

Bookworms and Type Lice

HARRY DUNCAN

The display in the lobby of the University Library from mid-November to mid-December, 1964, was called "Private Printing in Iowa City 1957-1964." This turned out to be a slight misnomer, for the exhibit was not comprehensive. Several presses operating not-for-hire in the neighborhood declined to submit material, and the work of our most illustrious printer, Carroll Coleman, will be shown by itself next fall. So it happened that most of the items exhibited had been printed by students in the Typographic Laboratory at The University of Iowa. Even the two amplest exhibitors, K. K. Merker, and Gerald M. Stevenson, Jr., had begun printing there before going on to notable independent achievements.

The Typographic Laboratory in The University of Iowa School of Journalism opened in the fall semester of 1945. It had been conceived and accomplished by three men: Wilbur Schramm, Director of the School 1943-1947; Carroll Coleman, proprietor of The Prairie Press, then at Muscatine but moved to Iowa City when he joined the Journalism faculty; and the late T. Henry Foster of Ottumwa, who gave funds for the project. It was their idea that a great university might properly include apparatus for studying what is still, after five hundred years, the chief technic for propagating knowledge: typography. Naturally, the finest practice of this "art preservative of all arts" would be the only end worthy of such apparatus so dedicated. The facilities they chose reveal something of their concept: a wide selection of the best available type faces for hand composition, a few in full series and in sufficient quantities of text sizes for setting short pamphlets or even books; ornaments, borders, rules, sticks, a miterer, and other appurtenances for composing and makeup; a paper-cutter, cabinets, and presses that include a Washington (donated by John E. Feuling in 1954 in memory of his father), an Adana, a Vandercook

5 cylinder, a table C&P clamshell, and a Kluge, the only power-driven one, even it hand fed. Obviously, with none of the machinery that carries the printing industry today, the Laboratory was not equipped to offer technical training in the manner of a trade school. But the fundamentals of typography, essentially unchanged since Gutenberg, were provided for. Additions and improvements were made under Professor Coleman's direction during the next ten years. Resources were enriched particularly by T. Henry Foster's bequest of his library, a small, choice collection of fine printing from Erhard Ratdolt to Bruce Rogers; later this was increased by a gift of books from Frank P. Leslie. All these are housed in the office of the Laboratory and, despite their high valuation, are freely accessible for examination.

So I found the Typographic Laboratory when I came in 1956. Clearly it was intended, as befitted its situation in a College of Liberal Arts, to offer students some direct knowledge of typography unencumbered by pecuniary or utilitarian considerations and "directed to general enlargement of mind." Theoretically, this challenge was stimulating, not baffling: studies of how the manner of communication affects matter are not less interesting for being in their infancy, and typography's creative potential is apparently undiminished as other techniques contest its preeminence. My difficulty was practical. The apple-pie order that Professor Coleman had left in the Laboratory was among its most impressive features. The prospect of an invasion by tyros dismayed me; one semester of two-hour weekly lessons is scarcely time enough to master even the primary decencies of a composing room—the unions require years of apprenticeship. So my first semester's class was held rather strictly to set exercises, few type faces, and close inspection. But my conscience began to trouble me. I had taught a smattering of printing office discipline, perhaps; but what had that to do with liberal education at the university level? What about typography's close, almost parasitic relation to literature and the plastic arts? Was knowledge of the layout of the California job case really enough? The books of Aldus Manutius, Baskerville, Bodoni, William Morris, and Sir Francis Meynell seemed to cry shame on me from their shelves. And the next semester's student compositors were allowed more freedom. Now, the main emphasis of the typography course is on a project devised by each student and carried out with free access to all the Laboratory's resources. The cases are undeniably dirtier; at times when I reach for an h and get an n, I impugn the whole idea. Then when looking at the originality and occasional fine finish of some student project, I take heart once more.

Here are descriptions of a few items chosen almost at random from those displayed. (Let me mention in passing that some excellent work has unaccountably disappeared from my files and could not be shown. I remember two pamphlets, one of Henri Coulette's poems printed by his wife and the other of Peter Everwine's poems by Jay North, and a catalog of the Davenport museum's Spanish American collection by Janet Ashton.) Each item is listed by printer and, if he chose one, an imprint. Most of them were done by graduate students in journalism, art, or the poetry workshop, enrolled either in beginning typography or special projects in journalism.

