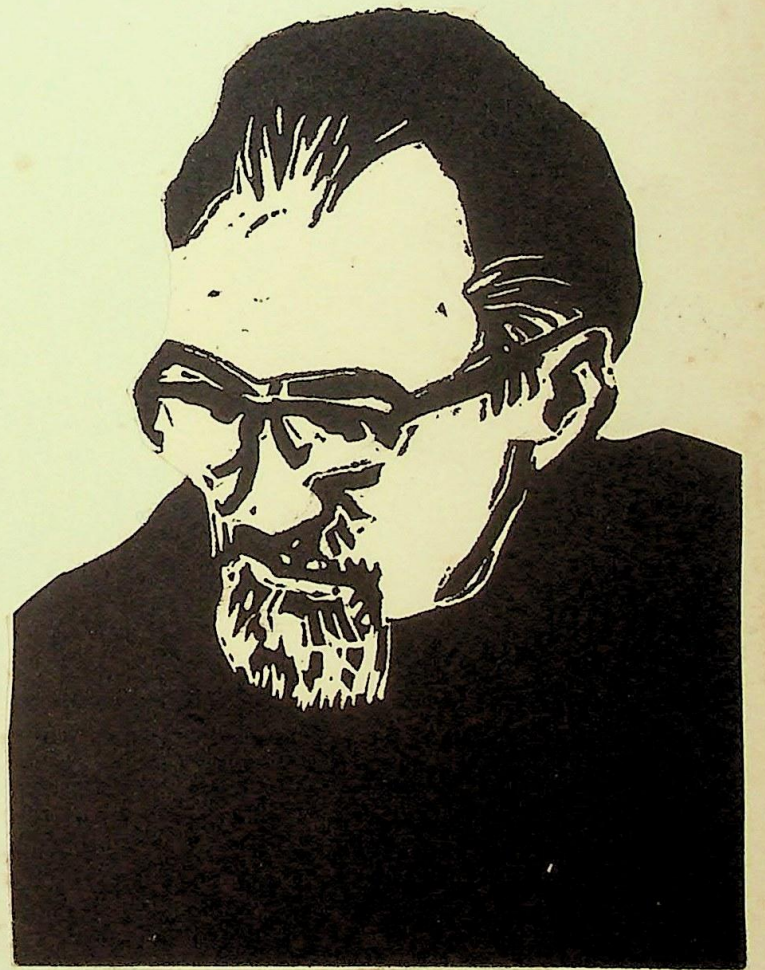


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LIAM MILLER AND
THE DOLMEN PRESS
BY FIONA HAYES : 1987

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The National College of Art and Design
Faculty of Visual Communication

Liam Miller and the Dolmen Press
by Fiona Hayes

Submitted for Degree of Batchelor of Design in Visual
Communication and History of Art

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Introduction.

When deciding on a subject for this thesis I had just two main criteria in mind: I wanted to write on a topic which was to do with graphic design and preferably one of Irish origin.

I had heard of the Dolmen Press and was aware that its founder, Liam Miller, was considered one of the leading figures in design in Ireland during the twentieth century. Not only has he produced a great deal of impressive graphic design, but he has also tried constantly to make a positive contribution to design in this country. His work was inspired and sustained by a love for Ireland: he did not emigrate to London or any of the world's design capitals, despite the fact that Ireland in the 1950s was experiencing a surge of emigration and his prospects abroad would surely have been more attractive than in his native land. Nor did he join an established company to pursue his love of book design in a secure environment. What he achieved, solely with the help of family and friends, "goodwill and optimism" as Ruth Brandt termed it, is tremendously impressive.

Section one of this essay outlines the beginnings of the Private Press Movement in the 1890s in England and the establishment of the Cuala Press in Dublin. Miller knew very little about modern private printing when he established Dolmen, despite the fact that he was following exactly in the footsteps of William Morris, Emery Walker and their contemporaries. But he did have an association with Cuala Press, which was a direct line to the Doves Press, Emery Walker, and the very heart of the Private Press Movement. As time went on he studied the Movement, became familiar with it, and came under its influence. In Dolmen XXV (published in 1976) he confesses to an "obsession with the Press books of the 1890s". In response to one of my questions in relation to this thesis Mr. Miller mentioned that as he learned more about the Private Presses he "came more and more to respect Emery Walker" and that his "admiration for Doves work still grows".

A very brief outline of the earliest years in the existence of printing is also contained in this section. This is mainly because Miller himself had gone back to those sources for his design inspiration and wanted to recreate the beauty, the quality, and the pure craftsmanship of the early books in his own work. Included is a list of the design features which were picked out of those early volumes by Morris and Walker and on which they founded their principles of good design. This list provides a useful guide against which to compare the design of Liam Miller's books.

Inextricably bound up with the story of Dolmen is the story of the development of Irish literature. It was a love of books which first motivated Liam Miller towards publishing: the editorial policy of Cuala Press and the ideas and writings of W.B. Yeats, its Editor, defined Dolmen's *raison d'être*: and over three decades of Irish literary achievements kept Dolmen in business and fuelled Miller's creativity.

The main section covers the history of Dolmen and the design of the books themselves. Design is analysed under the broad headings of typography, layout and illustration and the interaction of all three areas is looked at in a selection of individual volumes over the years. I have discussed the cover designs as a unique section and briefly talked about Miller's use of materials.

The books I have chosen to concentrate on were printed as Dolmen Editions. Started in 1966, this was an imprint which was to publish some of the best Irish literature in the finest design settings. As they represent the pinnacle of Dolmen's achievements it seems appropriate to examine them in some detail.

Finally I have tried to assess the importance of Dolmen and of Liam Miller's work, mainly through a personal response to the design of the books.

Acknowledgements.

There are a few people whose advice and assistance have been invaluable in researching and writing this study.

One of these is Frank Bissette, who helped me with the background, the history of the Private Presses, and answered endless typographical questions. Another is Ruth Brandt, Dolmen's most prolific illustrator, who provided personal memoirs and information about working with Liam Miller. Bill Bolger gave general advice and information, plus "technical assistance" with the word-processing of the text. And I am most grateful to him for being my contact with Liam Miller.

Mr. Miller himself is currently hospitalized and has been for some time, so I have not been able to meet him personally. But he has, through Bill, answered many of my questions (marked "quotations from personal interview.") I really appreciate this and, of course, I must thank Mr. Miller for providing me with the topic for my study itself: the Dolmen Press.

History of the Private Press Movement.

Printing has existed in Europe since at least the fifteenth century when Johann Gutenberg used movable type to produce his bibles. It was always practised as a trade and individuals have also printed books, usually titles which would not be commercially viable, such as scholarly works, propagandistic writings, etc. However, by about 1750 private presses were no longer strictly necessary, as even the most obscure textbooks could be financed by public sponsorship. The name "Private Press" came to be associated with a printing press operated for pleasure rather than for profit.

As a hobby, for those who could afford it, printing remained fairly popular until the late nineteenth century when it was brought back to public attention by the designer William Morris. Morris held that industrialisation and the subsequent decline in design and craftsmanship was at the root of many of the ills of modern society. He was an evangelist: his ideas prompted him to write and his socialist tendencies prompted him to seek a way of disseminating his writings as widely as possible. Thus he became interested in the potential of privately-controlled printing facilities. Although Morris is the person most readily associated with the beginning of the Private Press Movement, the real instigator of the Movement was the typographer Emery Walker (1851-1933.)

Walker had been employed by the Typographic Etching Company in London, where he became skilled in the technical side of type-design, and developed the basis of a lifelong love of typography and book design. He and Morris were neighbours and became friends, sharing their two major interests, socialism and design.

In 1888 Walker addressed the Arts and Crafts Society on the "Principles of Typography". He took examples of Gothic design and typefaces and, in his speech, advocated a return to the styles of design of the fifteenth and early

sixteenth centuries, the very dawn of printing in Europe. This speech was an inspiration to Morris and in 1891, after much discussion and some preliminary experiments, the Kelmscott Press was established.

Morris and Walker cooperated in writing an article on printing for the Arts and Crafts Society, which was published in 1893 and in which they ferociously attacked the prevailing standards of book design. These they contrasted with the standards of earlier times in an outline of the history of their subject.

Johann Gutenberg died in 1468, wrote Morris and Walker, and within 15 years of his death printing was being practised in every country in western Europe. At that time there were as many languages spoken as there were racial groups on the continent, and every language had its own alphabet. Individual printers had types cut or made them themselves and these were derived from the alphabets used in the handwriting of each region.

As time went on the new invention meant that words written in one country were much more freely available to citizens of other nations, as long as they could understand the language in which the books were written. This led to a demand for the standardisation of alphabets across Europe. The two kinds of character which became prevalent were the Gothic fonts of Fraktur and Schwabacher, and the antiqua fonts of roman and italics.

Gothic typefaces, employed by Gutenberg in his 42-line Bible, were the first to be used extensively: they were of Germanic origin. But they were superseded everywhere except in Germany itself by the antiqua fonts.

Roman was basically a development of the inscriptional lettering cut into architecture by Italian stonemasons in the classical era. It was brought to perfection, it is generally accepted, by Nicholas Jenson (c.1420-1480). He was a French die-cutter sent by Charles VII to Mainz to learn the new art of printing. Instead of taking his knowledge back to France,

however, he went to Venice and set up in business there as a printer and publisher. By 1470 he was cutting the typefaces which became celebrated all over Europe.

Italics were developed about 1500 by the designer Francesco Griffo of Bologna. He based the letterforms on the cursive script of Italian Renaissance scholars. Griffo's type proved to be the perfect complement to Jenson's roman, as well as being narrow and therefore economical to use. Griffo worked for the internationally renowned printer-publisher Aldus Manutius (again in Venice) and it was due to the influence of this man that italics quickly became popular throughout Europe.

Morris and Walker claimed that from the fifteenth century printing went downhill, but this was something of an exaggeration due, one supposes, to the great regard in which they held Jenson's typeface and to Morris' conviction of the infallibility of anything and everything in the infancy of its development.

What happened after Jenson's death was that typography became more refined in response to commercial needs. Letterforms moved away from the Venetian style, becoming lighter in colour and with a greater contrast in the widths of strokes. A vertical orientation in the axes of curves became common as types grew away from their manuscript ancestry. A certain virtuosity in ornament came to the fore. Commercial pressures to put more words on the page and save on paper costs meant that letters became narrower and smaller faces were used. For the same reason margins got smaller and the practice of filling margins and empty spaces with decoration was discontinued. To cope with the fineness of letters, paper had to be as smooth and clear as possible.

These things were practically all of the facets of modern book design to which Walker and Morris objected in their Arts and Crafts article. To suggest a remedy for the shortcomings of their contemporaries, the authors laid down what they considered

NATVRA. DELLE POPPE DEGLANIMALI. CAP. XL.

Lafine dolgono lepoppe dopo el parto: Ilperche Isuezano lafinino el sexto me-
fe: conciosia che lecaualle dieno lapoppa un anno. Tutti glanimali che hāno un
ghia dun pezo non generano piu che due per uolta: ne hanno piu che due poppe & q̄l
le nel pectignone: nel medesimo luogho lhanno quelle che hanno lunghia didue pezi
& sono comute: le uacche quattro: le pecore & capre due. Quelle che partoriscono piu
che due & hanno le dita nepiedi hanno molte poppe per tutto el ventre in due filari.
Le troie generose hanno dodici poppe: le uulgarie due meno. Similmente le cagne. Al-
chune hanno quattro in mezo del corpo: come sono lepanthere. Alchune due chome
sono le lionesse. Lohelephante solo ha due poppe sotto lebraccia & nō nelpecto. Nef
funa che habia dita nepiedi ha poppe nel pectigione. Eporcellini prima nati succiano
leprime poppe & benche habbino laltre presso alla bocca: ciaschuno conosce lesue in
quello ordine che e nato & cō quella sinutrice & non con altra. Et leuato un porcellio

Jenson : designed by Nicolas
Jenson and used by him in
Venice, c.1470.

OFFICINA COLUMBARUM excuderunt T. J.
Cobden-Sanderson et Emery Walker textum recensu
it J. W. Mackail typos composuit J. H. Mason prelum
exercuit H. Gage-Cole XIV Kal. Nov. MDCCCC.

Doves: designed by Emery Walker
and T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, used
at the Doves Press 1900-1916.

to be the principles of good book design. These were to become articles of faith to Morris' and Walker's followers and to private printers for years to come.

The first requirement of typography was, naturally, legibility. The typographer should "avoid irrational swellings and spiky projections". Lines should be pure: unnecessary ornament was to be shunned, even - or especially - in such apparently minor cases as on the ends of letter strokes. Caslon (designed in the eighteenth century), although generally regarded as a fine classical type, was faulted for the "vulgar and meaningless" hooking of the ends of some letters, like the "t" and the "e": these were contrasted with the "sharp and clear stroke" of Jenson's forms. Lines should be of a uniform width: the contrast between thick and thin strokes in faces like Baskerville (another eighteenth-century face and one of the most popular of all text fonts) was too marked. The upper finishings of letters should not be bulbous, as seen in the "ugly pear-shaped swelling" characteristic of the upper finishings of Caslon's "c" and "a". Legibility could be tested by attempting to distinguish between the numerals, particularly "3", "5", and "8".

Jenson's letters were designed within a square, but by the nineteenth century letterforms were generally only two thirds of this size. This was due to economic considerations, but because the words were so small printers used so much line spacing that they defeated the aims of the exercise. "Long Primer" (an old name for a type size of about 10 points) should be the smallest type size used in reading books. As regards commerciality, if less leading were employed larger type could be used without taking up any more space and without making book production any more expensive.

Spaces between words should be equal, or as regular as possible. The solidity of the page was important and printers were urged to take care to avoid "rivers", gaps in the text forming patterns running down the page. These were not always

easy to regulate, but could be avoided by taking care when breaking up lines of text. Spacing, the writers concluded, was a matter of personal judgement and therefore required a good deal of thought and attention.

Positioning type on the page was one of the most basic of skills, but this, too, had been lost in much modern printing. In the early days of book production it was standard practice to position a block of text so that there was more space at the bottom and fore margins than at the top and back of the text. The two pages of an opening were thus treated as a single unit and one overall impression was given whenever the book was opened. Modern printers were inclined to view each page as entirely separate from its fellows and to centre each block as a single element. This has the effect of breaking the continuity of the book. To complicate matters, printers often counted the headline (title of the book or chapter heading) as part of the text block so that in practice there was more space at the top than at the bottom of the page. The overall effect was of the words being driven off the page.

Good paper should not be confined to the best books. Cheap paper was often a necessity for the commercial printer, but to attempt to mask this was a bad idea. Inexpensive paper should at least be tough and durable: to sacrifice durability for a smooth white surface was foolishness. Publishers had a trick of producing slim volumes printed on paper which was almost as thick as board, a deception, wrote Morris and Walker, which fooled nobody. A small book should be printed on stock as thin as possible without being transparent. They acknowledged that machine-made paper could not be as fine as hand-made paper, however, which would seem to make some allowance for the problems of commercial printers.

Ornament, meaning patterns, head- or tailpieces as well as illustration, must be subservient to the unity of

FRIEND, I DO THEE NO WRONG, DIDST
NOTTHOU AGREE WITH ME FOR A PEN.
NY; TAKE THAT THINE IS, AND GO THY
WAY, I WILL GIVE UNTO THIS LAST EVEN
AS UNTO THEE. ¶ IF YE THINK GOOD,
GIVE ME MY PRICE; AND IF NOT, FOR,
BEAR, SO THEY WEIGHED FOR MY PRICE
THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER.

ESSAY I. THE ROOTS OF HONOUR

AMONG the delusions which at different periods have possessed themselves of the minds of large masses of the human race, perhaps the most curious—certainly the least creditable—is the modern socialist science of political economy, based on the idea that an advantageous code of social action may be determined irrespective of the influence of social affection. Of course, as in the instances of alchemy, astrology, witchcraft, and other such popular creeds, political economy has a plausible idea at the root of it. "The social affections," says the economist, "are accidental and disturbing elements in human nature; but avarice and the desire of progress are constant elements. Let us eliminate the inconstants, and, considering the human being merely as a covetous machine, examine by what laws of labour, purchase and sale, the greatest accumulative result in wealth is obtainable. Those laws once determined, it will be for each individual afterwards to introduce as much of the disturbing

1

the page above all else.

Well-designed type, pleasing spacing of words and lines, and the proper position of text on the page were essential: beautiful ornament and illustration, judiciously used, were an added bonus. The whole creed of the Arts and Crafts Movement is summed up in the final sentence of this essay: if all of these conditions were met, wrote Morris and Walker, "A work of utility might also be a work of art, if we chose to make it so."

The Kelmscott publications fit into a category of "Romantic" book design (Bib.1), inspired by the aesthetics of the Pre-Raphaelites: Morris designed typefaces based on Gothic models and on Jenson's face, but making this last very heavy and dark. A second major category is the "Classical" style, associated with the Aesthetic movement (Bib.1): it was characterised by restraint in design, ornament limited mainly to initial letters, plenty of space around the type, and an overall feeling of delicacy and lightness. Typefaces were equally light and taken from fifteenth century Italian prototypes. The most effective use of the Classical style was in the publications of the Doves Press which was run by Emery Walker himself and owned by T.J. Cobden-Sanderson.

