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[2] George Steiner, *Nostalgia for the Absolute*. Massey Lectures, Fourteenth Series (Toronto: CBC Publications, 1974).

[3] Steiner, *Nostalgia for the Absolute*, p. 2.

[4] Lyotard's *La Condition postmoderne*, a report commissioned by the Conseil des Université of the Government of Quebec on 'the current state of knowledge in the advanced societies', was published in 1979. See Roy Boyne and Ali Rattansi (eds), *Postmodernism and Society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1990), p. 16, and Jean-François Lyotard, 'Introduction' to *The Postmodern Condition*, reprinted in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), *Art in Theory 1900–2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, New Edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp 1122–23.

and what he describes, playfully, as 'Little Green Men' – the pseudo-sciences of astrology, psychokineticism and the occult. Each offers a complete solution to the mysteries of life, with its own canonical texts, symbolism and disciples. Each also, for all its negation of organised religion, bears a strong resemblance, at decisive points, to that which it aims to supplant. This need for myths, total explanation, guaranteed prophecy, in the twentieth century, as never before, is precisely what Steiner defines as man's 'nostalgia for the absolute'.[5]

In the first instance, Steiner's mythologies (with the exception of Marxism) can be seen to correspond with tendencies already identified in this thesis as relevant to Clarke. Writers', painters' and sculptors' awareness of psychoanalysis has been demonstrated to have far-reaching implications for the arts in the first half of the twentieth century. Steiner concentrates on Freud, suggesting that his theories may be attributed at least in part to the structure of middle-class Vienna at the turn of the century, as 'inspired readings of, and projections from, the very special economic, familial, sexual conditions of bourgeois existence'.[6] For reasons which will become clear, however, this thesis has avoided discussion of Freud in favour of Jung. Freud emphasises aspects of sexuality which have scant relevance to Clarke's work. Furthermore, because of the close relationship between Herbert Read's writings and Clarke's thinking, Read's latter preference for (and appropriation of) Jung has been taken into account. Most importantly, however, a crucial difference between the two psychoanalysts makes Jung's theories more relevant to Clarke. Freud, as Steiner points out, sought to remove from the human psyche the 'infantile illusions' (Freud's words) of religion.[7] Jung, in contrast, believed in man's essential and instinctive religious constitution.

Anthropology, likewise, has been shown to be relevant to twentieth-century art in general, and to Clarke in particular. Steiner discusses Claude Lévi-Strauss's highly-developed theories about man's origin, evolution and place in the world. Lévi-Strauss's viewpoint does bear relevance to Clarke, particularly in its identification of man's technological mastery, exploitation and potential destruction of his environment (although Lévi-Strauss's Godless world lacks prospect of salvation). Clarke's notion of anthropology is, however, general in its observations

[5] Steiner, *Nostalgia for the Absolute*, pp 5–6.
[6] Steiner, p. 14.
[7] Steiner, p. 22.

and not relatable to specific studies or research. His thesis refers, like Newman's 'The First Man Was an Artist' and Sartre's 'The Search for the Absolute',[8] and in language comparable to theirs, to man's earliest quest to make sense of the world through his instinctive creation of art:

> In the beginning, man is overwhelmed by the apparent complications of nature. Realization of the fact, that he himself is an integral part, and his consequent acceptance of the fact, enables him to look to it for laws for re-creation through his instinct and reason. He thus eventually becomes aware of its simple fundamentals.[9]

It is not suggested that Clarke's worldview is analogous to any of Steiner's identified mythologies, not least because it rests on a spiritual belief which is, in essence, Christian, and therefore cannot be claimed as a religious surrogate. However, it does incorporate significant aspects of these mythologies, in particular psychoanalysis, anthropology and (in its more serious forms) science. Furthermore, Clarke's searching in these fields for answers to the fundamental questions of life demonstrates his kinship with contemporary artists as diverse as Barnett Newman, Alan Davie, T. S. Eliot or Michael Tippett – artists all engaged in Sartre's 'search for the absolute'.[10]

