THE GOLDEN COCKEREL PRESS

P625 LETTERING 1930
Golden Cockerel Press Spring List
(Woodcut)

Sharon Gallagher.

THE GOLDEN COCKEREL PRESS

P625 LETTERING 1930
Golden Cockerel Press Spring List
(Woodcut)

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

Faculty of Design

Department of Visual Communication

THE GOLDEN COCKEREL PRESS

BY

SHARON GALLAGHER

MARCH 1992

A dissertation submitted to

The Faculty of History of Art & Design & Complementary Studies

IN CANDIDACY FOR A BACHELOR OF DESIGN IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

I am indebted to Dr.Frances Ruane who assisted me with ample patience, advice and tutorialship, without which this thesis would not have materialised. My special thanks to Gemma for her assistance in my research. I would also like to thank the staff in the National, N.C.A.D. and Trinity libraries for their co-operation. My sincere gratitude also to Geraldine for her time and help.

C O N T E N T S

INTRODUCTION:

My dissertation will analyse the evolvement of the Golden Cockerel Press 1920-1940, and authenticate it s role as the most renowned private press of the modern wood engraving revival movement. My attraction was the Press's pre-eminence for craftsmanship consequently providing an aesthetic appreciation for the reader on viewing the pages of it s publications in comparison to the pragmatic,lucrative priorities of the modern day commercial Press. My motivation to embark on this excursion into the ideology,conceptions and productions of this Press lies in a personal fascination and affection for the wood engraved illustraions and fine printing of it s books.

My topic is original as it received no prior thorough analysis. Thus all my research attained is principally my own and based on an accumulation of superficial information received from pamphlets, booklets, articles in periodicals, and it s acknowledgements in general books on the history of woodengraving. My own evaluations are fundamentally based on the observations of primary sources held atthe National Library,Kildare Street,Dublin. Consequently my topic required meticulous exploration as the information available was only researched on a superficial level and not readily available at hand.

The Golden era of the British woodcut revival movement was principally from 1900-1940, particularly the inter-war period from 1920-1940. It was the heyday for British woodengraving and fine book illustration. Though it s contribution to the modern art world was not as great as that of the German Expressionists, whichincluded Nolde,Barlach,Feininger and others, it was nevertheless significant. It led to the development of the private press movement, most significantly the Golden Cockerel Press and others, and to the 'Society of Wood Engravers'.

This revival movement thrived in Britain during this period, despite some financial difficulties it experienced during the war which it managed to overcome. The revival resulted in a whole new lease of life for originality and technical virtuosity,resulting in the production of beautiful finely printed books. The art of wood engraving of this period allowed for a great variety of individual designs,moods,stylisations and elegant mannerisms. The variations are vividly apparent: the stark effective black-white contrast of Gibbings, the linear perfection of Gill, the detail and atmosphere of Gwen Raverat, the decorative style of Agnes Miller Parker and the striking illustrative inventiveness of Ravillious. These are only a few of the many talented woodengravers that illustrated books for the Golden Cockerel Press.

I will discuss two of these illustrators in extensive detail, Robert Gibbings and Eric Gill, particularly the former. Nevertheless, they are all very significant as individual illustrators of the Golden Cockerel and contributed to the successof its

works. Robert Gibbings is very prominent in the evolution of the press acting as director, author, designer and illustrator during the most productive years of it s existance.Gill played his part as both typographer and illustrator in some of the press's most important work,particularly The Four Gospels. Outside the Golden Cockerel,other great works of the revival were Burne-Jones' designs for the Kelmscott Press,the work of Ricketts and Shannon Vale and Ballentyne Presses andthe Evagny pressunder Pissarro which introduced colour printing for the first time.

Initially I will give a brief outline of the history and subsequent events that surrounded the foundation, success and achievements of the Golden Cockerel Press.

To begin with, what is 'woodcut'? It has been defined as the

> "converse technique of cutting away the white to leave the black upstanding but this work is also used indiscriminately to include wood engraving, which has greater power for finer precision".(23,p60)

There were two principal modern woodcut revivals in Britain, firstly at the middle of the 18th century and secondly at the end of the 19th and very beginning of this century.

The first occurred when wood engravers designed on blocks from drawings done by other artists. These drawings were usually executed in pen and ink by artists like Sandy s,George du Maurier,Fred Walker and several others.The best professional wood engravers were people like Swain, Linton, and particularly the Dalziel brothers. But the Dalziel brothers were an exception as they designed a well as executed a considerable amount of blocks

which had not been done at this time.