Doves Press was founded after the death of William Morris in 1896, and its first book, the *Agricola* of Tacitus, was published in January 1900. From the beginning Doves' publications were universally admired and it was probably more influential than Kelmscott as regards design. Even when the Press ceased to function its influence was far from over. On a very practical level several of those who had been most intimately involved with Doves became closely involved with the printers of the future: Douglas Cockerell, first lecturer in bookbinding at London's Central School of Art, had been on the Doves' staff, and Doves' chief compositor, J. H. Mason, became first

instructor in printing at Central.

Emery Walker himself kept up his associations with private printing. The most important of these from the point of view of this study was his work as typographic adviser to the Cuala Press.

Ireland and the Cuala Press.

The Arts and Crafts Movement was not the only popular enthusiasm of the late nineteenth century. In both Ireland and England there was a great deal of interest in Irish culture, the language, arts, and traditional way of life of the Irish people.

The literary heritage was one of the areas to gain a great deal of attention. 1892 saw the founding of the Irish Literary Society in London and the National Literary Society in Dublin: Douglas Hyde founded the Gaelic League in 1893. A new literature began to appear, written mainly in English but directly inspired by Celtic influences. Theatre in Ireland also enjoyed a revival. And at the centre of all of this action was the young poet W.B. Yeats (1865-1939).

As a boy in Dublin Yeats had met William Morris and they were reintroduced in 1887 when the Yeats family was living in London. The poet soon became a regular visitor in Kelmscott House and made contact with, among others, Emery Walker.

All of the Yeats family came into contact with Morris and his circle. By 1888 Lily, the poet's sister, was studying embroidery with May Morris. The youngest of the Yeats sisters, Elizabeth, was studying to be a teacher and experimenting with the technique of writing short stories when she met Walker and under his influence became interested in printing.

One of the other members of this group was Lily's and Elizabeth's friend, Evelyn Gleeson. The three women shared an

interest in crafts and a desire to do something practical to help Ireland, which resulted in their leaving London for Dublin in 1902 to found a firm of designers and craftswomen which they called Dun Emer Industries.

Dun Emer was a commercial venture but it also had a philanthropic function. It was set up to design and make objects of use and beauty: embroideries, hand-woven tapestries and carpets, and hand-printed books. All of the employees were Irish, which created local employment, and they were all young women: the Feminist Movement was underway in London and Evelyn Gleeson was obviously influenced by this. The intention was to teach craft skills to the workers, who could, in their turn, pass these on to others. The scheme would appear to have been tailor-made to cater for just about every idealistic movement in Britain and Ireland at that time.

Elizabeth had taken just one month's tuition at the Women's Printing Society in London and was to be in charge of the Press.

Dun Emer had the good fortune to be able to engage Emery Walker as typographic adviser, while W.B. Yeats was to act as editor. An Albion handpress was purchased: this is an iron hand-press possibly invented around 1820 and made by most pressmakers up to c.1940. It was displaced for commercial work by mechanical presses by the 1850s, but was revived at Kelmscott and became extremely popular among private printers. On Walker's advice the type font Elizabeth bought was Caslon, a 14-point size. A special rag paper was ordered from Swiftbrook Paper Mills, Saggart (in county Dublin), to be used for all standard-format books.

In The Seven Woods, a collection of Yeats' poetry, was the first publication. It has many of the features which were to become associated with the Press' output. Pages are a small quarto size, 8 1/4ins. x 5 3/4ins. Swiftbrook's paper was mouldmade, thin and crisp, off-white

FOUR EPIGRAMS.

I

AT MASS

Ah! light lovely lady with delicate lips aglow,
With breast more white than a branch heavy-laden
with snow,
When my hand was uplifted at Mass to salute the
Host
I looked at you once, and the half of my soul was
lost.

II

SCANDAL

Snow-breasted star whose shining eyes are bold,
With ivory-gleaming teeth and locks of gold,
Mock not a sister fair who steers awry
Till thine own vessel in safe harbour lie.

III

REPENT

Ah! golden girl so sweetly spoken
Let it not be charged on thee:
"She a Christian's heart has broken".
Repent and let love's fire burn free.

34

IV
A VISION OF THE NIGHT

O chaste and fair! O sweet and rare! O slave of love
and duty!
Whose clustering hair falls stair by stair down all
thy house of beauty,
Thy shadow bright at dark of night went by where
I was sleeping,
Thy form, thy face, thy peerless grace in slow pro-
cession sweeping.

COLOPHON

"Firis" to all the manuscripts I've penned
And to life's fitful fever here "The End";
"The End" to limewhite women golden-tressed
And in God's hands at Judgment be the rest.

hesitate, cease to exist, glitter again,
dither in and out of a mother liquid
on the turn, welling up from God knows what hole.

Dear God, if I had known how far and deep,
how long and cruel, I think my being
would have blanched: appalled.

How artless,
how loveless I was then! O dear, dear God,
the times I had in my disarray - cooped up
with the junk of centuries! The excitement,
underlining and underlining in that narrow room!
- dust (all that remained of something) settling
in the air over my pleasures.

Many a time
I have risen from my gnawed books
and prowled about, wrapped in a long grey robe,
and rubbed my forehead; reached for my
instruments
- canister and kettle, the long-handled spoon,
metal vessels and delphi; settled the flame,
blue and yellow; and, in a distracted hunger,
my book propped before me, eaten forkfulls
of scrambled egg and buttered fresh bread
and taken hot tea until the sweat stood out
at the roots of my hair!

A snake out of the void moves in my mouth, suck
at triple darkness. A few ancient faces
detach and begin to circle. Deeper still,
delicate distinct tissue begins to form,

in tone. Layout of the page was similar to a Doves' book. The colophon, headings, and some notes are printed in red ink. 325 copies were printed and priced at 10/6. The edition sold quickly, half of the books by prior subscription.

Financial difficulties beset the Press considerably more than the rest of the Industries, partly because Elizabeth was not the most shrewd of businesswomen. Her elder brother was appealed to for money on more than one occasion. By 1908 financial problems of the Press and other personal differences between the Yeats sisters and Evelyn Gleeson had come to a head and a split was unavoidable. Lily and Elizabeth moved their own operations, including some textile work and the Press, to Churchtown, in south county Dublin. They named their new company Cuala Industries, after the Irish name of the district. The production of Cuala was all but indistinguishable from that of Dun Emer.

Dun Emer/Cuala was founded to publish the work of Irish writers and writings relevant to Ireland. As Editor of the Press, W.B. Yeats was responsible for the choice of publications. He had experience in this area from the age of 23, when he worked on the editing of Poems and Ballads of Young Ireland, printed in Dublin in 1888, and Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry, published in London in the same year. The first collection of his own poetry, The Wanderings of Oisín, appeared in 1889.

Yeats' involvement with the various literary associations of London and Dublin show his concern with the country's cultural heritage. He wanted to make Irish writing as widely available as possible and supported his sister's publishing venture from the start. His own work was heavily influenced by Irish legends and folk tales but Cuala's bibliography of publications shows the Press' support for many of the new young writers of the day. Apart

from Yeats' own work there are editions of books by AE, Douglas Hyde, J.M. Synge, Oliver Gogarty, Lady Gregory, Frank O'Connor, and Patrick Kavanagh.

Cuala was not the only private press in Ireland at the beginning of the century. Printing was carried on by individuals in this country just as it was in England, and, indeed, continues to do so to this day. But very few of the Irish presses have paid attention to design. Cuala was by far the most advanced in this area and was in other ways, specifically its editorial policy, the most influential of the Irish presses.

Cuala's great achievement was that it printed books by Irish writers at a crucial period in Irish cultural development. Through the Yeats family's efforts Irish writing was brought to the attention of a wider audience abroad and into the public eye at home. One of the Irishmen who, in the 1940s and 1950s, was strongly affected by Cuala and the achievements of Elizabeth Yeats and her family was a young architect from the Midlands: his name was Liam Miller.

The establishment of the Dolmen Press.

Born in Mountrath, co. Laois, on April 24, 1924, Liam Miller was the eldest child of Sighle and James Miller. He was educated by the Patrician Brothers, Ballyfin College, and studied architecture at University College, Dublin. He is married to Josephine (nee Browne) and they have four children, a son and three daughters.

Early in life Miller developed a tremendous admiration for the writing of Yeats. He loved the stage, being involved for a time with the Lantern Theatre in Dublin, and he was a voracious reader, especially of poetry. As Cuala Press was still in operation up till 1968

and as they were Yeats' main publishers, Miller would have discovered that Press very quickly. Before long he discovered Cuala's origins (he and his wife were friends of Michael and Anne Yeats, children of the poet) and was struck by both William's commitment to Irish writing and Elizabeth's achievements in printing and publishing.

This love of books and of the theatre, a knowledge of design through architectural studies, an awareness of the work and background of the Cuala Press, a strong desire to make some contribution to Ireland, and, above all, a sense of adventure seem to have been the key things which prompted Miller's suggestion in 1951 that he and Josephine should try printing. Miller himself made a tiny wooden press, set up a verse with a card fount of type, inked it, and made a couple of impressions. The first efforts cost less than a pound and were sufficiently encouraging to allow them to buy an elementary hand press and a font of 12-point Caslon type.

The press was an 11in. x 7in. Adana flatbed which just about allowed two pages to be printed simultaneously. Luckily, Cecil French Salkeld, who had run the Gayfield private press with his mother, lent the Millers a wooden handpress which could take four pages at a time. This was used for three years until the family moved to Glenageary (Co. Dublin), to a house which provided enough garage space to facilitate the acquiring of another three presses, one of which was an Albion. (This gesture suggests that Miller was beginning to come under the spell of the nineteenth-century Press movement.) When, in 1958, Liam Miller began printing and publishing full-time, the Press moved to Upper Mount Street and a Heidelberg platen was bought. North Richmond Street was the final stop of the printing works in 1973 and the machines in use at this time were Heidelberg platen and cylinder presses. Towards the end of the 1970s it was necessary to convert to offset lithographic printing if the Press was to remain commercially competitive: however print

union regulations prevented single crews from working on both offset and letterpress equipment and the closure of the printing works was unavoidable. The latest books published by Dolmen were printed by other printing works, often outside Ireland.

Back in 1951 the first book published by the new Press was Sigerson Clifford's small collection of ballads, Travelling Tinkers. Public reaction was encouraging and the booklet sold out quickly. It served to let people know of the existence of the Press and before long writers were coming to the Millers with books or suggestions for publications. Padraic Colum wrote from New York to offer his poetry. Donagh MacDonagh came with a ballad, "The Love Duet", from his play, God's Gentry, which was to become the second of the Press' publications. He introduced Miller to Louis LeBrocqy, who made a headpiece and tailpiece for this particular publication and who was later to be involved with the production of one of the Press' finest volumes, The Tain. Early in 1952 the translator of The Tain, the poet Thomas Kinsella, was brought to meet the Millers and work was begun on his book, The Starlit Eye. Dolmen eventually became the publishers of all of Kinsella's work.

Some of The Starlit Eye was set by Kinsella himself. Neither Liam nor Josephine Miller knew anything about the techniques of printing: these they learnt as they actually worked and they were more than willing to involve friends and writers in the preparation and printing processes.

Thus friends, guests, and visiting poets spent evenings and weekends in the Miller household, setting type, cutting and folding paper and pulling the press. As Miller was still working in an office in Dublin the work of the Press had to be carried out in the evenings, at weekends, and during whatever free time was available. In later years Liam Miller remembered the pleasure and companionship of these occasions, when new acquaintances were made, friendships consolidated, and conversations

frequently suggested new ideas and projects, as being one of the greatest rewards of setting up the Press.

Josephine Miller was not involved to any great extent in the design side of Dolmen. However, she was probably the more businesslike of the couple and she seems to have borne most of the responsibility for the family's welfare while her husband was immersed in his beloved books. Her brother, Liam Browne, was the business manager of the Press.

As mentioned above, writers had from the start approached the Millers with manuscripts and proposals for books. Those which were to be published were chosen, according to Miller, "out of [his] personal curiosity, taste, judgement or whatever you'd like to call it." (Bib.4) Illustrators were selected in much the same way. Michael Biggs made linocuts for The Midnight Court, David Marcus' translation of Bryan Merriman's long poem, in 1953, and through Biggs many young artists were introduced to the Press, including the frequently used Leslie MacWeeney and Bridget Swinton.

Louis LeBrocqy designed the Press' logo, the stylised dolmen which first appeared in the endpapers of The Tain. When choosing a name for the Press Miller wanted something "Irish, architectural, international, and ancient" (quotation from personal interview.) These stone structures erected over pre-Christian burial mounds are found along Europe's Atlantic seaboard and are an instantly recognisable feature of the Irish landscape. The symbol had appeared in all of the Press' publications, drawn by Miller himself, in a variety of forms until 1969 when LeBrocqy's interpretation was adopted as the company's standard pressmark.

Dolmen's first three years' work covered 16 small books and four broadsheets. By 1956 Liam Miller had decided to quit his job and work full-time at the Press. It was impossible to make a living purely from producing beautiful books and

pamphlets in limited editions, so the Press carried out jobbing work, such as the printing of theatre programs, catalogues for art galleries, etc. But it still needed to become more commercial to be financially viable and so by the mid-1960s more and more books were issued in unlimited editions for the mainstream publishing market.

Concerned that his original aims were being ignored, Miller decided to create a new imprint which would be a return to these ideals. It was called the Dolmen Editions.

In Miller's own words: "Dolmen Editions was conceived as a series which would print, in limited editions, important Irish writings. The text dictated the format of each book and many of them are illustrated, some with original graphics whose creators were encouraged to employ experimental techniques in letterpress printing." (Bib.11)

Thomas Kinsella's collection of poems entitled Wormwood was the first Dolmen Edition. It was produced in an edition of 350 copies, signed by the author and was published in March, 1966.

Liam Miller's Design.

The best way to examine Liam Miller's design is probably to look at his typography, layout and use of illustration first in a fairly general way and then in the specific examples of a selection of the books.

It should be appreciated that Miller's work was much farther ranging than is usual for designers today. In commercial publishing companies a designer can spend all of his or her time in a single very narrow area. For example, the designer might choose typefaces and layout and suggest an illustrator or photographer for nothing more than the cover of a book: the design of the text might be consigned to another designer, or even another department. Miller, on

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the other hand, worked in every single area of production of his books, from editing the author's typescript to seeing the final product through the press. One of his titles would be that of "Art Director". In this respect a good deal of his work was purely decision-making and liaising between different people, rather than actual placing of elements on the page. He had to decide what typefaces to use, which illustrators to employ. He had to be able to communicate with maximum efficiency so that illustrators, and, very frequently, writers, would be able to work harmoniously with each text. And so, quite often, one is critically examining the characteristics of a certain typeface or style of illustration and Miller's involvement can only be measured by extension, by trying to understand the reasoning behind the decision to use Perpetua titling, for instance, or a drawing by Jack Coughlin.

Typography.

A recent issue of the American graphics magazine, Print, carried an article about publication design by the typographer Roger Black. "Books and magazines", he wrote, "have content of their own, written content, and their design is not simply a package, a cup that contains the liquid text; it is essential to the meaning of the words. Type is the code that carries words. The subtle variations of typefaces have their own, usually subliminal, meanings. The typographic design of a magazine or book affects the meaning of the words by presenting the material directly, forcefully, and legibly - or not. The associations called up by type layouts can put the reader in the proper mood."

This philosophy of design can be seen in Liam Miller's work with Dolmen. He gave a great deal of loving care and attention to typography in all the Press'

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNO

PQRSTUVWXYZ

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNO

PQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstvwxyz

abcdefghijklmnopqrstvwxyz

1234567890

1234567890

Pilgrim: designed by Eric Gill,
reissued by Linotype, 1953.

have perished ere he could have ask'd one for himself: he stood by the chaise, a little without the circle, and wiped a tear from a face which I thought had seen better days—Good God! said I—and I have not one single sous left to give him—But you have a thousand! cried all the powers of nature, stirring within me—so I gave him—no matter what—I am ashamed to say how much, now—and was ashamed to think how little, then; so if the reader can form any conjecture of my disposition, as these two fixed points are given him, he may judge within a livre or two what was the precise sum.

I could afford nothing for the rest, but 'Dieu vous benisse'—Et le bon Dieu vous benisse encore—said the old soldier, the dwarf, &c. The pauvre honteux could say nothing—he pull'd out a little handkerchief, and wiped his face as he turned away—and I thought he thanked me more than them all.

Specimen of the Bunyan type from Laurence Sterne's A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

publications and his interest in using type as a visual communicator of ideas and emotions as well as of words is particularly evident in the Dolmen Editions.