The question persists, however: might Clarke's philosophy be considered to constitute a mythology, in Steiner's sense of the word? It does possess a definite beginning: the point at which Clarke's method of abstraction has pared artistic language to its absolute essentials, the line and the dot. This moment of 'diagnostic insight' is enshrined in a canonical text, 'Exposition of a Belief', in which the moment of revelation is mirrored, metaphorically, in the description of man's first endeavours to create art. Clarke's work undeniably also possesses its own system of

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[8] Barnett Newman, 'The First Man Was an Artist', *Tiger's Eye*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (October 1947), in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (eds), *Art in Theory 1900–2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, New Edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), p. 577; Jean-Paul Sartre, 'The Search for the Absolute' (1948), in *Art in Theory 1900–2000*, p. 612.

[9] Clarke, draft for 'Exposition of a Belief' (1951) [Clarke archive].

[10] The work of John Latham forms an interesting counterpart to these artists, in that his belief system is founded on science. Latham attributed the problems of mankind to 'differences in ideology and understanding ... in the absence of a single, unifying theory capable of explaining the universe and man's position within it'. Accordingly, he formulated a concept, 'event structure', which could explain everying in nature. See Paul Moorhouse, 'Insights From Afar – The Art of John Latham', in *John Latham in Focus* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005).

emblematic images – symbols – and might be said to generate its own myths to explain man's place in the world. The hardest question to answer would appear to be whether Clarke's work may be considered to constitute an unassailable mythological totality. This aspect was in fact raised, without reference to Steiner, at the end of Chapter One, the examination of Clarke's beliefs. It was concluded there that there were indeed cracks in Clarke's philosophy. However, deeper acquaintance with Clarke's work has made it less clear whether these problems are inherent in the artist's belief system – which appears capable of plausible counter-arguments to each line of attack – or are produced by the outsider's lack of sympathy with its principles. The example given, of the potential criticism of Clarke's spirituality for its Christian foundation but encouragement, or accommodation, of other forms of religion, demonstrates this point.[11] The attack is from a specific Christian viewpoint which identifies the Christian mission as a duty to encourage belief in its own tenets. Clarke's belief, however, although Christian in its fundamentals, aims to encourage others to explore their relationship to 'the supreme being' – in effect, their own inner spirituality – in their own terms. From this point of view, is it valid to claim that Clarke's totality of vision is compromised?

The Mo(ve)ment of Modernism

The necessity of establishing a definition of modernism prior to assessing Clarke's relationship or contribution has already been stated,[12] and the suggestion has been made that Clarke's outlook conforms more completely to a version of British modernism advocated by Read than to that forwarded by Greenberg. However, Clarke clearly outlived Read's modernism, moving on to areas, such as land art, on which Read's views will never be known. A different model is therefore also suggested: that of a 'succession of modernisms'.[13] The term is used by David Clarke in relation to Tippett, but might be applied to perhaps a majority of twentieth-century artists whose work has kept pace with the swiftly changing stylistic climate. Tippett's change in gear, from a largely tonal, lyrical and developmental language to a

[11] See Chapter One, pp 53–4.
[12] See Introduction, p. 23.
[13] The concept of a 'succession of modernisms' has been preferred to Paul Wood's 'varieties of modernism' since there is a distinct sense of progression throughout Clarke's work. See also Paul Wood (ed.), *Varieties of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with the Open University, 2004).

rhetorical, post-tonal soundworld with an emphasis on musical discontinuity, is marked by *King Priam* (1962).[14] Clarke's various transitions may be considered no differently. Indeed, this notion of a 'succession of modernisms' helps to avoid the pitfalls of trying to match Clarke to a single model, such as medieval modernism.