Then followed the work of the Bewick School of Illustration and

> "asolitary ray of light came from William Blake's own excursion into wood in 1821, so brilliant in conception if not in craftmanship that it's reprecussions more directly influenced the renaissance of engraving in this country that the BewickSchool. However, it evoked little interest at the time and wood engraving sank to the slave of journalism". (25,p16)

The deterioration around 1875 was principally due to the introduction of photographic processes. But these photographic processes evoked a negative reaction and the woodcut received a "fresh impetus from the energy and enthusiasm of William Morris" (28,p17) His books from the Kelmscott Press represented acomplete rejection of what was considered to be poor commercial standards and methods. Morris and his collaborators looked back for their inspiration to the fine woodcut illustrated books of the late 15th and 16th century, the art nouveau period, using types based on early models,decorative borders and initials made the intimate assocation of type, decoration and illustration once more the basis of fine book production. Good materials, fine craftmanship and good proportions throughout were the principal considerations, not cheapness and speed of production. However, this was ironically to be the cause of the downfall of the private press movement.

It was these ideas of Morris that were later to be the foundation and inspiration for the second revival, the modern woodcut revival and the private press movement. Many of these ideas were materialised in productions of the Golden Cockerel Press, in

particular The Four Gospels under the directorship of Gibbings. William Morris owned the Kelmscott Press. The original designs or drawings were done by William Burne-Jones. Yet he had little knowledge of drawing for engraving so his drawings had yet again to be redrawn by R.Catterson-Smith into versions to suit the medium of wood and then engraved by W.H.Hooper. William Morris himself generally art directed the general design and execution. The next generation, towards the late nineteenth century featured artists like Charles Ricketts and Lucien Pissarro, who revolutionised the whole production process so that now the artist designer and craftsman were controlled by one person. This subsequently led to the great age of the private presses, the Vale and Ballentyne presses popular around 1892 and the Eragny Press 1892-1914. Woodcut became a particularly popular illustrative medium. It became an integral part of bookdesign. Simplicity became the popular ideal of the late 1890's:

> "the immense technical dexterity of the specialist engravers of the sixties was studiously avoided in order to obtain the maximum possible directness of expression"(28,p20).

It was William Nicholson's work which was of particular influence at this time. Gordon Craig, his student was inspired by Nicholson. This was evident in his work particularly between 1898 and 1909 when he produced work of remarkable simplicity. This stylewas later to influence younger men and we see later is evident in the works of the Golden Cockerel Press. This style was oneof the reasons why the press produced some of the finest pieces of its era.

During this period the work of Frank Brangwyn and T.Sturges emerged. Their approach was different as they retained a high proportion of black in their prints in such a way as to emphasise the texture of the wood. Brangwyn style being broader and rougher. Noel Rooke (1881-1953) was a renowned wood engraver of the time who made a lasting impression on the wood engraving revival movement. He taught book illustration at the Central School to some of what were to become aspiring engravers of the movement like Erie Gill and Robert Gibbings. He was very much dissatisfied with the mechanical reproduction of drawings and wanted the woodblock to be used as an independant medium, where designer, artist and engraver combined as one. He felt that engraving had become a very mechanical process of copying pen and ink drawings even though people like Ricketts and Pissarro had already combined the job of designer and engraver. His ideas and enthusiasm motivated many engravers who collaborated together and set up a new society.

By 1915, the work of Eric Gill and Gwendolen Raverts had appeared. Then in 1920 the Golden Cockeral Press was founded, the climax of the revival. Blair Huges Stanton and Gertrude Hermes in 1931. A year later John Farleigh's illustrations for Bernard Shaw's Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search for God which brought wood engraving illustration for the first time to a vast general public. As Dorethea Braby remarked,

> "So from Cinderella's dish-clout, woodengraving hasbecome the Princess's robe of glory,displaying the beauty of light emerging from blackness into its full power of creative expression".(25,p30)

This thesis hopes to show that this was most apparent in the best publications of the Golden Cockerel Press.

In my introduction I have given a brief overall view of the Golden Cockerel's significance in relation to it s predicament within the woodcut revival, and the current artistic movements of it s era, for example the German Expressionists. I have also mentioned some of the topics which will later form the foundations of the chapters to follow.