Caslon was the first font used by Dolmen Press. A case of Bodoni came with Cecil French Salkeld's printing press and as time went on more faces in a range of sizes were acquired at the rate of two or three per year from 1957. There were eventually 16 different typefaces in the Dolmen collection, 10 of these in a range of text sizes, plus 12 display fonts.

Caslon and Poliphilius were most frequently used in the early sixties, but by the middle of that decade a font of Gill Pilgrim had been bought and this was used in 44 of the 119 books brought out before 1970. It remained the most popular font for the Editions through the 1970s.

Eric Gill, one of the greatest British typographers of the twentieth century, was the designer of Pilgrim. He produced it for a book published by the Limited Editions Club of New York, who called it "Bunyan". In 1950 the Linotype Corporation bought the rights to reproduce the font: it was re-cut and issued in 1953 under the new name.

It has features of Humanist origin, that is, derived from the fonts of Jenson and the Venetians, as well as features common to the Transitional designs of the eighteenth century and the work of Baskerville. It is classified between these two categories as an Old Face or Garalde (along with Caslon and Garamond.)

Pilgrim's colour is even: a page set in Pilgrim text will have an overall grey appearance. The contrast between strokes in each character is not very marked. Very slight difference in width between thick and thin strokes is a characteristic of the Venetian fonts. Capitals are the same weight as lower-case characters and the ascenders of the lower-case are taller than the cap-height.

The typeface has an overall vertical bias: most

tellingly, the axis of the curves of "o", "O", "c" and "C" are vertical and the cross-bar of "e" is horizontal. The serifs of "b", "d", "i", "j", and "r" are horizontal and the feet of "a", "b", "d", and "u" are flat. The heavy emphasis on the vertical found in Pilgrim is a trait of the Modern or Didone category, of faces like Bodoni and Walbaum.

Walker and Morris would have approved of the lack of ornamentation of Pilgrim. There are no swellings on any of the letters, apart from a slight widening of the end of the tail of "y". "j" has no swelling of its tail and is not as hooked as Caslon's "j".

Gill was commissioned to create this typeface for a limited edition of Laurence Sterne's Sentimental Journey, which makes one wonder why it was first called "Pilgrim" and then "Bunyan", names apparently derived from John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. One reason which seems plausible is that the face was named for its qualities of design and that these called to mind qualities associated with Pilgrim's Progress. Pilgrim, the typeface, is plain, simple and vertically-biased, with a firm, flat baseline. The spiritual characteristics preached by Bunyan, the writer, are honesty, purity of heart, rectitude, and a firm, steadfast faith which is not distracted by worldly pleasures. Miller's choice of this typeface was influenced partly by his admiration for Eric Gill and, presumably, partly because he felt the traits of the letterforms were appropriate for what he was hoping to accomplish.

A small range of typefaces was employed in the Dolmen Editions, but it was employed with considerable versatility and effectiveness.

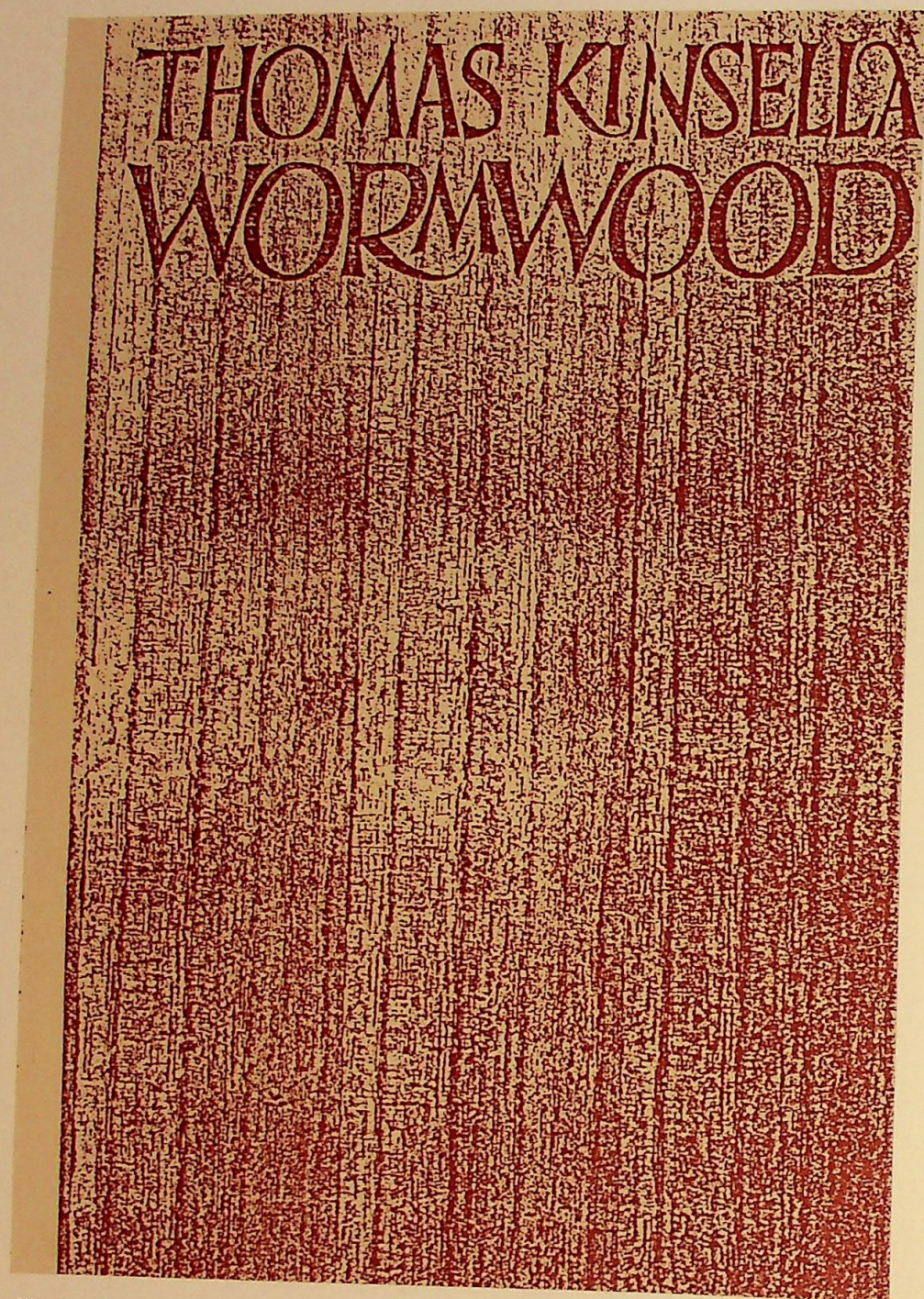
Text fonts were practically all Old Faces, including Bembo, or fonts based on Venetian originals, such as Plantin (designed by F.H. Pierpont for Monotype and derived from a sixteenth century Dutch original) and Centaur (by the American Bruce Rogers, cut in 1914 but derived from Jenson's roman.)

These are in contrast to Dolmen's more commercial productions, which were mainly set in Baskerville and Times Roman. Display types were limited to a small selection. They included Felix, a titling face based on the inscriptional lettering designed by Felice Feliciano in Verona in 1463: Eric Gill's most popular roman, Perpetua: and the Uncial of Austrian artist Victor Hammer, which harks back to pre-Gothic type forms.

Irish typefaces.

Hammer Uncial was based on the writing used in the scriptoria of early Christian Irish monasteries, and the Irish connection was one of its main attractions for Liam Miller. He comes across as a concerned typographer with a special interest in the survival of the Irish language and alphabet. In the late 1950s he encouraged the illustrator and scribe Michael Biggs to design an Irish alphabet and the results were published in 1960 in the Dolmen Chapbook, A Gaelic Alphabet, along with a short article on Irish type by Miller himself. In this article he briefly discussed the history of Irish type design, from the bastardized versions of roman and Anglo-Saxon fonts of the sixteenth century to "Columcille," designed by the proprietor of the Three Candles Press (another private press in Dublin), Colm O'Lochlainn. His knowledge of the subject is evident, but, despite his support for the continued use of the Irish alphabet and concern for the quality of its design, it has to be said that Miller himself did not actually employ any Irish font other than Hammer Uncial and, rather sadly, Michael Biggs' alphabet seems to have been developed no further than it was in the original Dolmen Chapbook.

Miller's use of Uncial was always inventive. Letterspaced capitals were used for titles, tightly set upper- and lowercase



Wormwood
by Thomas Kinsella:
title lettered by Ruth Brandt.
Dolmen Editions 1,
March 1966.

blocks were used on title pages: over the years Uncial was used for setting English, Irish, Spanish and Italian text and worked equally well in all cases.

Calligraphy.

Calligraphy and hand-lettering was a feature of many private press books, as limited editions meant that initials could be drawn and coloured by hand. Calligraphic letterforms were used in several of Dolmen's publications, although they were generally printed from blocks (while printing was by letterpress) or plates (when lithographic printing was adopted). Miller introduced Ruth Brandt, one of the illustrators most often employed at the Press, to the work of David Jones, a modern Welsh scribe, and she began to produce hand-lettering for Dolmen under Miller's direction. In fact, the very first of the Editions, Thomas Kinsella's *Wormwood*, included some of this calligraphy.

The volume is half-bound in veneered boards to give the impression of a natural wooden surface. At the top of the cover is the title, "Wormwood", in capitals about one inch high and justified to fill the width of the cover. Directly below, slightly smaller and also justified, is the author's name. The lettering looks unusual, has a great deal of personality, and is very attractive.

Taking the lead from David Jones, Ruth Brandt's lettering is based on the forms of modern typefaces rather than on cursive scripts. "Wormwood" looks as though it might be derived from the typeface Perpetua or maybe from Optima, executed so the letters are uneven and individualised: the "K", the final "A", and the "R" have elongated curled strokes.

Printed in sepia, the grain of the veneer shows through the characters. They look rather like characters

burnt in wood. Ms. Brandt's letters are used again on the title-page of the book: "Wormwood" is set in olive ink and "Thomas Kinsella" in black. They are denser and look better than ever. To tie in with the calligraphy, Miller used olive green Perpetua initials to start each poem.

Later in Dolmen's production Miller employed Timothy O'Neill, Ireland's leading contemporary scribe, to provide calligraphy for books like Giraldu Cambrensis' *Topographia Hiberniae* (translated by John J. O'Meara and published in 1970.) Miller always favoured the "masculine" qualities of modern hand-lettering over the scrolls and flourishes of the traditional cursive approach. The work of Brother Timothy is based on ancient Celtic handwriting and Ruth Brandt's on mechanically-produced typefaces. They might have curled the ends of letters, extended serifs, or made obviously hand-drawn lines, but neither was inclined to use the sort of flowing brushwork which typifies the work of scribes like David Jackson, or even the script-typography of, say, Herb Lubalin or Hermann Zapf.

Colour.

In relation to typography the word "colour" generally means the overall appearance of a page set in any particular typeface, but in this case it refers to the spectrum of visible light. While it is not possible to generalise to any great extent about Miller's use of different sizes of type, or different combinations of typefaces, etc, his use of colour with type can be so examined.

Use of two or more colours is very much a trait of the Private Presses. Cuala's colophons and headings were usually in red, for instance. Dolmen Editions were frequently printed in more than one tone, a second colour often being reserved for headings, or at least the title-page. *Wormwood*, for example, shows the name of the book in

green on the title-page and uses green Perpetua initials at the start of each poem. In Synge's translation of Petrarch's sonnets from Laura in Morte (1971) the titles of the poems throughout the book are in red-brown capitals. Lady Gregory's Coole, some of her memoirs associated with her home in Connemara, has a title page printed in black and red and, again, throughout the book titles are set in brown ink. 1973 saw the publication of William J. Philbin's To You, Simonides, a collection of sayings, proverbs and words of wisdom. The book is divided into sections according to themes. The first (left-hand) page of each section contains extracts from thinkers as diverse as T.S. Eliot and de Tocqueville. These are set in brown. The rest of each section is translations from the Greek philosophers, set in black.

Layout.

Liam Miller's respect for and admiration of the type designs of the past is evident in the selection of faces he used in his books, especially his feeling for models from the earliest years of printing, a feeling which was, of course, common to Emery Walker and the private press owners of the last century.

Something else he shared with Emery Walker was the way in which the type was laid out on the page.

The standard format page sizes of Doves, Cuala, and the Dolmen Editions are in direct proportion. Cuala has the smallest page, 8 1/4 x 5 3/4ins.: Doves used a page of 9 1/2 x 6 1/2ins.: and Dolmen Editions pages are 11 x 7 1/2ins. The overall page layout of the Editions strongly resembles that of Doves or Cuala. The width of the back and top margins in non-poetry volumes is the same as in a Doves book: 3/4in. and one-inch respectively. In volumes of

poetry the head margin is 1 1/2ins. deep: the tail margin is two inches deep: the fore margin of a Dolmen Edition is 1 1/2ins. wide. The type is usually 12- or 14-point and set solid or one-point leaded.

The combination of type, margins, and style of setting in the layout of a page can, as Roger Black wrote, influence the frame of mind of a reader. Layout can also be used to communicate in much the same way as an illustration or the words themselves. It should be possible to "read" the meanings of a page layout, as long as it is recognised that any such interpretation will be subjective to at least some extent.

The first thing which the layout of a typical Dolmen Edition may suggest is the value of the text. This is largely because of the beauty and elegance of the layout: just as a jeweller gives the finest settings to the most precious stones, one feels that the words must be important indeed to merit such a fine presentation. More practically, the spareness of the layout and the wide margins make it appear that economic considerations were played down in the book's creation: the book looks expensive and we assume that the words are worth the expense.

Compared to the amount of space available there are very few words on each page. Thus one has the impression that each double-page opening contains a complete idea or set of ideas: if more space was needed it was obviously available on the page and there should be no reason to hurry on to the next opening to find the rest of the message. This is an impression rather than a fact, but it does have the effect of making one read in a more relaxed way, perhaps just a little more slowly. Hopefully this allows the reader to appreciate and savour the words more. It is a particularly good way to set poetry, which is generally intended to be perused at leisure, but can enhance any text, again calling to mind the full importance

of the words by making the reader take his or her time over them. These are, one feels, words and ideas to be contemplated.

The size of the typeface adds to this impression. Most of the Dolmen Editions were set in 14-point Pilgrim, which is two or four points larger than the sizes of type most commonly used for text setting today. One tends to associate larger characters with slower reading, with words, again, to be studied.

From an aesthetic point of view each double-page opening has coherence as a unit. The wide fore margins push the two text areas together to make one block, which leads to continuity from page to page, an important criterion as noted by Morris and Walker. (This device is more effective in continuous text than in poetry as lines of poems printed on the left-hand sheet won't all reach the edge of the back margin.)

Another of Walker's and Morris' criteria is fulfilled by the wide fore and narrow back margins, in that they prevent the text from appearing to slide off the page.

The lack of ornamentation of the typeface is in keeping with the page as a whole. There is a modesty or reticence about the layout which suggests that the reader should focus all of her or his attention on the words. The purity of the layout lends a sense of purity, or intensesness, to the words as well.

Title-pages.

The early Editions had title pages which were not stylised and which had little to distinguish them from conventional commercial layouts. In the edition of Synge's play Riders to the Sea published in 1969, the treatment of title pages which was to become a hallmark of Dolmen was first introduced.

All of the type - title of the play, names of the author,

RIDERS TO THE SEA BY J M SYNGE
EDITED BY ROBIN SKILLION FROM THE MANUSCRIPT
IN THE HOUGHTON LIBRARY IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY
WITH FIVE LINOCUTS IN COLOUR BY TATE ADAMS
DOLMEN EDITIONS VIII

Riders To The Sea
by J. M. Synge:
linocuts by Tate Adams.
Dolmen Editions VIII,
March 1969.

editor and illustrator, and the book's imprint - are set in a single block, ranged left, unjustified, at the top of the page. The setting is all capitals of one point size, set solid. In this particular case three colours were used: the title and imprint number are in earth red, author's name in black, and names of the editor and artist in olive green. Later Editions were regularly printed in two colours, usually red (for the title of the book) and black. All of the information is conveyed through the colours, the red generally picking out the most important feature, and through the logical order of the statements.

This implies a very penetrating analysis of the functions of a title-page. Both Doves and Cuala books had title-pages which were comparably simple, but the compacting of all the information into one block and setting it ranged left rather than centred would appear to have been unique to Dolmen.

Colophons.

Colophons detailing the production of the book, the workers involved, the materials they used, and the print run of the edition were a regular feature of privately produced books since Kelmscott. William Morris may have adopted them partly because of his socialistic leanings: he believed that workers should be involved at all stages of production so that everyone could share the sense of achievement and satisfaction in the creation of the book. The colophon is a mark of pride in a book, as it is a list of people who are willing to acknowledge responsibility for the production. For the owner, the colophon provides a link with the designers and craftsmen and some contact with the actual creation of the book.