Catherine Davis, The King's Quair Press. *Under this Lintel*, poems by Catherine Davis. 1962. 16 pp. 5x8", erratum slip, sewed into decorated paper covers. "One hundred and eighty-five copies have been printed on Arches paper from Garamond type with Hadriano Stone-Cut initials." Miss Davis, before coming to Iowa, had printed two earlier pamphlets of her poems.

Horace G. Dawson, Jr. *My Book*. 1960. 29 pp. 7½x7½", sewed to tapes and cased into buff paper wrappers. "Twenty copies of this 'personal reader' have been printed on Curtis Rag paper from Bulmer types set by hand and photographs made by Horace G. Dawson, Jr.," who also wrote the text, a primer in 24 point, personal to the printer's son, as are the ten photographs; it was intended to teach the boy to read, and succeeded eminently. The pages are numbered only on rectos commencing at p. 3.

James Hayden, The Corn-Cob Press. *The Corn-Cob Calendar for 1965*. 1964. 12 leaves 7x11¼", laid into an imprinted paper folder. Each leaf is on a different paper and printed from at least two type faces and linocuts by the printer's wife, Jan, in as many as four colors; ornaments are lavishly used as well. Yet all this variety and freshness is unified. The leaf for April is reproduced on the back cover herewith.

Beverly James. *Nudes*, blockprints by Susan Sprague, text by Gerald M. Stevenson, Jr. 1961. Five prints on rice paper mounted in bristol folders with imprinted captions plus two leaves on bristol, all 9x12½", laid into a portfolio cover of terra cotta paper. Fifty copies, Mistral types in black. The satirical linocuts are very funny and beautifully printed; so are such captions when read with them, as "Never again shall I beg a Marquis for alms."

Abner Jonas, The Sisus Press. *The 7 Days of Creation*, poems by Robert Jensen, prints by Abner Jonas. 1964. 28 unnumbered pp. 11½x15½" sewed

to tapes and cased into quarter morocco with imprinted cloth sides. Fifty copies on BFK Rives and Curtis Rag papers, Perpetua and Bauer Bodoni types in black and various colors. The plates are relief zinc etchings in as many as five colors; and the surfaces are textured to multiply these in their different combinations with one another, as in process color.

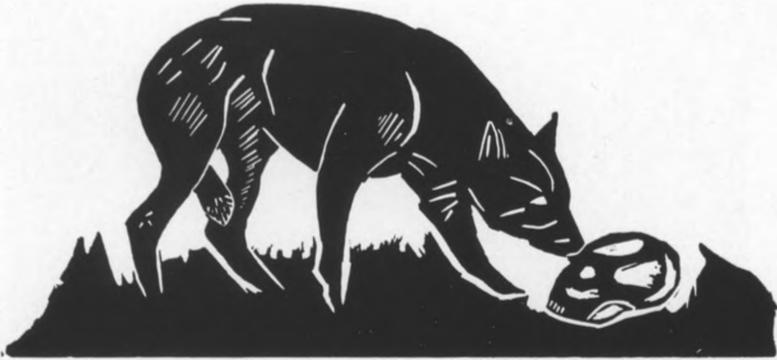
19:172, Typographic Laboratory. *The Ocean to Cynthia*, the autograph poems of Sir Walter Raleigh. 1962. 32 pp. 6½x10", unbound. "Edition of twelve copies, five on Curfew and seven on Rives paper, set up and printed by members of the class in book design and production." I quote from an extensive Printers' Note: "The first poem in this book has been set up from a facsimile of Raleigh's holograph printed in *The Illustrated London News* . . . ; as far as we know, it has not been printed in a book before. The others are from microfilms of pages 238-247r, Cecil Papers 144 . . . ; they all have appeared in Hannah's and Agnes Latham's editions . . . , although in several minor instances our readings differ from one or the other editor's. Our aim has been to provide the reader convenient access to what Raleigh actually wrote. To this end, we have retained his spelling, capitalization, and punctuation, as usages rather personal to him and therefore elements of his style. But we have modernized more general conventionalities of Elizabethan handwriting . . . The type face is Arrighi, a version of the chancery cursive that Raleigh used. The blazon on the title page is from a drawing by Marian Nichols of the Raleigh coat of arms." This should give some idea of the labors of editing and composition and proofreading; small wonder we didn't have time to bind it.

K. K. Merker, The Constance Press. *My Glass Brother and other poems* by Robert Patrick Dana. 1957. 11 pp. 6½x10", sewed and pasted into light terra cotta paper wrappers with pasted label. "Fifty copies of this book have been hand-set in Centaur & Arrighi types . . . The paper is Alexandra Japan." The three-line initials are printed in the color of the wrapper. I choose this from the many splendid books by Mr. Merker not because it is the best or handsomest, but because it is the first in which he grasps his style. Looking it over now, I find it no wonder that his work under his new imprint, The Stone Wall Press, maintains such high standards and wins so many honors.