Read and British Modernism

Herbert Read was vital in preparing the path for the emergence of the new school of British sculptors in the early 1950s. His influence at this date was far-reaching: he was a member of the British Council's Fine Arts Committee and Arts Council's Art Panel, a founder member of the Institute of Contemporary Arts,[15] and had published a significant number of books on art (*English Stained Glass*, 1926; *Art Now*, 1933; *Art and Industry*, 1934; *Education Through Art*, 1943; *Contemporary British Art*, 1951; *The Philosophy of Modern Art*, 1952). As Robert Burstow points out, Read identified the new generation of sculptors a year before their selection for the 1952 Venice Biennale, in his survey of contemporary British art for Penguin Books.[16] Here, Read carefully prepared a lineage for the sculptors' work in tune with post-war celebrations of national identity; identifying their turning away from Europe towards native models, and in particular recalling the English landscape tradition and the linearity of English Gothic architecture. Their selection for the 1952 Venice Biennale reinforced the sense of critical sanction and also fostered – through the accompanying media coverage of an international event – public recognition. This exposure was, however, carefully manipulated to reinforce the image of the sculpture's 'modernism'. Read's catalogue essay, conjuring the uncertainty of contemporary existence, borrowed from 'modernist' poet T. S. Eliot while forging its own, brittle, new language. The display at Venice – a stark white backdrop for the roughened textures of metal – was calculated to emphasise the sculpture's strangeness. (David Hulks has drawn an analogy between 'clinical' display

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[14] David Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett: Modern Times and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 4. *King Priam* was premiered at the festival which accompanied the dedication of Coventry Cathedral in May 1962.

[15] Robert Burstow, '*The Geometry of Fear*: Herbert Read and British Modern Sculpture after the Second World War', in Benedict Read and David Thistlewood (eds), *Herbert Read: A British Vision of World Art*. Exhibition Catalogue (Leeds: Leeds City Art Galleries, in association with The Henry Moore Foundation and Lund Humphries Publishers Limited, 1993), pp 120–21.

[16] Burstow, '*The Geometry of Fear*', p. 123; Herbert Read, *Contemporary British Art* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951), p. 33. Read omitted Armitage and Clarke from his discussion.

conditions and the psychoanalytical concerns explored by much of the sculpture.)[17] Read even involved himself in countering criticism of the Biennale selection in the British press.[18]

Clarke's association with Venice and the young generation of sculptors thus allied his work with a specific moment of modernism in British sculpture, relatively short-lived and largely constructed by Read. That Read's purposes were not unconnected with politics – the promotion of a progressive British image in the early post-war years – makes it perhaps less surprising that he did not continue to champion the cause of the sculptors whose fortunes he had helped to establish. Read's sculptural paradigm was, in any case, Moore, who signified an ideal approach to form ('organic vitalism'), materials (stone and bronze), symbolic content (the representation of archetypes) and the monumental calling of sculpture. Of these, Clarke really only conformed to one: the symbolic approach.

Shifting Identities

The image of Clarke's identity forwarded by Peter Black has been that of solitary pilgrim: closeted away from external influence and isolated further through his faith. Study of Clarke's life reveals a quite different picture. Isolation is still a significant factor, and spirituality even more so. However, Clarke's mode of living has reflected the changing nature of his work (and *vice versa*) to a surprising degree, suggesting a concern with style not evident from the reductive view of Black.[19] This biographical aspect, used sensitively, can amplify an understanding of the changing concerns in Clarke's work.

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[17] David Hulks, 'The dark chaos of subjectivism: Splitting and the geometry of fear', in Brandon Taylor (ed.), *Sculpture and Psychoanalysis* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), pp 97–8.
[18] Herbert Read, 'Letters to the Editor: The Biennale at Venice', *The Manchester Guardian* (25 June 1952). Read was responding to Sylvia Sprigge's 'The Biennale at Venice: Britain Strangely Represented', *The Manchester Guardian* (24 June 1952).
[19] It is not proposed, here, to examine the origin of the 'myth' of Clarke as pilgrim which appears in Black's and subsequently Richard Cork's writing, although it seems possible to have been suggested by Clarke. The motives of either the artist or Black in forwarding this image, and consequently of limiting or suppressing other biographical aspects, at this date (1994), would merit further examination, particularly as the artist has shown no concern to control access to information or the way it is used during research for this thesis. See Peter Black's essays in *Geoffrey Clarke: Symbols for Man. Sculpture and Graphic Work 1949–94* (Ipswich: Ipswich Borough Council Museums and Galleries with Lund Humphries, 1994) and *Geoffrey Clarke: sculpture, constructions and works on paper 1949–2000* (London: Fine Art Society, 2000).