Ironically, today the information in the colophon can

seem positively pretentious and elitist. We in the twentieth century have lived our entire lives in the age of mass-production so that naming designers or craftsmen is something we tend to associate with the most exclusive products, not by any means with design for the general public. The Dolmen colophons did not always list all the workers involved in each book, but they invariably mentioned typeface, size, paper, etc. Naming typefaces is of little or no use or interest to anyone except typographers. Therefore it would appear that Liam Miller had less interest in the sociology of book-making than in its craft. He was not trying to make volumes for "the masses", but for a discerning audience, an audience which would appreciate fine craftsmanship and understand some of the technicalities of his art.

Illustration.

It is considerably more difficult to pin down general features of illustration relevant to Dolmen's books than it is to define features of typography and layout, simply because illustrations were contributed by so many different people.

One of those whose work appeared most frequently, especially in the early years, was Liam Miller himself. He did not actually include his own illustrations in any of the Dolmen Editions, but made drawings, prints and photographs for a number of other volumes. All of Miller's illustrations are small and compact. They are not strikingly well drawn, nor are they artistically prepossessing in any other way, but they do work quite nicely within the structures of the pages he planned. This practice in making illustrations fit his own layouts and coordinate with his typography was to stand Miller in good

stead when it came to commissioning other artists to provide work for Dolmen: having some experience in illustrating for books himself, he was able to involve these other artists in the design of the book as a whole and thus to integrate words and pictures to give one overall impression.

Many of the artists who worked for Dolmen in the early years were young unknowns, several of them straight out of college. They were employed largely because Dolmen simply couldn't afford the fees of established artists. Although the pay was not very good, it was pleasant work, gave the artist some creative freedom, and the end results, the books in which the work appeared, were objects to be proud of. Also there was very little other work available for illustrators in Ireland at that time.

When the Press began to gain its reputation as a publishing and printing house of quality, Miller started to employ the services of people who are known as "artists", rather than "illustrators", people like Barrie Cooke, Bernard Childs, and Louis LeBrocqy.

In describing the artwork in his books Miller very rarely referred to it as "illustration". Pieces are invariably described as "linocuts", "drawings", etc. As quite a lot of Dolmen's artwork was provided by people who did not and do not consider themselves "illustrators", it may be that Miller described the work as he did in deference to these artists.

Looking at the evidence of the books themselves it appears that he also wanted their readers to see the images in a certain way. The term "illustration" is usually taken to mean an image which gives a visual aid to some sort of descriptive passage in a book. In Miller's books text and imagery are considered as working together, but each with a unique and independent identity.

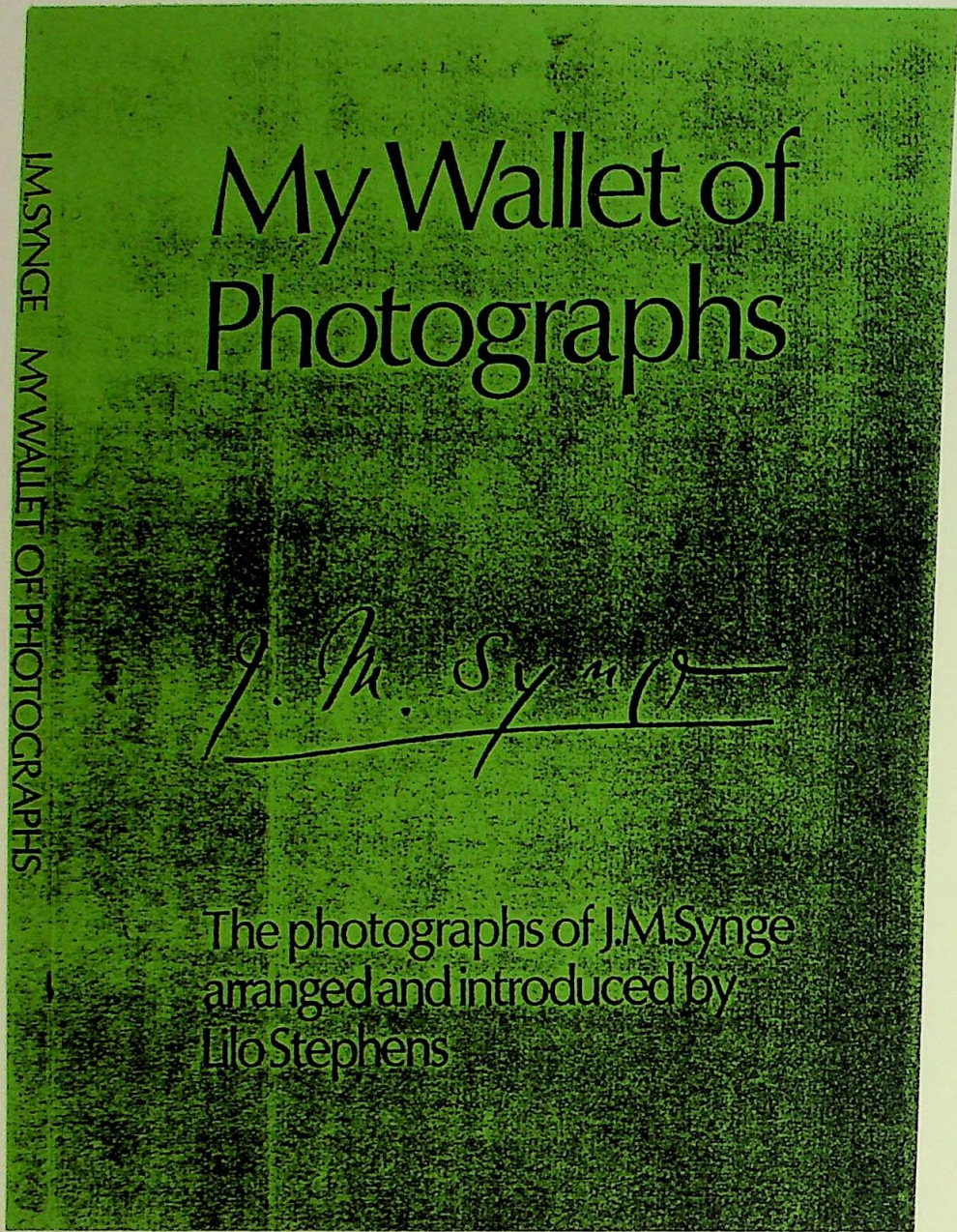
It is interesting to note, however, that when dealing

with an artist like Ruth Brandt, one of the avowed "illustrators" of Dolmen's books, Miller knew exactly what he wanted from the artist and was able to describe this in some detail. He requested Ms. Brandt to change her style for some of Dolmen's books, from light, pretty watercolours to a simulation of the woodcuts of incunabulae, all of which indicates that his attitude to art/illustration was not quite as reverent as one might expect from his manner of speaking about it.

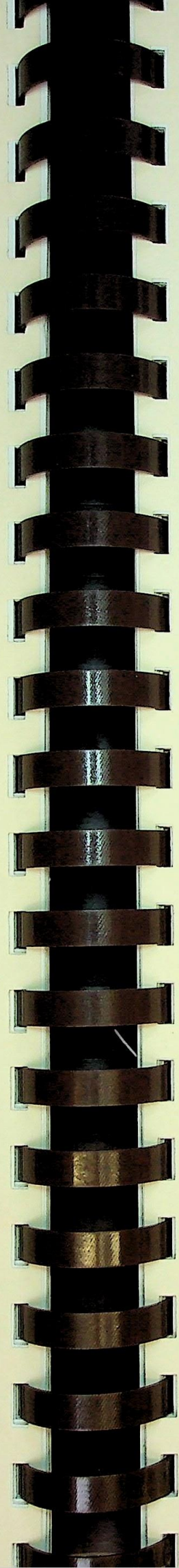
Cover design.

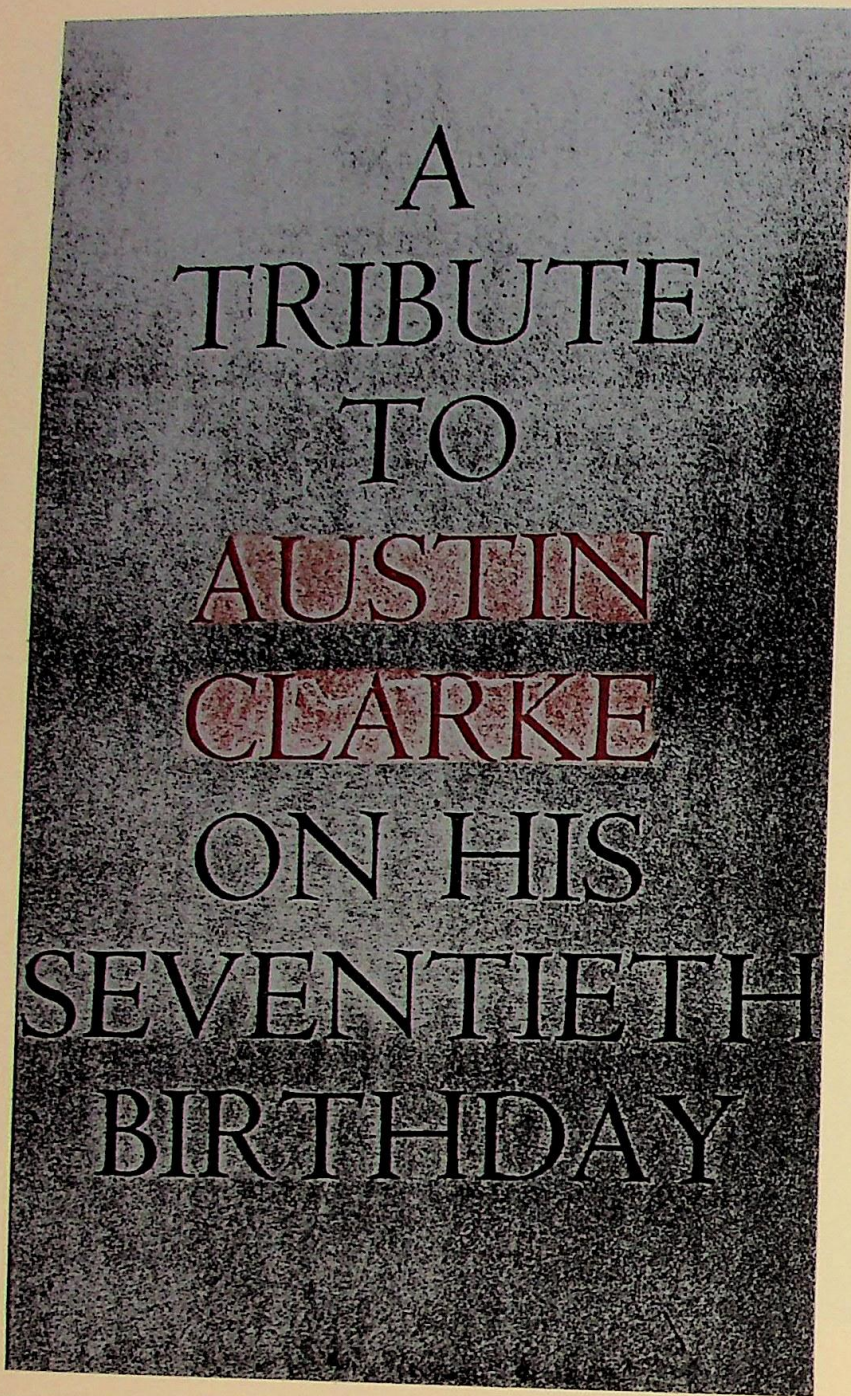
One instance in which pictures of any kind, be it "illustration" or "art", were, if anything, under-used, was in Dolmen's cover design. Most of the Dolmen Editions were hard-bound and issued with dustjackets. The design of each of these was different, of course, but the differences were variations on a definite theme. Some of the binding was done at the Press, more of it by commercial bookbinders.

The majority of the Dolmen Edition dustjackets were of matte paper: even through the 1970s neither lamination nor any other kind of glossy finish was used very often. This has several drawbacks. It means that the books are hardly protected from dampness or staining and that the covers cannot be cleaned. One very specific disadvantage is that adhesive price labels used by booksellers cannot be removed without tearing the surface of the paper. All of this indicates either that Miller did not really consider very carefully the practicalities of buying and owning books very carefully, or that he intended the volumes to be purchased by people who would take particular care of them, perhaps book collectors, and did not intend to sell the Editions in ordinary bookshops, maybe offering them by subscription instead. Perhaps the matte finish was adopted



My Wallet Of Photographs
J. M. Synge's photographs
arranged and edited by
Lilo Stephens.
Dolmen Editions XIII,
April 1971.





*A Tribute To Austin Clarke
On His Seventieth Birthday*
edited by Liam Miller and
John Montague.
Dolmen Editions IV,
May 1966.

simply because Liam Miller felt it was the most suitable for the hand-crafted feel he was aiming to reproduce in his work.

A Tribute to Austin Clarke on his Seventieth Birthday was a collection of poems and short essays to honour the poet, plus a checklist of his work, published in May 1966. Its cover design is typical of the Dolmen Editions. The cover is a dull grey paper with a rough finish. The whole front of the book is taken up by the words of the title and author's name. 48-point Felix titling is used, set centred, all the type in black except for "Austin Clarke", which is maroon. The overall effect is reminiscent of a classical tombstone. J.M. Synge's Wallet of Photographs (1971) has a cover of grey-green paper with a heavy laid grain. The type, black Optima upper- and lower-case and the author's signature, does not cover quite as much space as on the previous example but it is still very large and there is nothing else on the cover.

Photographs and illustrations appear on book jackets so universally today that it is quite a surprise to come across the type-only Dolmen Editions. But the covers are in tone with the classical, restrained nature of the books themselves and fit in with the styles of the bookjackets of the earlier private presses.

Materials.

Before discussing the books themselves it is worthwhile to mention the use of materials in Dolmen's productions.

When Dolmen was first established Liam Miller followed in the footsteps of Elizabeth Yeats by purchasing his paper from Swiftbrook Mills in Dublin. The early books tended to be on the heaviest of laid paper: so heavy, in fact that in Wormwood, for example, the lines of type look

underscored in certain lights. Miller fell into the trap, pointed out by Morris and Walker, of printing slim volumes on paper that was overly thick.

Later stocks were more thoughtfully chosen. For The Tain in 1969, Swiftbrook produced a special making of paper, loaded with kaolin for maximum white density as the blackness of the images was so important. Hand-made paper was used on several occasions early in the Press' history, as for David Marcus' Six Poems and Three Legendary Sonnets by Thomas Kinsella, both printed in 1952. On occasion Dolmen produced books which, with reference to materials at least, were quite spectacular. In February 1957, Faeth Fiadha, St. Patrick's Breastplate, was published, printed on vellum and illustrated with woodcuts hand-coloured by Gerrit Van Gelderen: the binding, of limp vellum, was hand-lettered by Michael Biggs. For obvious reasons the edition was limited to ten copies. The first 50 copies of The Voyage of Saint Brendan (1976) had woodcuts coloured by hand and were full-bound in calf, blocked in blind and in gold, in a slip-case.

The bindings of the books show perhaps the greatest attention to detail in the choice of materials. Many were half- or quarterbound in leather, buckram or vellum. Otherwise they were bound in cloth, sometimes linen, or marbled boards. The spines of the more expensive volumes were blocked in gold with the name of the author and the book, and a device of some kind was often printed on the face of a hardcover book.

Craftsmanship was of paramount importance. Many of the colophons bear witness to the pride taken in each book by its creators. The very fact that Miller wanted to print the books himself in the first place indicates the importance of the act of printing in his opinion. Years after Dolmen had ceased printing books, Liam Miller's concern over this and his conviction of the importance of

the basic processes led him to have the last of the Dolmen Editions, James Joyce's Dubliners (1986), made at the September Press in England, where it could be set by letterpress.

The books.

Having looked broadly at the different elements of design involved in Liam Miller's work, it is necessary to look at a selection of the books individually. This is because the interaction of type, illustration, etc, is so important in Dolmen's publications. First of all, practically everything in the books' design was controlled to a greater or lesser extent by Miller himself, so a cross-over of ideas and approaches from one area to the next would be unavoidable: in other words, what he had in mind when selecting a typeface would also influence the way he handled illustrations in the page layouts, and so on.

Secondly, Miller made conscious decisions to integrate words, images, and all the elements of design.

And thirdly, Miller always intended to treat each of his books as a separate and unique design problem (within, of course, the limitations of format, typefonts, etc, which made up the Dolmen house style.)

In the examination of the books the emphasis is not on stylistic changes over time as it is not quite accurate to speak of the "development" of Liam Miller's design. The principles which guided Miller's work when he established Dolmen remained more or less unchanged through all the years of the Press' operation. Of course his technical abilities improved, and, over time, his style became more accomplished. His knowledge of printing and publication design also increased, but he always remained faithful to the original sources of his design inspiration. For

instance, in answering one of my questions with reference to this thesis, Mr. Miller quoted the Americans Bruce Rogers and W.A. Dwiggins as people whom he came to admire, but there is no obvious evidence of their influence in the design of Miller's books. James Joyce's Dubliners, published in 1986, was, as Mr. Miller himself put it, basically The Tain 17 years on. Unlike many publishing operations, Dolmen did not need to find a niche for itself, as from the beginning Miller knew what he was trying to achieve: "a publishing presence in Ireland on which a genuine list could grow, and at the same time allowed experiment in fine book production" (quotation from personal interview.)