Doyle Moore, The Final Press. *The Onus of Existence* by Magda Osterhuber. 1960. 20 unnumbered pp. 6x9½", cased into boards covered with textured Japanese paper, pasted label. "Fifty copies in Arrighi type on Asahi paper . . . signed by the author." The text paper is thin and so used double, the fold at the fore edge, making the sewing difficult. Illustrations are by the printer from type, ornaments, dingbats, old commercial cuts, and the entire graphic impact of the book is extravagant and sure.

The Cremation of Sam McGee

BY ROBERT W. SERVICE



*There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who moil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge
I cremated Sam McGee.*

Page one of "The Cremation of Sam McGee." Printed and illustrated on Weimar paper using hand-set Perpetua type and linoleum cuts by Dennis W. Binning at the Typographic Laboratory, 1963.

INCUNABULA AT IOWA

A Descriptive Bibliography of books printed in the fifteenth century and now held in Special Collections of the Library of the State University of Iowa.

Compiled by Sidney B. Vosper.

Not yore
Agon, hit happed me for to beholde
Upon a boke, was write with lettres olde,
And ther-upon, a certeyn thing to lerne,
The longe day ful faste I radde and yerne.

For out of old feldes, as men seith,
Cometh al this newe corn fro yere to yere,
And out of olde bokes, in good feith,
Cometh al this newe science that men lere.

But now to purpos as of this matter—
To rede forth hit gan me so delyte,
That al the day me thoughte but a lyte.

Chaucer, from *The Parlement of Foules*.



The Press of Other Matters / Iowa City, Iowa / M^cm^lxij.

Title page of *Incunabula at Iowa*, a descriptive bibliography by Sidney B. Vosper. Set and printed by the compiler in Centaur, Arrighi, and Hadriano types on Curtis Rag paper at the Typographic Laboratory, 1962.

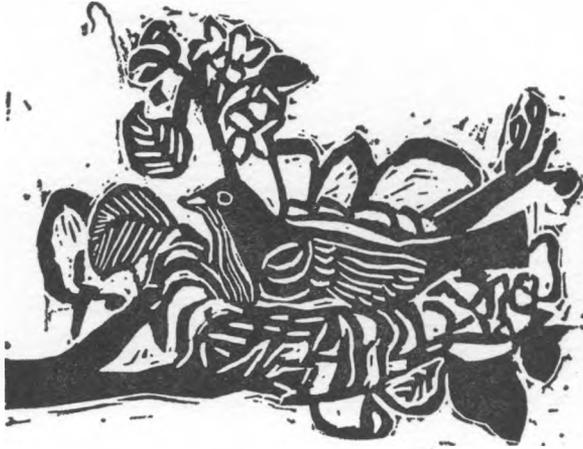
Terry Pritchett. *Type: indicative experiments*, text and illustrations by the printer. 1963. 36 unnumbered pp. 9x12", one leaf a fold-out, invisibly sewed into silk-screened paper covers (the title page in letterpress spreads onto the inside front cover) and with a silk-screened slip case. Cameo Brilliant Dull paper and red acetate printed in black and red by letterpress and silk-screen from a great variety of type faces and ornaments; one leaf is embossed blind from a wood blackletter.

Gerald M. Stevenson, Jr., The Qara Press. *Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson*, selections from his writings and including a portion of an hitherto unpublished notebook, edited and prefaced by Gerald M. Stevenson, Jr. 1961. 37 pp. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ x10", sewed to tapes and cased into dark blue paper boards, pasted label on the backbone, two tipped-in halftones. Garamond types, Curtis Rag paper. This was chosen for the A.I.G.A. Fifty Books exhibition.

Young Lung-Chang. *Two Poems* by Li Po in calligraphy by Young Lung-Chang with translations by Ezra Pound. 1959. 8 pp. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x10 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", sewed, pasted into paper wrappers. "Twenty-five copies . . . from Weiss types on Sterling Wove paper." The Chinese calligraphy is printed from linecuts.

FOR SEE, the winter is past, the rains are over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of pruning the vines has come, and the song of the dove is heard in our land.

THE SONG OF SONGS, II



april	1	2	3			
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	thir	ty

sun **mon** **tues** **wed** **thur** **fri** **sat**