Throughout the 1950s Clarke continued to reap the benefit of the association with Read's 'young British sculptors' through inclusion in exhibitions.[20] However, from the time of his enrolment at the RCA he consciously avoided what he perceived as the norm for artists and art students in London. In contrast with a general tendency towards scruffiness, Clarke cultivated an air of 'professionalism' (his description): photographs from the early 1950s show him dressed in jacket and handmade black cloth tie, tied in a bow at the collar. Clarke's flat in Camden Road was a model of lean elegance: contemporary wire chairs (affordable versions of Italian models), white walls, his own black and white etchings and iron sculpture. This 'minimal', carefully presented, linear environment reflected one aspect of his early work. The other, the organic world of iron, stained glass, man and nature, suggested by his affinity with the Northern landscape, found expression in the move to Stowe Hill, a large nineteenth-century house amid extensive grounds in a Suffolk village, where it was possible to set up an iron foundry and stained glass studio.[21] Clarke's notions of 'man and nature', 'man as craftsman' and the artist as spiritual prophet appear to relate to a profoundly romantic view, one which is reinforced by the image of Stowe Hill. Yet this suggestion of sympathy with concerns or attitudes of the nineteenth century disrupts, not for the first time, any too-glib definition of Clarke as modernist. (A parallel with Wordsworth's depiction of landscape as a spiritual environment, and his portrayal of the untamed landscapes familiar to Clarke, has already been identified.)[22] In his book on Tippett, David Clarke confronted a similar dilemma. Tippett espouses a romantic view of man's ideal unity with nature, a unity threatened by urbanism and industrialisation, but also engages with the aesthetics of modernism. The resulting friction, perceptible in his music, is identified as deriving from the composer's 'application of a twentieth-century realist and materialist consciousness to the nineteenth century's aspirations to the ideal and the absolute'.[23] The categorisation David Clarke thus adopts for Tippett (after Arnold Whittall) is that of

[20] The artist's collection of exhibition catalogues shows that his work was included in thirty-four exhibitions during the 1950s: three at the ICA, four in connection with the British Council (including three showings at the Venice Biennale) and two with the Arts Council. Nine of these exhibitions took place outside the UK.

[21] The location was more practical (its relative proximity to London) than ideal: Clarke has never felt a particular connection with the Suffolk landscape, always preferring Cumbria, Yorkshire or Lancashire.

[22] No claim is made for Clarke having read Wordsworth, although a copy of his poetry remains among the few books belonging to Clarke's wife.

[23] David Clarke, *The Music and Thought of Michael Tippett: Modern Times and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 5.

'post-romantic modernist', a label which might plausibly be applied to Clarke. Both subscribe to a spiritual, inner world, experienced intuitively, both exhibit a philosophical romanticism and idealism that may be traced to the nineteenth century, and for both the consequences of accessing this inner world – the reconciling of consciousness and unconsciousness, of rationality and irrationality – are mediated through the work of Jung.

The validity of considering Clarke's work from the mid-1960s as a continuation of his earlier work in terms of symbolism and subject matter has already been demonstrated. As yet there has been little comment on his lifestyle at this period, and this void has tended to reinforce (or at least not to contradict) suggestions that this had either not altered significantly from the 1950s, or that the radically different cultural and social climate of the '60s had little impact on his work. The reverse, however, would appear to be the case. It has already been suggested that the increased abstraction of Clarke's work from the early 1960s onwards parallels tendencies both in Caro's new sculpture and Greenberg's formalist criticism.[24] With financial security from commissions, Clarke's mode of living changed out of recognition. He chose to drive a Mercedes 300SL and hire, and himself pilot, a helicopter: symbols of freedom paralleled – in tune with the times – by a new freedom in his personal life. When Clarke designed a hangar for the helicopter in a field next to Stowe Hill, the accommodation above, complete with roof patio, spiral staircase and glazed observation hatch (in the bedroom – to observe approaching helicopters) epitomised the masculine fantasy of the James Bond fiction he was currently reading.[25] Clarke's reading in fact reflected an awareness of contemporary culture completely absent from recent accounts.[26] In addition to the collection of science fiction already mentioned, he owned several books of spy fiction and even Vance Pickard's influential book on the techniques of advertising, *The Hidden*