And unlike many designers, Miller's work was not influenced by fashion or even very substantially by technological changes. When he established the Press he had a fair idea of the design he liked and, as there were no "clients" as such to demand new ideas, and very little competition to force the Press into new ways of doing things, Miller was able to continue to work in the style he personally favoured through the years.

Therefore we can look at Dolmen's books in more or less chronological order, but stylistic developments, it transpires, are only intermittent.

As has already been mentioned, the first of the Dolmen Editions was Thomas Kinsella's collection of poetry, Wormwood.

It is a large book, with only eight poems spread over 20 pages. The craftsmanship involved in its production is strikingly obvious. Each poem starts on a new page. The titles are in 14-point letter-spaced Pilgrim capitals, ranged left like the lines of the poetry. These are two-point leaded and with the two-inch top margin (titles are set one inch from the top of the page) and three-inch bottom margin, the overall effect is of luxurious spaciousness. No



All Legendary Obstacles
by John Montague:
drawing by Barrie Cooke.
Dolmen Editions II,
March 1966.

illustrations were included in this volume and the calligraphy of the title has already been discussed. There is a real sense of "craftsmanship" throughout Wormwood. It is due partly to the knowledge of the loving attention to detail that went into its manufacture, partly to the materials used and the fine finish of the book. It is also due to the apparent inefficiency of the whole undertaking: the unusually weighty paper, the fact that the pages are sewn together with very thick white thread, three long exposed stitches which will withstand very little misuse: and having a mere eight short poems to 20 big pages is certainly not very economical. The colophon, the mark of a craftsman's production, and the limited print run complete the impression of extravagance and "hand" production.

The next Dolmen Edition, the March 1966 publication of John Montague's All Legendary Obstacles, was produced by the principle which was to distinguish a great many of Liam Miller's books as time went on, the integration of words and imagery. One of the poems, "The Trout", is dedicated to the artist and friend of the author, Barrie Cooke, and the book was printed "with a drawing by Barrie Cooke", as the title page puts it.

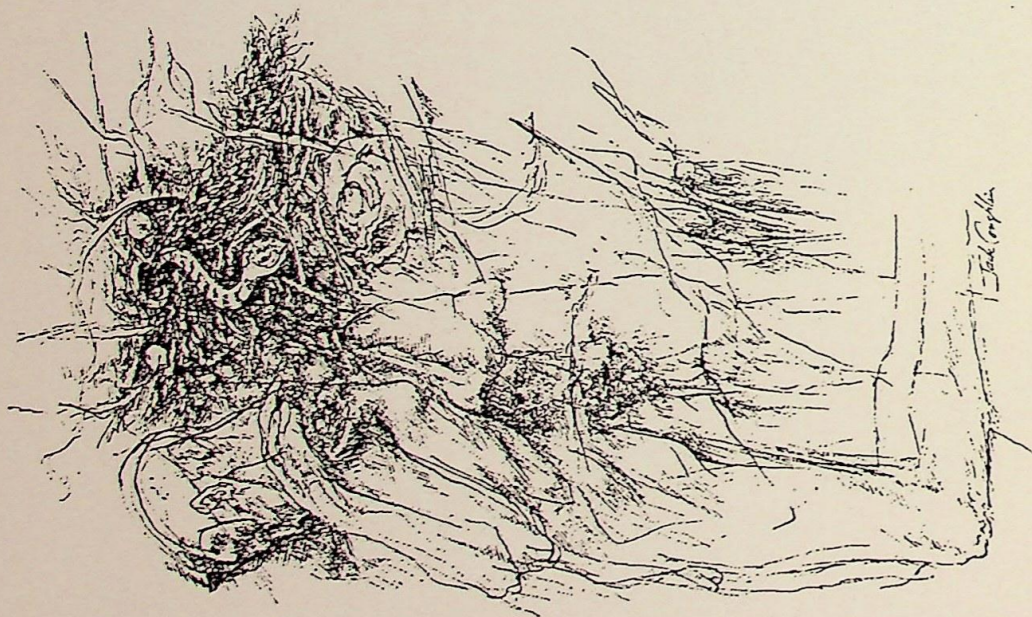
Cooke's drawing, or sketch to be more precise, is of a recumbent nude, printed in rich sepia ink. It is printed as a frontispiece, separate from the words themselves, which infers that the illustration is relevant to the entire contents of the book without necessarily speaking for one specific poem. Most of Barrie Cooke's work is to do with the elemental forces in nature and occasionally with how people (generally women) relate to these forces. His nude looks almost as much like a tree trunk as it does like a female form. John Montague's poetry seems to be concerned with human relationships, particularly relationships between men and women. "The Trout" is an acknowledgement of Cooke's preoccupations with nature.



MNEMOSYNE LAY IN DUST

Past the house where he was got
In darkness, terrace, provision shop.
Wing-hidden convent opposite,
Past public-houses at lighting-up
Time, crowds outside them — Maurice Devane
Watched from the taxi window in vain
National stir and gaiety
Beyond himself: St. Patrick's Day,
The spike-ends of the Blue Coat school,
Georgian houses, ribald gloom

[7]



The picture is not a visual restatement of any words, nor are any of the words a literal restatement of the image. Two attractive printable things, the poetry and the drawing, linked purely by the poet and the artist recognising each other as friends, are paired to give one overall effect, to make one overall statement. Each has an independent meaning and a separate and distinct identity.

In this case the approach works because of the simplicity of the book. Nothing, in the shape either of additional text, like footnotes, or of over-ambitious design, distracts from the poetry and the drawing.

Austin Clarke's long poem, *Mnemosyne Lay in Dust*, was the first of the Editions to use illustrations extensively: these were a set of drawings by the American artist, Jack Coughlin. The book was published in May 1966.

Coughlin made very fine-lined pen drawings in a style that is partly surreal and partly abstract. Delicacy is their outstanding feature. Lines are thin, nervous, short and broken. Coughlin's drawings are like violent but absolutely self-contained whirlwinds, with lines moving in all directions. There is no real black in his work, no pure darkness and no attempt to isolate bright spots. The whole effect is of greyness, varying in just a couple of tones. Tone is not used for creating distance or space, nor for moulding objects: it delineates objects, to some extent at least. It is an excess of line. Forms are not at all clearly defined, however. They vanish in the multiplicity of marks and on continuing to look at the pictures one discovers figures not at first noticeable. The symbolism in these works is of snakes, owls, skulls - images of darkness and death.

The drawings are set within the text, taking up a page or half a page and filling it roughly to the same area as the words. A cartridge paper was used, less weighty than the laid paper used in many of the early Editions and the lines, again

JOHN MONTAGUE

the
BREAD GOD

¶ A lecture with illustrations in verse on the recent history of the church in the ancient parish of Errigal Kieran already referred to in the Annals of the Four Masters as being a monastic centre twelve centuries ago.

¶ Listeners are warned that reception may be interfered with by pirate stations, but every effort will be made to provide undisturbed contemplation

DOLMEN EDITIONS

The Bread God
by John Montague.
Dolmen Editions VII,
December 1968.

14-point Pilgrim, are leaded to be light enough not to interfere with the delicacy of the illustrations.

How words and pictures work together was one of Liam Miller's overriding concerns as a book designer, but it does not apply to all of his work. *The Bread God*, a series of writings by John Montague, was published in December 1968. It contained no illustrations and was the first of the Dolmen Editions to use truly experimental typography.

The two typefaces used were Pilgrim and Hammer Uncial.

On the title page, the words "John Montague" and "Dolmen Editions" are set at the top and bottom of the page respectively, in upper case Uncial, letter spaced and printed in black. Below the author's name comes the title, in lower case Uncial, in red ink. Next is a description of the booklet, again in Uncial but this time in upper and lower case: there are six lines, set centred. Below this again is another block of five lines of text, in Pilgrim upper and lower case and printed in red. Both blocks start with a paragraph marker (similar to that which was used throughout Doves' publications.)

The colours look vibrant and very effective. The combination of Pilgrim and Uncial is interesting, and even the different combinations of setting styles seem to work well. But the last block of text looks odd. The page would be totally harmonious without it: it would be less intrusive either in black or in Uncial. Also the words of the text are offputting: the first block describes the book as "A lecture...on the recent history of the church in the ancient parish of Errigal Kieran..." The second advises: "Listeners are warned that reception may be interfered with by pirate stations, but every effort will be made to provide undisturbed contemplation."

The whole scheme becomes clearer after reading through the book in full. The writing is about religion and

LOYALISTS REMEMBER!
MILLIONS have been MURDERED for refusing to GROVEL
Before Rome's Mass-Idol: THE HOST!
King Charles I and his Frog Queen Henrietta GLOAT in their
letters
that they have almost EXTERMINATED THE PROTESTANTS OF
IRELAND
The PRIESTS in every PARISH were told to record HOW MANY
killed!
Under ROGER MORE AND SIR PHELM O'NEIL
Instruments of ROME
40,000 loyal protestants were MASSACRED like game-fowl
IN ONE NIGHT

'Cromwell went to Ireland
TO STOP
The Catholics murdering Protestants!'

Penal Rock/Altamuskin

To learn the massrock's lesson, leave your car,
Descend frost gripped steps to where
A humid moss overlaps the valley floor.
Crisp as a pistol-shot, the winter air
Recalls poor Tagues, folding the nap of their freize
Under one knee, long suffering as beasts,
But parched for that surviving sign of grace,
The bog-latin murmur of their priest.
A crude stone oratory, carved by a cousin,
Commemorates the place. For two hundred years
People of our name have sheltered in this glen
But now all have left. A few flowers
Wither on the altar, so I melt a ball of snow
From the hedge into their rusty tin before I go.

viii

I sometimes wonder if anyone could have brought the two
sides together. Your father, I know, was very bitter about
having to leave but when I visited home before leaving for
the Australian mission, I found our protestant neighbours
friendly, and yet we had lost any position we had in the
neighbourhood. Perhaps this new man will find a way to
resolve the old hatreds . . .

The Bread God
by John Montague.
Dolmen Editions VII,
December 1968.

An Ulster Prophecy

I saw the Pope carding tow on Falday
A blind paason sewing a Patchwork quilt,
Three bishops cutting rushes with their croziers,
Roaring Meg firing Rosary beads for cannonballs,
Cooks in boats afloat on the summit of the Spearains,
A mill and a forge on the back of a cuckoo,
The fox sitting concealedly at a window chewing
tobacco.

And a moonshen in flight
surveying
a United Ireland.

ix

Northern Ireland: Catholics attending mass, Protestants railing against Rome, and extracts from the letters or conversation of an ex-patriate Jesuit in Australia. They combine as different ways of seeing a situation, a set of precise and very narrow visions.

The typography used throughout the book serves to differentiate between the different ideologies and is expressive of the traits of the three factions.

The Protestant words are centered in blocks of all capitals and upper and lower case italics. They look and read like a proclamation. Capital letters indicate emphasis and the frequency with which they occur suggests great fervour. The words themselves bear this out: they are the impassioned statements of impassioned minds. The whole effect is definitely political, and one is inevitably reminded of the rantings of any fervent Loyalist politician.

The Catholic words are titled in Hammer Uncial but set in Pilgrim, ranged left. This is poetry as we are used to reading it. It is in what the words say that the attitudes of the people and the message of the poet are revealed. The poems are about the mass, but about peoples' behaviour to do with mass-going rather than the ceremony itself. Their behaviour is neither pious nor reverent. They don't enter the church, but stand outside where a "Monster Carnival In Aid Of Church Funds" is advertised. One of the poems tells how, after a mass, a politician spoke to the crowd from the graveyard wall, "And they listened to all / His plans with the same docility." The overall impression is of an attitude infinitely more leisurely than that of the Protestants, leisurely, perhaps, to the point of laxness and ignorance.

The priest's speeches start with an Uncial initial and are set in justified Pilgrim italics. Thus the typography here combines elements of both sides. His contribution reads

LOSS

- Item: The shearing away of an old barn
criss-cross of beams where pigeons moan
high small window where the swallow builds
white-washed dry-stone walls
- Item: The suppression of stone lined paths
old potato-boiler full of crocuses
overhanging lilac or laburnum
sweet pea climbing the fence
- Item: The filling-in of chance streams
uncovered wells, all unchannelled sources
of water that might weaken foundations
bubbling over the macadam.
- Item: The disappearance of all signs
of wild life, wren's or robin's nest,
a rabbit nibbling a coltsfoot leaf,
a stray squirrel or water-rat.
- Item: The uprooting of wayside hedges
with their accomplices, devil's bit and dent de lion,
prim rose and dog rose, an unlawful
assembly of thistles.
- Item: The removal of all hillocks
and humps, superstition styled fairy forts
and long barrows, now legally to be regarded
as obstacles masking a driver's view.

iu

GAIN

- Item: 10 men from the district being for a period of time fully
employed, their wives could buy groceries and clothes to
send 30 children content to school for a few months,
and raise local merchants' hearts by paying their bills.
- Item: A man driving from Belfast to Londonderry can arrive a
quarter of an hour earlier, a lorry load of goods ditto,
thus making Ulster more competitive in the international
market.
- Item: A local travelling from the prefabricated suburbs of
bypassed villages can manage an average speed of 50
rather than 40 miles p.h. on his way to see relatives in
Omagh hospital or lunatic asylum.
- Item: The dead of Carvaghey Graveyard (including my grand-
father) can have an unobstructed view — the trees having
been sheared away for a carpark — of the living passing at
great speed, sometimes quick enough to come straight in:
- Let it be clear
That I do not grudge my grandfather
This long delayed pleasure!
I like the idea of him
Rising up from the rotting boards of the coffin
With his J.P.'s white beard
And penalizing drivers
For travelling faster
Than jaunting cars

u

like a conversation, and he seems, even as a Catholic priest, impartial, representing the opinions of the sympathetic outsider. Hammer Uncial is, as discussed earlier, a typeface which is derived from Irish calligraphic originals. It is used for the titles of the poems and for the final "Ulster Prophecy," which is relevant to both sides. Its use in this context brings to mind Wolfe Tone's statement about being neither Catholic nor Protestant but Irish.

It is only on reflection that the typography of The Bread God makes this kind of sense: at first glance it seems to be totally meaningless. However, it is intended as a book to study in some depth and so this feature is at worst a minor drawback and at best a positive encouragement to spend time studying the volume.

The Bread God was planned to be "uniform" with Hymn to the New Omagh Road, published by Dolmen Press seven months earlier. The theme in Hymn is the same: it is about two parallel and entirely separate worlds, in this instance the pros and cons of building a new road to Omagh: the destruction of nature versus "improvements" in living standards, typified by being able to drive faster.

Both books have the same design problems: how to visually communicate two different sets of ideas so as to compare and contrast them. In Hymn to the New Omagh Road the piece "Balance Sheet" has the two arguments on facing pages, laid out like a balance sheet. "Glencull Waterside" has alternate verses set in two different type sizes, and its lines are arranged along two different grids.

Titles, numbers of poems, and folios are in a Gothic face, the type of a Victorian prayer- or hymnbook. This obviously ties in with the title of the anthology.

The Bread God was an ambitious undertaking. Other pieces of experimental typography were no less ambitious but did become "smoother", their design less obviously painstaking.

what is the price of a thousand horses against a son where there's one son only?

Bartley the red mare, and the grey pony 'll Let you go down each day, and see the sheep are n't jumping in on the rye, and if the jobber comes you can sell the pig with the black feet if there is a good price going.

Maura How would the like of her get a good price for a pig?
Bartley fall her sails. If the west wind holds with the last bit of the moon, let you and Nora get up weed enough for another stack for the kelp . . . It's hard set we'll be from this day, with no one in it but one man to work.

Maura It's hard set we'll be surely the day you're drowned with the rest what way will I live and the girls with me and I an old woman looking for the grave the day you're drowned with the rest what way will I live and the girls with me and I an old woman looking for the grave

Bartley Is she comin she coming to the pier?

Nora t's hard set She's passing the green head, and letting fall her sails.