C H A P T E R O N E

HISTORICAL INVOLVEMENT

In this Chapter I hope to give a brief overall historical account of the work and evolvement of the Press, in order to form a foundation to the more comprehensive following Chapters.
Following the commercially failed efforts of William Morris,the names of Emery Walker,Cobdon Sandeson and St.John Hornsby emerged. This marked a new period which once again valued the printing press, not merely as a pliant machine but "as an instrument of art only second in it s value to the printer's brush and the sculptor's chisel", as remarked by Humbert Wolfe. This impetus was unfortunately interrupted by the war. But immediately after the war there was a Renaissance in printing. The Golden Cockerel Press starting its career of devoted craftsmanship in 1920. Founded in a decade when over twenty five private presses flourished in Britain, the Golden Cockerel press was the only such venture to survive the economic depression of the 1930's and the Second World War.(17,p70)

In 1921 it issued its first book A.E.Coppard's, Adam and Eve and Pinch Me. It commenced producing stories with loving care on good plain paper and bound with easy distinction. The Golden Cockerel Press was owned successively by Harold Midgely Taylor, Robert Gibbings and Christopher Sandford,whose individual interests are reflected in the various phases of its activities.

Harold Taylor owned the Press from 1920-1924. In order to learn to print Taylor and his wife, Gay, spent time with Hilary Pepler at St.Dominic's Press in the summer of 1920 and taught their

initial collaborators. Pran Pyper and Barbara Blackburn with limited experience.(29,p10) Under Taylor the press was an idealistic attempt to provide the opportunity for the publication of writersnot sufficiently known for a large publishing market. (29,p20).

The second owner was Robert Gibbings who had helped found the Society of Wood Engravers and who used the press as a showcase for his own and fellow engravers work. In the '20's under Gibbings directorship work was used by artists like Eric Gill, Gibbings himself, Blair Hughes Stanton, David Jones, Eric Ravilious and John Farleigh. And in the '30's illustrators were used such as John Buckland Wright, Reynolds Stone, Gwenda Morgan, Peter Barker and Mill and John O'Connor.

Finally, in 1933, along with Owen Rutter and Francis Newberry, Christopher Sandford took over the press and continued both the innovative approach to text and the interest in wood engraving for illustrations.

Having briefly introduced those who were involved in the directing of the press I will now discuss their involvement in more detail. The press itself throughout its existance sought to produce books that were first rate and beautifully crafted.

The Press's books were not limited to contemporary literature. Great books from all times and all peoples were used, an example being The Maxims of Comfort. As the Press's prespectus remarks itself:

> "The Golden Cockerel interests itself generally, in publishing material that is new and not available elsewhere - either new writing of a

> high quality,fragrant and new ideas and better translations of the classics or editions of medieval and modern literature".(13,p11).

When the Press was started in 1920 by Harold Midgely Taylor it s premises were located at the rear of his house, St. Elms Cottage, Milly Bridge Road,Waltham,St.Lawrence.(13,p30). The Golden Cockerel Press initially took it s name from the ballet 'Le Coq d'Or" and was founded as a co-operative society for the benefit of young authors.(1,p7).Taylor aimed to get together young authors who he hoped would all work as a team to set up the type for their own books, do the printing, design, binding,thus eliminatingthe profit making middlemanand minimizing the costs. (31). Some of the authors under Taylor's direction included A.E. Coppard, H.T. Wade Gory, J.D. Beresford, Havelock Ellis, Martin Armstrong, Richard Hughes and Peter Quennell. Taylor initially succeeded with great enthusiasm but unfortunately the venture fell apart.As Christopher Sandford later remarked of the situation,

> "scribblers do not take kindly to the slow process of setting type by hand; and the attempted sale of unknown press of unknown works of unknown authors, is not an economic proposition"(34,p15).

Manuscripts had been accepted for publication in the field of Drama,Fiction,Belles Lettres, Lively Philosophy, Criticism and Poetry.(29,p40). A Prospectus of that period expressed the hope that the press would "develop as a real co-operative society of authors and artists".(13,p13).

Between 1921 and 1922 Harold Taylor published nine books. But in 1922 Taylor had to review his predicament as both his partners had deserted him as authors had proved reluctant to assist in book production. The pressure of work, finance and ill-health caused him to revise his objectives and turn to fine printing.(13,p10) He printed his books on a Victorian platen press using dampened handmade papers which were then stitched bound together.(29,p7).The text was printed ussing the Caslon old style Roman faced type. Taylor no longer published the works of aspiring authors but rather the material of fine printing - the work of Sir James Browne, Edmund Spenser and other classics. He also at that time began publishing books illustrated with wood engravings. In 1923 The Wedding Songs of Edmund Spenser was illustrated with engravings by Ethelbert White.(10). Although examples of this work was inaccessible to me, research yielded comment by those who have seen it according to Julia Bigham,

> "the engravings were not however of the quality of White's later work nor was any attempt made to harmonise the illustrations with the text".(29,p30).