[24] A further area of study might be the influence of Eastern models in this process of simplification, as was the case for composer Benjamin Britten. Clarke has stated that his series of works were titled *Torii* (Japanese Shinto gateways) *after* their creation, but it may be that some notion of the Japanese form provided earlier, unconscious inspiration.

[25] Clarke's fascination with the gadgets and futuristic transport in James Bond novels is mirrored by his (unsuccessful) attempt in the 1960s to become a UK agent for the autogiro, a form of aircraft with freely rotating horizontal vanes and a propeller.

[26] This interest in popular culture, gadgets and consumer goods aligns Clarke more closely with members of the Independent Group than has previously been acknowledged, although the influence of such interests was less overt in his work. See Anne Massey, *The Independent Group: Modernism and mass culture in Britain, 1945–59* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

Persuaders.[27] Viewed in this context, Clarke's sculpture, rather than simply continuing concerns from the '50s, had in fact metamorphosed drastically in line with the times: profiting from the progressive image of aluminium, a contemporary sleekness of form, and a 'space-age' process of construction.

A similar pattern of cross-influence can be seen in the landscape-oriented work of the late 1960s. In 1968 Clarke bought Aldeburgh's Martello Tower, the largest and most northerly, *quatrefoil* example of a defence chain stretching south to Eastbourne. The tower, although early nineteenth-century, constitutes a monumental fortress in brick, granite and stone, of a character consistent with much earlier fortifications – not unlike a gigantic mound or earthwork. Its location reinforces the notion of isolation amid the elements: east, the sea; west, the Alde estuary; south, the shingle peninsula; north, the only habitation, Aldeburgh; and of course, above, the wide skies of Suffolk. Clarke's work contemporary with the acquisition of the tower explores the concept of landscape fortification, in the conical *Enclosures* (1969; LS329–32) which were intended to be constructed on a scale similar to that of the Martello Tower. Clarke's unrealised plan was to use the void of the tower as a sculpture studio/foundry and to live in 'double-glazed luxury' on top of his work,[28] perhaps not in keeping with the ethos of preserving ancient monuments, but showing an extraordinary degree of identification with contemporary artistic issues of landscape and environment. Here, as earlier, Clarke is almost perceived to 'live' the concerns of his sculpture.

After the early 1970s, Clarke's diminishing income from commissioned work precluded personal statements on the scale of the Martello Tower. It is from this point that his work might be seen to turn inwards towards the monastic reclusiveness characterised by Black, as well as to exhibit increasingly less connection with cultural and artistic trends. In this process, particularly from the 1980s onwards, a loss of confidence may be perceived (personal and critical – perhaps not unrelated). Again, this change may be viewed in different ways. Clarke's return to figurative concerns in the 1980s might be seen to parallel the work of, among others, Gormley (whom Clarke admires), and thus to be in tune with one strand of contemporary sculpture, or as a regression to concerns he had explored in the 1950s. His 'Artist

[27] Vance Pickard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (London: David McKay, 1957; Penguin Special, 1960).
[28] Clarke, [typescript] (*ca.* 1971) [Clarke archive], quoted in Judith LeGrove, *Geoffrey Clarke and the Aldeburgh Connection: an exhibition to celebrate his 80th birthday* (Aldeburgh: Strand Gallery, 2004).

Series' of the late 1990s, with which it appears difficult to find contemporary parallels, could be viewed either as an abdication from engagement with current issues, or a temporary withdrawal (a retreat?) in order to concentrate, fully, on the roots of art: the creative process. What is clear, however, is that Clarke's work should not be divorced from the cultural context with which it is interlinked and from which (in varying degrees throughout his career) it has derived considerable inspiration.