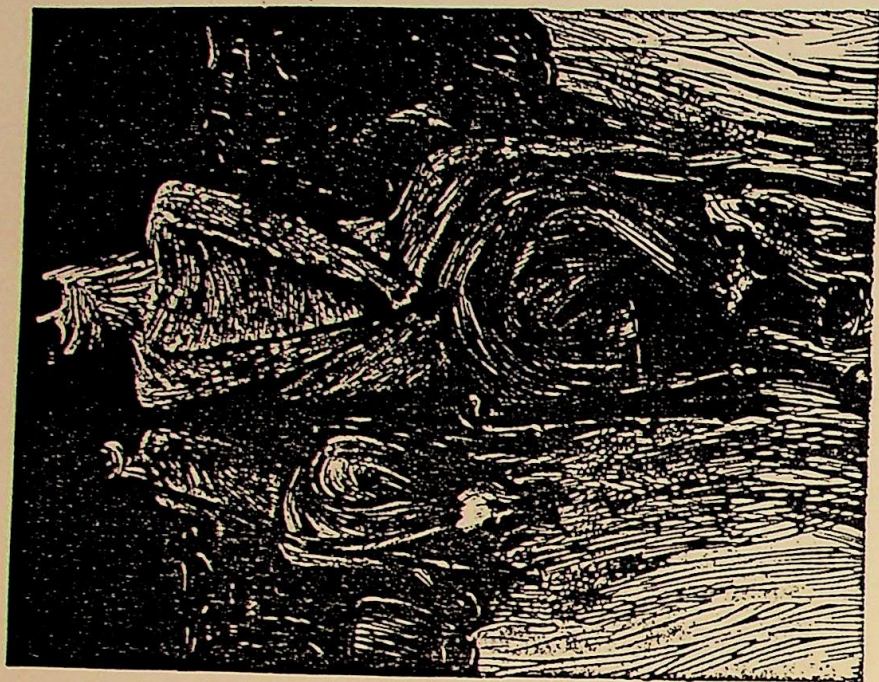
Bartley what is the price of a thousand ll have half an hour to go down, and you'll see me coming again, in two days, or in three days, or maybe in four days if the wind is bad.

Maura and see the sheep are n't jumping in on the rye, and the jobber is n't it a hard and cruel man, wont hear a word from an old woman, and she holding him from the sea?

Caiteen the life of a young man to be going on the sea, and who would listen to an old woman with one thing and she saying it over?

Bartley saving it over I must go now quickly, I'll ride on the red mare, and the grey pony 'll run behind me . . . The blessing of God on you.

42



Riders To The Sea
by J. M. Synge:
linocuts by Tate Adams,
Dolmen Editions VIII,
March 1969.

One of the very best of the Dolmen Editions was published in 1969. It was John Millington Synge's play, *Riders to the Sea*. Linocut illustrations were made by Tate Adams, and Liam Miller, talking about the book in later years, said that, "Typographically, it is one of our most pleasing experiments." (Bib.11)

The design of the volume was described in the sleeve notes as "an attempt to present dramatic writing in a new typographical format." And in *Dolmen XXV* Miller wrote that this edition of *Riders* was "an essay in printing a play text without recourse to italics or small capitals to distinguish between spoken text, stage directions and names of characters."

All of this was possible because of the simple device of printing different pieces of information in different colours. Black was an obvious choice for one of the colours. It was used to indicate speech: it is the dominant tone and words are the dominant feature of the play. The characters' names are in brown-red and stage directions in olive green. Red and green are earthy, natural colours, very appropriate for the Arran Islands.

There are no indentations and the setting, all upper and lower case, is justified. Each new speaker gets a new line but it still looks like continuous text, rather than a play. This is particularly interesting because most plays are printed as if they were directions for the play's performance: a play, by definition, is something to be acted, to be seen. To write down a play is to change its very nature - in short, it is meant to be seen, not read. What Miller has done in this case is to change the text so that it becomes something closer to a piece of reading material. It is presented as something worth reading in its own right, rather than as an incomplete performance. The names and stage directions are presented as part of a narrative, so it can be read like a book. At the same time,

the spoken words stand out because they are printed in black. The setting makes one read it like a book: the colours make one read it like a play.

The sleeve notes to Riders to the Sea state that "Tate Adams has made a series of dramatic cuts in four colours to accompany the play", and mentions that these are "integrated with the text".

They are recognisably figurative but not "realistic" pieces, and reminiscent of Cubist styles in details like the shapes of heads, hands and feet. The shapes are outlined with very thick, heavy black lines and both figures and background forms are filled with thinner lines, each area with lines running in particular directions. For example, the first picture shows what appears to be white surf on rocks and a figure falling into the sea. There is no hatching or intersection of strokes. The parts of the figure above the waves are vertically lined, and below are horizontally lined.

There is no three-dimensional aspect to these images. Everything is flat, diagrammatic, ie, inhuman, like the elements against which the islanders are pitted, harsh, dark and primitive, like the lives of the islanders, and as up-front as the inescapable realities of life on the Arran Islands. A head points upwards if the character is alive, downwards if he is drowned. Heads and hands are the only parts of the body which are distinguishable from the background and one feels that the figures are part of Nature, of the land and sea. There is a real uncompromising feel to these prints: they are stark, dark, and very strong and they demand some effort to be understood and appreciated.

The colours are the same as those of the text, along with white and a greyish blue. Outdoors everything is in the colours of night, the sea, and bad weather: blue, black, green, and white. Indoors there are the colours of firelit shadows and raw skin: black, green, red and white.

50
 Thirty grown boys could take
 their place from rump to nape
 — a hero to his herd at morning
 foolhardy at the herd's head
 to his cows the beloved
 to husbandmen a prop
 the father of great beasts
 overlooks the ox of the earth.

A white head and white feet
 had the Bull Finnennach
 and a red body the colour of blood
 as if bathed in blood
 or dyed in the red bog
 or pounded in purple
 with his blank paps
 under breast and back
 and his heavy mane and great hoofs
 the beloved of the cows of Ai
 with ponderous tail
 and a stallion's breast
 and a cow's eye apple
 and a salmon's snout
 and hinder haunch
 he romps in rut
 born to bear victory
 bellowing in greatness
 idol of the ox herd
 the prime demon Finnennach.



THE TAIN

The Tain
 translated by Thomas Kinsella
 with brush drawings by
 Louis LeBrocqy.
 Dolmen Editions IX,
 September 1969.

The illustrations are printed facing text pages and filling the same area as the text. This combination, the printing of words and image in the same colours and the same size, is very effective. It indicates a close cooperation between Miller and Adams. Miller must have been able to describe quite clearly how he hoped the finished volume to look, Adams to work within the limitations of shape and colours and any other strictures which Miller laid down. And one assumes that they would have discussed Synge and the play itself at length before agreeing to work together in the first place.

Another example of this cooperation, this time with the writer as well as the illustrator and designer, is the publication of *The Tain*, also in 1969. This was to become the most famous and one of the most celebrated of all the Dolmen Editions, and a good measure of its success is due to the contribution of Louis LeBrocqy.

14- and 10-point Pilgrim was used for setting the text and notes, etc, with Perpetua and Felix titlings. The text itself is in 14-point Pilgrim, justified, one point leaded. The first two words are in two-line high Perpetua capitals. This device was an attempt, according to Miller, to make a visual equivalent of a storyteller's attracting attention when beginning to tell a tale. Throughout the book each new chapter opens not on a new page but directly after the preceding chapter. Most of the titles are quite long, often taking two lines, and are set in 14-point Pilgrim capitals, and the first word or two of the text proper is set in large Perpetua capitals. All of this means there is great continuity through the book. Chapter divisions involve minimal breaking up of the stream of words. Headings become rhythmic markers within the text. As the story had survived in various forms for so long, one version merging into another as the years passed, the effect of the continuous long narrative is very appropriate.

He set out then toward Cúil Airthir, in the east. Cúchulainn slew thirty warriors at Ath Duirn, the Ford of the Fist, and they couldn't reach Cúil Airthir until night came. Cúchulainn slew thirty more of them there before they pitched their tents. In the morning Ailill's charioteer Cuillius was washing the bands of his chariot-wheels in the ford and Cúchulainn struck him with a stone and killed him; from which comes the name Ath Cuillne, the Ford of Cuillius in Cúil Airthir. They pressed on then, reaching Druim Féne in Conaille for the night — and that is the second version of how they reached that place.

VII SINGLE COMBAT

CUCHULAINN continued to harass them there. He slew a hundred men on each of the three nights they stayed in that place, plying the sling on them from the hill Ochainne nearby.

'At this rate,' Ailill said, 'our army will melt away at his hands. Bring Cúchulainn this offer: I to give him a part of Ai Plain equal to the whole plain of Murtheimne, with the best chariot to be found at Ai, and harness to equip a dozen men. Or offer him, if he would like it more, his native plain, with twenty-one bondmaids and compensation for anything of his — cattle or household goods — that we have destroyed. He for his part to take service under me, who am more worthy of him than the half-lord he serves now.'

'Who will take this message?'

'Mac Roth there.' (Mac Roth could circle the whole of Ireland in one day.)

Mac Roth set out to Delga with the message from



Menn was let leave the encampment and no more men were killed. They told him they wouldn't think it any dishonour for him to go back to his home in the watered lands by the Boann river. He went and stayed there. He thought it no dishonour to leave the camp until such time as he was to come with Conchobor to the last Battle.



Cúchulainn told his charioteer to go for help to Rochad mac Faithemain. The charioteer found him and told him to come and help Cúchulainn if his pangs were finished; he said they could steal up on some of the host and destroy them. Rochad came southward with a hundred warriors.

'Scan the plain for us,' Ailill said.

'I see a troop crossing the plain,' the watcher said. 'They have a tender youth among them and they reach up only to his shoulders.'

'Who is that, Fergus?' Ailill said.

'That is Rochad mac Faithemain,' he said, 'coming to help Cúchulainn.'

'Here is what to do,' Ailill said: 'send out a hundred warriors into the middle of the plain with the girl Finnabair in front of them. Send a horseman to tell him that the girl wants to speak alone with him. Then you can get your hands on him and end any danger from his army.'

This was agreed. It happened that Finnabair loved Rochad, for he was the handsomest hero in Ulster at that time, and she had gone to her mother Medb to speak about it.

'I have loved this warrior a long time,' she said. 'He is my true and first and chosen love.'



'If you have so much love for him,' Ailill and Medb said, 'sleep with him tonight and ask him for a truce for our armies until he comes against us with Conchobor on the day of the great Battle.'

Rochad came to meet the horseman, who said:

'I have come to you from Finnabair. Will you talk to her?'

Rochad went alone to talk to her. The troop rushed at him from all sides and grasped him in their arms. So he was captured and his followers fled. Later he was set free on his promise not to fight the armies until the coming of the whole of Ulster. He was offered Finnabair for this and he took her. The girl slept with him that night. Then he returned to Ulster.

The seven kings of Munster were told that Rochad had slept with the girl. One of them said:

'That girl was promised to me, with fifteen hostages as a guarantee, to get me to join this army.'

All seven confessed in turn that she had been promised to them. They came to take vengeance against Ailill's sons who were keeping watch over the armies in Glenn Domain. But Medb rose up against them, and the Galcoín troop of three thousand rose up also, and Ailill and Fergus. Seven hundred died slaughtering each other there in Glenn Domain.

When Finnabair heard that seven hundred men had died because of her deceit, she fell dead of shame. From this comes the place-name Finnabair Síébe, Finnabair in the Mountains.

Then Ilech came against them at Ath Feidli. He was Laegaire Buadach's grand-father; Laegaire was the son of Connad the Yellow-haired, Ilech's son. Ilech had been left



There are 131 illustrations by Louis LeBrocqy, little black ink brush sketches. They have no colour, no tone, no three-dimensional form and no lines except for outlines. They are purely shapes. In a note in the introduction to the book, LeBrocqy wrote that he wanted the images to be "impersonal", reflecting the fact that *The Tain* was the product of the cumulative efforts of many poets over 1200 years. He felt that important lessons could be garnered from Celtic illuminators, despite the technical and temperamental changes which had occurred over the centuries. Graphic images, LeBrocqy felt, "should grow spontaneously and even physically from the matter of the printed text". His illustrations he called "shadows thrown by the text".

The Tain is a story in which characters and deeds are larger than life. But there is no "character development": Cuchalainn, Maeve, and their companions are as two-dimensional as LeBrocqy's drawings. The art does not reflect the hyperbole and ostentatious settings of the story nor the physical richness and the heroism of which it tells. Nor are the images portraits. Nor do they communicate opinions or ideas. What they are seems to be gesture-sketches, indications of scraps of action and situations. Two wavy lines show a couple sleeping together, half a page of Rorschach-like blobs is a flight of birds. The characters in the book exist and act, rather than think, feel, or emote, and the figures in the illustrations follow this lead precisely.

Once the meaning of the illustrations is established LeBrocqy's technical mastery becomes evident. He had the facility to make the slightest, most offhand images speak volumes. Each situation is immediately recognisable and, which seems more fascinating when one looks again at the simplicity of the images, they convey atmosphere.

Miller, LeBrocqy and Kinsella worked in close collaboration on *The Tain*, and this shows in the way the drawings are utilised. They are scattered freely throughout

Mai non fu' in parte ove si chiar vedessi
 Quel che veder vorrei, poi ch' io no 'l vidi.
 Né dove in tanta libertà mi stessi
 Né 'mpiesti il ciel di sì amorosi stridi;
 Né già mai vidi valle aver sì spessi
 Luoghi da sospirar riposati e fidi;
 Né credo già ch' Amore in Cipro avessi
 O in altra riva sì soavi nidi.
 L'acque parlan d'amore e l'ora e i rami
 E gli augelletti e i pesci e i fiori e l'erba
 Tutti insieme pregando ch' i' sempre ami.
 Ma tu, ben nata che dal ciel mi chiami,
 Per la memoria di tua morte acerba
 Pregli ch' i' sprezzi 'l mondo e i suoi dolci ami.

I was never anyplace where I saw so clearly one I do
 be wishing to see when I do not see, never in a place
 where I had the like of this freedom in myself, and
 where the light of love making was strong in the
 sky. I never saw any valley with so many spots in it
 where a man is quiet and peaceful, and I wouldn't
 think that Love himself in Cyprus had a nest so nice
 and curious. The waters are holding their discourse on
 love, and the wind with them and the branches, and
 fish, and the flowers and the grass, the lot of them are
 giving hints to me that I should love forever.

But yourself are calling to me out of Heaven to
 pray me by the memory of the bitter death that
 took you from me that I should put small store on the
 world or the tricks that are in it.

Some Sonnets From
 "Laura In Death,"
 translated by J.M. Synge:
 illustrations by Jack Coughlin,
 Dolmen Editions XII,
 April 1971.

Winner of the Institute for
 Creative Advertising and Design
 award for book design, 1971.

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J. M. SYNGE
SOME SONNETS FROM
"LAURA IN DEATH"
FRANCESCO PETRARCH
DOLMEN EDITIONS



FRANCESCO PETRARCA
ALCUNI SONETTI DA
"LAURA IN MORTE"
CON VERSIONI INGLESI DA
J. M. SYNGE
EDIZIONI DOLMEN

the book, fitting satisfactorily into spaces within the text, ie, filling the same area as some blocks of text, then overflowing into margins and occasionally filling whole pages and double spreads. The illustrations are always optically aligned with one or other of the edges of the text area, and this apparently minor point is one of the more important things in the design of the layout. The interaction between the freedom of the images and the control of the type give the design its dynamism.

"Marks in printer's ink," is another of LeBrocqy's descriptions of his images. The ink is actually very important: the tone of the illustrations is the same as that of the type. This is highlighted by the extreme whiteness of the paper and particularly noticeable in the large opening words of each chapter. As in Riders to the Sea, the printing of words and pictures in the same colour serves to unify the two.

1971 was the year of J.M. Synge's centenary and his translation of Some Sonnets from 'Laura in Death' after the Italian of Francesco Petrarch came out in April of that year. It is of particular interest as the winner of the Institute for Creative Advertising and Design Award for Book Design in 1971. The layout is tasteful, refined, and has the classical feel at which Miller aimed in most of the Editions.

Bembo was used for the type with Uncial capitals for titles. It is interesting to note how a face like Uncial which is generally considered quintessentially Irish can take on very different associations when used out of an Irish context and in an unusual way. In this case, referring to Latin writings and set in letter-spaced capitals, they look distinctly classical, rather like letters engraved in stone.

The tone of the book is set by the cover of the dust-jacket. It is of beige paper. A blue-gray block at the top of

the page has the name of the book and author reversed out of it in Hammer Uncial. In brown ink below is the Dolmen Editions logo.

There are two title-pages, reflecting the dual printing, in English and Italian, of the text as a whole. The title sheets face each other, the Italian on the left and English on the right-hand page. Their design is a repetition of the block on the cover, the block in green this time with type reversed out. Above each of the blocks is a drawing by Jack Coughlin printed in brown-red: the poet Petrarch is on the left and Synge is on the right.

One is less aware of the tiny, fine lines in these drawings than in Mnemosyne Lay in Dust. They are used more sparingly and there is a fairly strong contrast between dark and light: areas of shadow are simplified. These portraits seem to be purely decorative. They have none of the expression of Tate Adams' linocuts or Louis LeBrocqy's brush drawings, and are much more contained, tighter, and devoid of the symbolism of Coughlin's earlier work. But they look attractive, and are used as cameoes which is appropriate to the classical nature of the words.

The Italian verses are set in the measures of poetry while Synge's translations are justified. Throughout the book the titles are in brown. The Italian is in Roman numerals, centred, while the English is in words, ranged left and justified. The grid is in the best traditions of the Dolmen Editions, very wide at outer edges and the bottom.

With Lady Augusta Gregory's Coole in August 1971 Miller remained in the pure, classical vein for his design. That book was set in Plantin. It contains some 105 large pages of solid text and looks elegant if a little daunting: one wonders why an autobiography and a book about the writer's home should have no illustrations, except for the building's elevations which are reproduced on the endpapers. This is an instance where Miller does not seem

The face of one I loved and one befriended.

Ghosts fill the dark air

Attempting to recover lost ground

Like our repentances, divine and human,

The street-lamps pad away with failing whisper.

And stars are more or less, when you look at them, like ghosts.

Pains and penalties of all men repeat,

Like the people in the Gospels

And the ghosts of the dead and the living weave through them

all still.

Women vanish when their hands are tired.

10

In the night-bar, black and red;

And the gold on the hair of a girl entering brings back



1

ABBREVIATIONS: P1—Poetry Ireland, 1960; A—first revision of poem; B—second revision of poem; R—Revised text (the text of the present edition); CP—Collected Poems of Denis Devlin, Dolmen Press, Dublin 1964.

NUMBERING OF VERSES: Every tenth individual verse of R has been numbered. It should be borne in mind that occasional verses occupy several successive lines in the printed text. Verses always have an initial capital.

The footnotes indicate the variant readings found in the other versions of the poem, each note being preceded by the number of the verse, or verses, to which it refers. B does not always show the same reading as R. The place-names, which form the headings in the revised text did not occur in P1 nor in A.

1-2 No space between these verses in P1 and A.

3 A has: to recover trying, lost ground.

4 A has: like our confessions, divine and human.

6 P1: the stars more or less when you look at them like ghosts. A adds terminal ellipsis.

7 P1, A: pains and penalties of all men repeat, repeat.

9 P1: And the ghosts of the dead and the living weave through them all. A adds terminal semicolon.

10 P1: Women vanish when their hands are tired. A adds terminal full stop.

10-11 P1: no space.

11 P1: And the gold on the hair of a girl entering brings me back. A: . . . entering remembers me.

The Heavenly Foreigner
by Denis Devlin:
hand-lettering by Ruth Brandt,
portrait by Comas(?)
Dolmen Edition VI,
December 1967.

DENIS DEVLIN
THE HEAVENLY
FOREIGNER

EDITED AND INTRODUCED BY
BRIAN COFFEY

DOLMEN EDITIONS



to have thought very seriously about the fact that some people might actually want to read the book.

One of the aims of Dolmen was to fill gaps in commercial publishing, a function of the original private presses. As part of this mission the Dolmen Editions included books which would appear to have a very limited appeal. Dolmen brought out Prof. Leo Daly's James Joyce and the Mullingar Connection (1975), a collection of references to Joyce's various sojourns in the Irish midlands which could really only be of interest to intellectual devotees of the writer's work. Similar to this was My Wallet of Photographs (1971), the collected photographs of J.M. Synge arranged and introduced by Lilo Stephens. The photographs are of ordinary Irish working people of the countryside and towns, of no particular interest to anyone except, presumably, students of his work who wished to trace the origins of Synge's attitudes to the Irish peasantry. It is quite likely that volumes like these might never have found a publisher if Liam Miller had not made it his business to see that they did.

Denis Devlin's The Heavenly Foreigner, a poem written and revised over 15 years to the time of the poet's death in 1959, was an early example of this genre, published as the sixth Dolmen Edition in 1967. This is a book for the committed Devlin-scholar: there are interminable footnotes detailing revisions in punctuation, original wording and word-order, and so on. There is an introduction where the editor, Brian Coffey, lists the reference numbers of the sheets of paper from Dublin's Stationery Office on which the poet first wrote. There are several pages of appendices (set in justified nine-point Pilgrim, which looks scholarly and severe.) All of this means that there is much more to the book than simply Denis Devlin's poetry and the different pieces of information all demand different kinds of treatment.

A drawing by Anne Yeats faces the first page of the text



In heavy rustling tunic, in crossed swords,
In bows of beaten bronze when galleys drive
On galleys and the gleaming oar-blades break,
On eagle-headed race, rush through the air
Unhook the flaming shields and quench the world,
THE SEABAR ON THE BULWARK
Ingrate, bow down and kiss our wandering feet,
Because like wrong bends all that hunger and sleep,
Dagda, and Partholan, and him who lies
At Iros Donnain by a narrow tide,
And Bator, and the children of Heremon,
And the great seaborn eagle-headed race,
Loosen the grey sails out upon the winds
And overwhelm white cities and forget.
FOR GAEL
This wrong has bowed down all that hunger and sleep;
And therefore I, whom you have set above
The masters of white cities and grey sails,
The artificers that make pale images
Out of enchanted gold, the Druids that carve
Enchantments on thin boards of hazel and oak,
The demons that shake storms out of their bags
On shattered galleys, the demons that guard
The hordes of dead kings under the ancient stones,
I that am mightier than the moon and sun,
Or than the shivering casting net of the stars,
And have beheld all things in a wink of the eye,
Cry there is no good hour but that great hour
That shall puff our demons and gods and men,
SEABAR ON THE BULWARK
He has condemned white cities and grey sails,
And them that offer sacrifice, and all
Demons and gods of earth and water and wind,
The passionate Oriel, and the goat-horned race,

[Fol. 5

and covers the same area on the page. There are no clues about its origins or purpose as there are in All Legendary Obstacles, for example. The names of the author and the book are set on the half-title page in Ruth Brandt's calligraphy. Facing the title-page is a reproduction of an oil-painting of the poet. It has a totally different feel to that of the lettering, and neither of these seems to have particular relevance to Anne Yeats' drawing. Despite all of this the book looks elegant and holds together, thanks to the basic soundness of the grid and typography.

The early 1970s saw the greatest volume of production of these "specialist" books. One of the most unusual was probably A Tower of Polished Black Stones (Dolmen Edition XI, September 1971.) This was a collection of pieces to do with The Shadowy Waters, one of W.B. Yeats' plays, including some transcripts and two sets of illustrations. Miller described the genesis of the book in Dolmen XXV. It was, he wrote, "originally a project of the Gehenna Press, Northampton, Massachusetts, Leonard Baskin's private press. As Gehenna did not wish to proceed with the edition, the type, set in America, was shipped to Ireland where our edition was redesigned and printed."

Centaur, a typeface designed by Bruce Rogers and inspired by the Venetians, was the font that had been chosen by the American designers. The layout of the title-page is unusual and effective: an illustration by Baskin is framed by black and brown type.

Baskin's illustrations were used throughout the text. They are of strange creatures, half man and half bird, very dark and monumental. Many are in a landscape format and where one of these illustrations takes up the top half of a page the bottom half is left blank. Two of Baskin's contributions are drawings, one is an etching, one a woodcut, and one a wood-engraving. To complicate matters, a

Éama laoiach is feallaire

F AOI thionchar Chesterton nóidia (fionnaitheoir agus maisitheoir rúndiamhairreacha ealaíonta) agus an chomairleoir cúirte Leibnitz (a chum comhcheol reamh-bhunaithe), samhlaíodh dom an chonspóid seo leanas ar a ndéanlad forbairt gao dabh (a bheireann fianaise dom chuid dírithe cheana féin) trathínónta gan sochar. Tá sonraí, athbheithéanna, sochraithe in easnamh; tá limistéir den stair seo nár léirlíodh fós domhsa; inniu, an tríú lá d'Eanáir 1944, braithim go doiléir é mar seo:

Tarlann an beart i dtír éigin danartha atá faoi chois: Éire, An Pholainn, Poblacht na Venéise, tír éigin i Meiriceá Theas nó sna Balcáin. . . . Tharla, ba cheart dúinn a rá, óir cé go mbaineann an scéalaf leis an lá inniu, tharla na him-eachtaí atá faoi chabhdú aige um tús nó lár an naoú haois déag. Abraimís inár gcasna, is ar mhaithe na scéalaíochta de, gurbh in Éirinn a tharla um 1824. Ó Riain is ainm don scéalaf, iarua mic le Fearghas óg Iaochúil, maistiúil, feallmh-mharfa Mac Giolla Phódraig, ar sáráíodh a thuama go mistéireach, ar maistiú a ainm ar véarsaí Browning agus Hugo, ar fairtheoir a dhealbh ar liathchnoc a éiríonn imeasc na bportach donnrua.

Ba chomhchealgairé é Mac Giolla Phódraig, captaen rúnda agus glórmhar lucht comhcheilge. Amháil Maois i Maob leath sé súil ar Thír na Tairngire ach cos ní leagfadh sé riamh ann, nó cailleadh é um bigil an réabhlóid a réamh-bheartaigh is a thoghairmigh sé.

14

theme of traitor and hero

UNDER the patent influence of Chesterton (contriver and embellisher of elegant mysteries) and of the court counsellor Leibnitz (inventor of pre-established harmony), I have conceived the following theme, which I may develop (it already justifies me in a small way) on profitless afternoons. Certain confirming elements are lacking: details, concurrences. Entire areas of the story are yet to be revealed. Still, as of today, I perceive the following outlines:

The action takes place in any one of several oppressed and stubborn countries: as, Poland, one of the Balkan states, some country in South America, the Republic of Venice, Ireland. . . . Has taken place, we should say, for though the narrator is contemporary, the events occurred at the beginning, or toward the middle, of the nineteenth century. For narrative convenience, let us say that the story took place in Ireland, in the year 1824. The narrator is named Ryan. He is a great-grandson of the young, the heroic, the strikingly handsome, the assassinated Fergus Kilpatrick, whose grave was mysteriously violated, whose name colours the verse of Hugo and Browning, and whose statue looms atop a grey hillock amid russet bogs.

Kilpatrick was a conspirator, a secret and glorious captain of conspirators. Like Moses, who desecrated the Promised Land from a mountain in Moab but was never to set foot there, Kilpatrick perished on the eve of the victorious rebellion he had dreamt and premeditated.

15

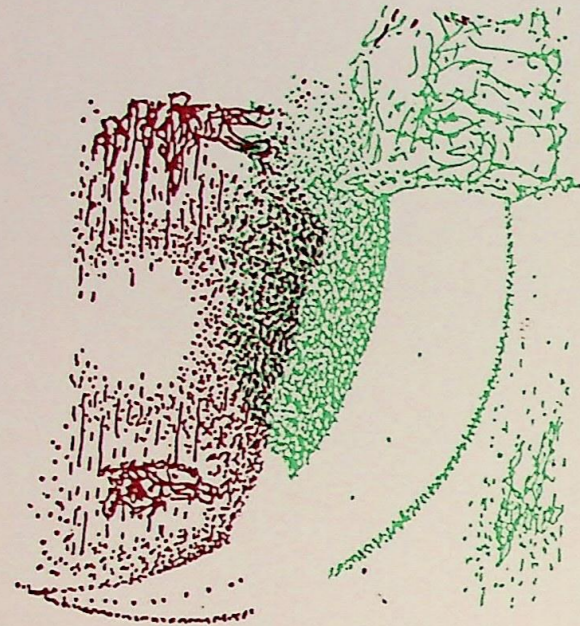
borges on revolution

I believe in revolution, and am waiting for it to come. In the revolution there will be no political leaders. There will be no propaganda and there will be no *banderas*, no flags. . . . When they tell of some new revolution I always ask . . . and do they have a flag? and when they say 'yes', I know that it is not my revolution.

BORGES: standing & leaning on his cane & speaking in English from a platform at Columbia University in the city of New York in July of 1971. in answer to the anti-poet Nicanor Parra and a band of lumpen-freaks who had attacked him (mindlessly & with dogmatic unanimity) for stating that he was a 'conservative'. (Quoted in *The Village Voice*: report titled 'I ask nothing better than to be forgotten', by Anna Mayo, 22 July 1971.)

la forma de la espada

CRUTH AN CHLAIMH
THE FORM OF THE SWORD



Irish Strategies
by Jorge Luis Borges:
drawings by Bernard Childs
Dolmen Editions XXI,
January 1976.

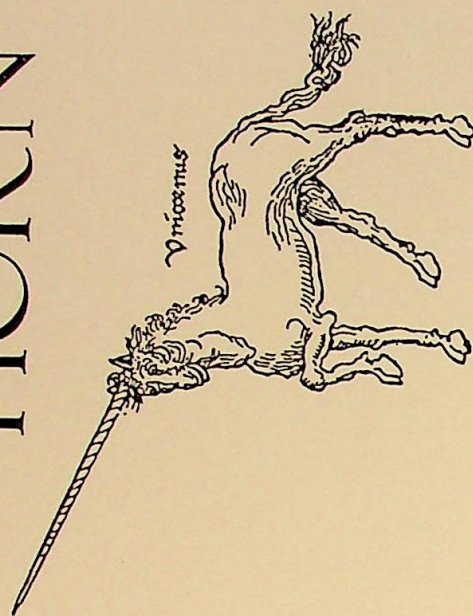
few pencil sketches by Yeats himself are also included.

Perhaps the only fault with this book and others like it, going back to *The Heavenly Foreigner*, is that it did not have a tight enough structure. Miller was inclined to amass a collection of articles to do with the same subject and then to present them as a piece of beautiful design and craftsmanship. But beautiful design and craftsmanship is probably best reserved for books which can be read smoothly, at leisure, or contemplated, when their layout can be properly admired. Fine craftsmanship is likely to be wasted on books which will be consulted for obscure information but never read for pleasure.

"A meeting with Borges in New York led to the conception of *Irish Strategies*, a collection of writings relevant to affairs in Ireland today," according to Liam Miller in *Dolmen* XXV. "The dimension added by the artist, Bernard Childs, set the experimental approach to producing this limited edition which, in its combination of techniques and languages is, I think, a reflection of the Irish dimension." The production team on this book included Anthony Kerrigan who translated Borges' writing into English, Diarmaid O'Suilleabhain who translated them to Irish, Childs in New York, and Miller himself as both designer and editor. In the colophon Miller added that the text was set by Jim Hughes, machined by Garret Doyle, and that Liam Browne supervised the production. From this list of people involved directly with the making of just one book, Miller's skills of communication and coordination become apparent.

Like *Sonnets from 'Laura'*, this book is printed in two languages, English and Irish on this occasion, and the titles of the pieces are included in Spanish. All of the titles are printed in brown lower-case Hammer Uncial, and, again like *Sonnets from 'Laura'*, this "Irish" face works surprisingly well with both the English and, especially, the Spanish

DENIS JOHNSTON THE BRAZEN HORN



THE writer has been in his turn a lawyer, a war correspondent, and one of the early executives of British Television. Since World War II he has held a number of chairs and Professorships at American Universities and Colleges until his retirement about six years ago, after which he has combined further teaching with the writing of this book, to which the varied aspects of his professional life have all contributed. The work may also be regarded as a sequel and commentary on his earlier war autobiography entitled *Nine Rivers from Jordan*.

THE BRAZEN HORN is the twenty-second of the Dolmen Editions series and is one of the finest books produced in Ireland in recent times, ranking with Thomas Kinsella's rendering of *The Tain* and the edition of Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (both of which appeared earlier in the series and are now out of print in their limited editions). The text is set in Pilgrim type, as this specimen, and the book is illustrated by two-colour woodcuts of zodiacal and other figures reproduced from the fifteenth-century *Poetica Astronomica* printed by Erhard Ratdolt at Venice in 1482 as well as other diagrams and reproductions. The unicorn design, on the cover and title page is a detail from a woodcut in *Die Reise in Heilige Land* by Bernhard von Bryeydenbach, printed by Peter Schöffer at Mainz in 1486.

The volume, an Imperial octavo on fine paper, with a page size of 11 x 7½", will be quarter bound in buckram and issued in an edition limited to 1050 copies in Autumn 1975. Each copy will be signed by the author and the book will not be reprinted in this form. Publication price will be £17.50 net. Subscriptions are now invited and prepaid subscriptions received before 30 September 1975 will be taken at £15.00.

Dolmen Editions are published by The Dolmen Press, North Richmond Street, Dublin 1, Ireland.

June 1975



THE DOLMEN PRESS
North Richmond Industrial Estate North Richmond Street
Dublin 1 Ireland

words. The two versions of each piece are printed on opposite pages.

Bernard Childs had developed a technique of colour printing for his illustrations over a number of years, wrote Miller at the start of the book, and *Irish Strategies* was the first occasion on which this technique was used in book production. The illustrations are made up of a series of dots and printed in two graded tones, from orange to green, with brown where they overlap.

Like Jack Coughlin's work, these illustrations are figurative and full of symbolism and the figures are half hidden by the artist's style. In "La Forma de la Espada", for instance, the crescent of the scimitar or scythe is recognisable but almost hidden above it is the image of a victim in front of a firing squad. The impressionistic pattern of dots making up the picture veils the image. The illustrations generally fill the text area, some whole pages, some half pages, and they tend to extend into the fore margins on the right hand pages.

The type is straightforward Pilgrim with Perpetua initials. The title-page is a variation on the usual Dolmen theme: all of the information is in a block but it is set in brown and black Uncial and Pilgrim capitals, centred.