Spirituality: The Root of the 'Modern' Problem

As suggested in the Introduction, it has been the spiritual aspect of Clarke's work which has tended to relegate it to the periphery of twentieth-century art history, exemplified by its inclusion in exhibitions of so-called 'religious art' rather than in more mainstream reviews of 'modern' or contemporary art. This segregation reflects the perceived tension between spirituality and modern society: a tension traceable from the post-1945 requestioning of religious belief to the anxiety about religious fundamentalism that caused Tate Britain to cancel its proposed display of John Latham's *God is Great* in 2005.[29]

There is some suggestion, however, that the pendulum may have reached its furthest point. The question of the continuing relevance of spirituality was addressed in a recent lecture by composer James Macmillan, entitled 'Music, Modernity and the Sacred', in which he spoke of music's transformative nature, its power to restore a sense of completeness and bind culture together: in effect to 're-sacralise' a post-religious modern society.[30] In terms parallel to Steiner, Macmillan invoked man's need for myths in restoring a lost ideal to modernity. Musically, this process can be traced to Wagner who quarried depths of folklore, anthropology and psychology to create operas dealing with transcendence and eternal truth. Wagner invented the musical *Leitmotiv*, a sophisticated means of symbolism whereby a host of references could be made successively or in combination in voice and orchestra; he also repeatedly used spiritual, Eucharistic imagery (culminating in *Parsifal*) to point to

[29] Tate Britain cancelled the proposed display of Latham's *God is Great* (a work consisting of large sheets of glass and copies of the Koran, Bible and Talmud, cut apart) for fear that it might upset Muslims in the 'sensitive climate' following the 7 July London bombings.
[30] James Macmillan, 'Music, Modernity and the Sacred', lecture given at the Sage, Gateshead, as part of an ABCD (Association of British Choral Directors) conference, 26 August 2006.

transcendence. Macmillan argued both for the timeliness of spirituality to be restored to culture and for his belief that music is analogous with the grace of God: that 'all great music is touched by the sacred'.

Macmillan's conclusions prove remarkably pertinent to Clarke. Clarke's whole approach – to craftsmanship, to symbolism, to the unity of art and life – is coloured by his spiritual belief. In many ways his attitudes may be considered anachronistic, and it is notable that they share much in common with those of the interwar British generation defined by Saler as 'medieval modernists'. Clarke's association with modernism may be viewed negatively in today's society more concerned with surfaces, fragmentation, disjunction and the ephemeral.[31] Yet Clarke's searching for a single narrative to explain existence (a process described by Steiner as 'mythologising' and subsequently by Lyotard as the 'grand narrative') remains fundamental, as proved by his highlighting of a quotation from Robert Graves in Steiner's *Grammars of Creation*: 'there is one story and one story only'.[32] This looking beneath the surface to establish the constant, the essential, the absolute, is continuous and not affected by the evolving style of his work, which has been referred to as a 'succession of modernisms'.

Ultimately, Clarke's unique contribution to British art is as a modern spiritual artist, whose work – for those who approach it openly – can point beyond itself to issues of transcendence. Yet to view his work in these terms alone is to diminish both its significance and its interest. Clarke is significant also for his profound consideration of symbolism, his craftsmanship and enquiring use of materials (in particular his development of the full-mould casting technique), and for the breadth of his commissions, which at over one hundred works in different media must surely constitute one of the most notable contributions to architecture by a British artist in the twentieth century.

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[31] As Anne Massey has noted, the idea of modernism's 'grand narrative' was in fact anathema to members of the Independent Group (those early 'postmodernists') as long ago as the 1950s. Conference on 'This Is Tomorrow', Pallant House Gallery, Chichester (23 September 2006).

[32] Quoted in George Steiner, *Grammars of Creation* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), p. 129. Clarke's most recent sculpture, *Consignment* (2006; LS751) could be considered from this viewpoint. Although differing from earlier work in its materials and construction (cut and bolted sheet aluminium), it still presents 'man', and the overall structure of the erect and prone packing cases takes the form – an interpretation corroborated by the artist – of a cross.

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