Intended to rank with *Riders to the Sea* and *The Tain* as "one of the finest books produced in Ireland in recent times," *The Brazen Horn*, subtitled "A non-book for those who, in revolt today, could be in command tomorrow," was also published in 1976. Broadly speaking it is an autobiographical collection of thoughts on science and religion compiled by Professor Denis Johnston, a lawyer and war correspondent for the BBC. However, the book was not quite such a runaway success as the fanfare which heralded its arrival might have suggested, mainly because Professor Johnston's ideas were nothing like as popular, or even as interesting, as Synge's play or Kinsella's prose.

Adam's Apple

THE recording session was becoming tedious, and I had just volunteered a remark to that effect when this young Announcer entered the studio, and placed a heavy automatic pistol of foreign make on the table before me.

'This, I believe, is yours,' he said with a cryptic smile.

The production of a lethal weapon at a BBC panel discussion is an unusual event, and especially so in Belfast where there are local reasons for frowning upon the possession of firearms. So I grabbed the thing and shoved it hastily under the furniture.

'Just something left over from the war. A toy, of course. Now what were we saying?'

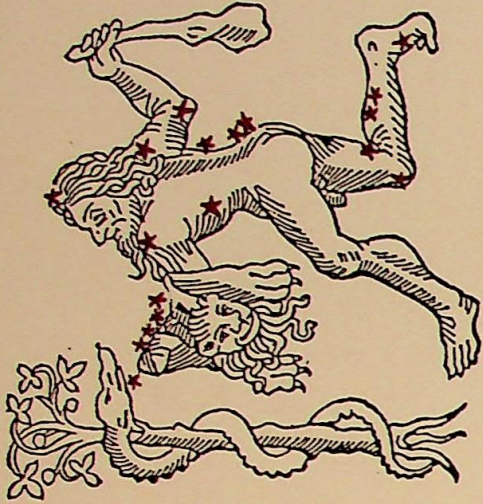
But it was no good. The talk never recovered its earlier abandon, and a mood of uneasiness seemed to have settled on my fellow speakers. The incident may have added to my stature as a figure of some sinister significance, but it was a dead loss in my rôle as a panellist. So presently we adjourned for refreshment and other relief, ignoring as we filed out a malicious quotation on the lips of James Boyce:

...keep him hungry till his work is done,
Will the wild ass bray while he has grass?

Have You Anything to Declare?

This was during the cold January of 1956. The original source of our embarrassment, however, went back to a date almost eleven years earlier when I passed through Belfast on my way home from the War. Why I had followed so circuitous a route in order to get from Paris to Dublin is itself a mystery, but it had probably got something to do with Travel Permits and the passport problems that were very obstructive at the time. Or maybe it was cheaper to go that way for some administrative reason. Whatever the cause, I had grown tired of my variegated baggage by the time I had reached Ulster, and I felt that I had got enough to explain to the southern customs without having to account for a pistol. So I had handed the thing to a friend in Broadcasting House with an invitation to dispose of it in any way he thought fit.

Even as it was, I had a little trouble with the officials at Dundalk over a plated soup tureen that I had picked up on the battlefield of Alamein, in an abandoned enemy Mess. This handsome piece of equipment had served as the focal point of many a pleasant evening in the desert when, filled



ABOUT THE BOOK AND ITS AUTHOR

WE are faced today with a number of seemingly insoluble quandaries in the fields of both Religion and Science, amongst which may be included the problem of a God that seems to all appearance to be either demonic or incompetent, of a Universe that is apparently expanding in relation to nothing but itself, of the structure of Space-Time, of the significance if any of Death, and of the everlasting conflict between the ways of thought known as Realism and Idealism.

In collating various pronouncements in all of these areas that have been besetting us during the present significant century, the writer has come to a surprising conclusion that modern Science may be providing an answer to some of the quandaries of religious belief, and on the other hand, that theology in many ways is capable of coming to the rescue of the Physicists, enmeshed as they are in a tangle of contradictory facts.

A solution is probably to be found in the abandonment of our traditional conception of an inanimate Universe which nevertheless is explosive and kinematic, in favour of a new view of its dimensional character.

Nonetheless, the book itself is quite beautiful. It was printed on cream coloured paper light enough for a considerable show-through of type from the reverse side of each sheet and this, rather than being an irritant, gives the book the appearance of a fifteenth or sixteenth century volume and the letterpress printing process.

The feel of the early printed books was deliberately sought in this case. Professor Johnston was trying to peel back the layers of information and misinformation, theorizing and mythologizing which had informed thinking about science and religion since the Middle Ages, and wanted to try a fresh approach to the questions and philosophy of life and death. And so Miller tried to echo this in his design of the book, giving the impression of a tome written in the 1500s, say, when a man would have to get much of his knowledge about the world from his own observations of it.

Felix titling was employed, as was Perpetua for the initial letters and chapter headings. Running heads are 11-point Pilgrim capitals, centred, and the cross-heads are Pilgrim italics. There are copious notes within the text, printed in a smaller typesize and set in blocks indented into the main body of the type. This is taken from the treatment of notes in manuscripts and incunabulae and is more appropriate than the usual practice of footnotes would have been.

To remain in the Gothic style the illustrations were taken from early sources. Each chapter opens with a woodcut of one of the signs of the zodiac, reproduced from the *Poetica Astronomica* published by Erhard Ratdolt in Venice in 1482. The outlines of the figures are black with the configurations of stars superimposed in brown, toning well with the buff-coloured stock.

Comparable to this is the 1979 production of *Holinshed's Irish Chronicles*, an annotated reprint of a sixteenth-

Grace

TWO GENTLEMEN who were in the lavatory at the same time tried to lift him up: but he was quite helpless. He lay curled up at the foot of the stairs down which he had fallen. They succeeded in turning him over. His hat had rolled a few yards away and his clothes were smeared with the filth and ooze of the floor on which he had lain, face downwards. His eyes were closed and he breathed with a grunting noise. A thin stream of blood trickled from the corner of his mouth.

These two gentlemen and one of the curates carried him up the stairs and laid him down again on the floor of the bar. In two minutes he was surrounded by a ring of men. The manager of the bar asked everyone who he was and who was with him. No one knew who he was but one of the curates said he had served the gentleman with a small rum.

— Was he by himself? asked the manager.

— No, sir. There was two gentlemen with him.

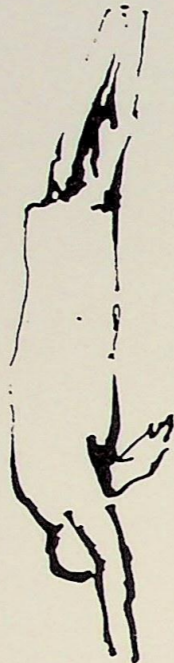
— And where are they?

No one knew; a voice said:

— Give him air. He's fainted.

The ring of onlookers distended and closed again elastically. A dark medal of blood had formed itself near the man's head on the tessellated floor. The manager, alarmed by the grey pallor of the man's face, sent for a policeman.

His collar was unfastened and his necktie undone. He opened his eyes for an instant, sighed and closed them again. One of the gentlemen who had carried him upstairs held a dinged silk hat in his hand. The manager asked repeatedly did no one know who the injured man was or where had his friends gone. The door of the bar opened



century volume complete with the original woodcuts and copious shoulder notes. In both cases the materials, type and quality of printing make the books unmistakably of the twentieth century, but their design draws on the traditions of an earlier era.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s most of Dolmen's production was for the commercial market and the production of Dolmen Editions came almost to a standstill. The latest of these does not actually even bear the imprint's pressmark, but it does follow in the Editions' proudest traditions of quality design and craftsmanship. It is the 1986 publication of James Joyce's *Dubliners*.

This book Miller describes as "the culmination of a process started with Dolmen Editions...with the same production team as *The Tain*, seventeen years on - but with the difference that we had ceased to set and print our books in the interval" (quotation from personal interview.)

The text of *Dubliners* was printed by letterpress at the September Press, Wellingborough, England, and the lithograph illustrations by Louis LeBrocqy were also printed here. As in *The Tain*, a special paper was commissioned, a white, wove, mouldmade rag from Saint Cuthbert's Mill in Somerset. The book was cased "in full natural Irish linen lettered in gold and stamped on each side in a design by the artist."

Only 500 copies of the book were printed in this format: they were signed by the artist: numbers 1 to 400 were for sale to subscribers, the last 100 being "hors commerce." Reflecting the quality of the book's production and its rarity value is the price: a copy of Dolmen's *Dubliners* costs £350.

For the text the typeface "Joanna" was chosen, a design, as one might have guessed by now, of Eric Gill's. The running heads were set in Joanna italics, ranged left on both left and right hand pages: the folios are similarly treated, but in the roman version of the face. There is a space of one line between title and text at the top of the page and text and folio at the

rakish set of fellows at that time, drank freely and borrowed money on all sides. In the end he had got mixed up in some shady affair, some money transaction: at least, that was one version of his flight. But nobody denied him talent. There was always a certain . . . something in Ignatius Gallaher that impressed you in spite of yourself. Even when he was out at elbows and at his wits' end for money he kept up a bold face. Little Chandler remembered (and the remembrance brought a slight flush of pride to his cheek) one of Ignatius Gallaher's sayings when he was in a tight corner:

— Half time, now, boys, he used to say light-heartedly. Where's my considering cap?
That was Ignatius Gallaher all out; and, damn it, you couldn't but admire him for it.

Little Chandler quickened his pace. For the first time in his life he felt himself superior to the people he passed. For the first time his soul revolted against the dull inelegance of Capel Street. There was no doubt about it: if you wanted to succeed you had to go away. You could do nothing in Dublin. As he crossed Grattan Bridge he looked down the river towards the lower quays and pitied the poor stunted houses. They seemed to him a band of tramps, huddled together along the river-banks, their old coats covered with dust and soot, stupefied by the panorama of sunset and waiting for the first chill of night to bid them arise, shake themselves and begone. He wondered whether he could write a poem to express his idea. Perhaps Gallaher might be able to get it into some London paper for him. Could he write something original? He was not sure what idea he wished to express but the thought that a poetic moment had touched him took life within him like an infant hope. He stepped onward bravely.

Every step brought him nearer to London, farther from his own sober inartistic life. A light began to tremble on the horizon of his mind. He was not so old — thirty-two. His temperament might be said to be just at the point of maturity. There were so many different moods and impressions that he wished to express in verse. He felt them within him. He tried to weigh his soul to see if it was a poet's

soul. Melancholy was the dominant note of his temperament, he thought, but it was a melancholy tempered by recurrences of faith and resignation and simple joy. If he could give expression to it in a book of poems perhaps men would listen. He would never be popular: he saw that. He could not sway the crowd but he might appeal to a little circle of kindred minds. The English critics, perhaps, would recognize him as one of the Celtic school by reason of the melancholy tone of his poems; besides that, he would put in allusions. He began to invent sentences and phrases from the notices which his book would get. Mr Chandler has the gift of easy and graceful verse. . . . A wistful sadness pervades these poems. . . . The Celtic note. It was a pity his name was not more Irish-looking. Perhaps it would be better to insert his mother's name before the surname: Thomas Malone Chandler, or better still: T. Malone Chandler. He would speak to Gallaher about it.

He pursued his reverie so ardently that he passed his street and had to turn back. As he came near Corless's his former agitation began to overmaster him and he halted before the door in indecision. Finally he opened the door and entered.

The light and noise of the bar held him at the doorway for a few moments. He looked about him, but his sight was confused by the shining of many red and green wine-glasses. The bar seemed to him to be full of people and he felt that the people were observing him



bottom. The layout of each page of text is simple, stylish and elegant. There is only one obvious fault, or potential fault: ranging the titles and folios left, ie, with the back margins on right hand pages, is somewhat impractical as, generally speaking, the eye tends to be drawn towards the right-hand page first in most books.

Joanna is a bold, definite face, strong enough to contain Joyce's words with all of their own intense, violent personality. It is strong enough to hold the character of Joyce's Dublin, too. It has a certain forcefulness. There is very little difference between the width of strokes in each individual character, serifs are slab-shaped, and there is no ornamentation. The face looks very black on the white page. In fact it looks very like both the Doves typeface and Jenson's roman.

Louis LeBrocqy repeated what he had done for The Tain in illustrating Dubliners. His note on the artwork at the start of the book even uses the same wording as that in The Tain. The "graphic accompaniment to the story...should be as autonomous as possible." "Dubliners, essence of a people, distilled from the intimate life and history of a city, surely demands no less particular respect" than The Tain.

The images are treated the same way as in the earlier book, as gestures, delineations of the tilt of a head or a figure slumped on the ground. Dubliners is a slightly more subtle book than The Tain: there is more depth in the characters and the action is psychological as well as physical. The drawings seem to echo this and there are numerous depictions of faces, which were absent from the previous work. There are also a lot of drawings of buildings: as ever LeBrocqy communicates the shape and size of a house or an office-building with offhand ease, but these particular images do not have the attraction of his little battling figures, at least to this viewer, maybe

simply because they are intrinsically inanimate and LeBrocqy's art is, I think, at its most effective when capturing life.

In Dubliners the illustrations are used as they were in The Tain. They fill the same areas as blocks of text, extending occasionally into margins. Many of them are given whole pages, where they are printed off-centre, close to the back margins and the text.

The final impression one has of Dubliners is of sumptuous craftsmanship combined with restraint and subtlety of design. It is a very fitting volume to crown 20 years of the Dolmen Editions.

The importance of Liam Miller's achievements with the Dolmen Press.

Liam Miller's stated primary intention when he established Dolmen was to serve Irish writers, and the Press' work and achievements in this are second to none. However on this occasion what concerns me is Miller's and Dolmen's importance to design.

I think there are two basic questions which can be helpful in determining this. One: is Miller's work recognised? and two: should it be recognised?

With regard to the first question, Dolmen's successes in design have been acknowledged by various awards. In Ireland these include the Institute for Creative Advertising and Design's Awards for Book Design, plus the Kilkenny Design Workshop-sponsored Irish Book Design Awards from CLE, the Irish Book Publishers Association. Internationally, one of the company's most recent and more prestigious honours went to Dolmen's publication of Holinshed's Irish Chronicles which received the bronze medal and commendation in the East German Awards for "The most handsome books from all the world" (Bib.4), at the Leipzig Spring Fair in March 1981.

provided by the Press were generally quite pleasant to do, although the degrees of freedom an illustrator had in producing the work seem to have varied a lot. The end products, the books themselves, were objects to be proud of and would have been an asset to any illustrator's portfolio. And Dolmen provided an outlet for artists when there very few others available. But in the end all of Liam Miller's efforts simply have not been enough. Dolmen couldn't provide enough work to allow a "tradition" of book illustration to arise in the way it was instrumental in the formation of a literary tradition. Dolmen could help to "create" a field of literature by publishing all of the work of Austin Clarke, Thomas Kinsella, and John Montague, for example, but it could not or did not publish anything like this volume of the work of any group of illustrators and there was no other establishment in the country which had the power, the facilities, the design skills, or the imagination to fill that gap. Leslie MacWeeney, illustrator of at least seven Dolmen books, emigrated to the U.S.: Bridget Swinton, who contributed to three books, went to Denmark: Tate Adams and the American illustrators do not seem to have produced any work in Ireland outside of their half dozens of Dolmen books.

But on the positive side there are several reasons why Liam Miller's work has great significance. Firstly and most simply because he produced a great deal of beautiful design: many of his books, through their layout, handling of words and pictures, and the craftsmanship in their production, are a pleasure to look at and to handle.

He always treated the words of each book in the way that he was sure was best for them. That is, he examined each book individually and tried to create a design which would be most appropriate and would best serve each individual volume. He always attempted to design texts "as [he] saw them." (Bib.4)

Fashion did not sway his work. Miller adhered always to the design principles of the Renaissance books which he so admired. His aim was to produce books in the image of design which was intrinsically good (or which he saw as intrinsically good) rather than that which was popular. Therefore he developed a strong and personal style of design, which became a unique and effective house style for Dolmen.

That which I personally admire most about Liam Miller's work is the way he held to his principles. Firstly, he was committed to Ireland and to doing his best to improve Irish publication design and serving Irish writers, mainly because of his great love for Irish writing. Second, for every problem he produced the kind of solution he felt was right. He was inspired by what he saw as the best kind of design, as I have just mentioned, rather than by fashion or popularity. And when his principles were threatened by the need to become more commercial he responded by creating for himself an area in which he could be free of these pressures, founding a new imprint. When he felt that a situation would not allow him to do what he felt to be the best possible work he tried to change the situation. And third, Miller dedicated himself to making good design.

For these reasons and for the great number of lovely books he produced Liam Miller is deserving of the greatest respect from other designers. In this study I have only been able to concentrate on a few areas of the Press' work, which, with a subject of this size and the limitations of the format of a thesis, seems to be unavoidable. Nonetheless, I hope it has gone some way towards doing justice to Liam Miller and the achievements of his Dolmen Press.

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