The second illustrated book was The Lives of Gallant Ladies, with engravings by Robert Gibbings, It was during the process of pubication that Gibbings himself took over the press in 1924. The style of illustration of Gibbings in this book will be discussed more thoroughly in one of the following chapters.

Taylor's health deterioriated and he sold the press to Gibbings before he died the following year.Although Taylor's work had not been particularly magnificent he had begun setting the press on the

path to success. The Golden Cockerel was henceforth to be intimately connected with woodengraving. Its accounts reveal that the Press had become a profitable concern; fine printing evidently now had a better market.

In 1924 Robert Gibbings took over the Press for a period that was to last for seven years. This contribution was of primary significance to the success and achievements of the Press and will be discussed thoroughly in the following Chapter.

The Golden Cockerel was taken over by Christopher Sandford from 1933-1960 together with Owen Rutter and Francis Newberry, who was later replaced by Anthony Sandford. The Press was established at Eye Manor,England,the home of Christopher Sandford.(24,p28). Sandford had previous printing and publishing experience as a director of a commercial printing works, the Chiswick Press; as joint owner of the Boar's Head Press (1930-36) which he ran with his artist wife Lettice; and as a partner of the Golden Hours Press (1932-33) (29,p50). The Golden Cockerel Press had already established itself a reputation for quality despite it's shortage of finance. Like the Golden Hours Press, The Golden Cockerel Press became an imprint of the Chiswick Press which needed more work on it's order books at the time. Because of the economic predicament the Golden Cockerel had to abandon thelabour and machinery at Waltham for printing at the Chiswick Press (29,p56). The printing of the Cockerel's was done under the supervision of one of the partners, Frances Newberry, at the Chiswick Press. Christopher Sandford was in charge of book design and production and the third partner Owen Rutter was responsible for making new

literary contracts and finding and editing unpublished material (29). Rutter died in 1944, Anthony Sandford took over from Newberry but later all the directorship was left to Christopher Sandford. He used the Chiswick Press and employed a part-time employee for the sales and accounts, as he felt it was the best solution during the financially troubles climax of the 1930's depression.

At the Chiswick Press, Sandford used mechanical composition and power presses. For prose work, he would work on the type after the mechanical composition, putting it "through the stick" in order to obtain the close even spacing that characterised handsetting. The slow running Wharfdale Presses could be stopped frequently for examination, which was generally Monotype, enabled him to use a greater range of typefaces. (10,p60) As Sandford stated in his general prespectus of 1935

> "the Golden Cockerel now rests in the premises of the Old Chiswick Press. Like the Vale, it also retains and cherishes its complete independance and 'private press' status Every line of type is designed and every page 'modelled' and printed under the personal scrutiny of one of the partners".(10,p62).

For literary content Sandford concentrated on material that was new and unavailable at the time, including the work of modern authors, new or revised translations of classics and previously unpublished manuscripts. For example in 1939 he published Pilgrim Fathers, by a journal unpublished since the sixteenth century, a new translation of the Vigil of Venus, the Wisdoms of Cymry, translated from ancient Welsh triads, and John Fryer of the Bounty compiled from notes ofFryer's daughter,to mention only a few.(1).

The books were at this period printed on vellum or handmade paper, sometimes bound in pigskin or morocco, illustrated with engravings in wood and copper and often printed in unusual typefaces. Sandford used a range of typefaces for the120 books produced during his direction of the Golden Cockerel Press. He used a combination of mechanical and handsetting methods and 15 hand-set titles. The output of the Golden Cockerel Press is chronicled in four biographies - Chanticleer (1936), Pertelote (1943), Cockalorum (1950) and Cock-A-Hoop (1976). The last mentioned was the 214th book to come from the Cockerel Press and perhaps the final one. Love Night Oct.1936 by E.Powys Mathers was the first book by Sandford. Love Night is Powys Mathers at his most exotic and is illustrated with 15 wood engravings by John Buckland Wright. It was printed in Perpetua type on vellum and bound in green vellum and yellow ram boards (10,p35) The luxuriant theme cried out for exuberant typography. As Christopher Sandford remarked himself in the prospectus,

> "We compiled with elaborate chapter openings and a generous employment of italic type. Buckland-Wright produced some amorous engravings, and everything turned out as planned except the binding. We had chosen a particularly lush green vellum, but there was some misunderstanding and the final result,if more appropriate to the title, was a little too nocturnal for our liking."(13,p38)

Sandford's 97th book which he regarded as almost perfect, was the Book of Ecclesiastes (1934) printed in orange and black with 16 wood engravings by Blair Hughes-Stanton, some copies of which were on vellum. About six books a year were published, among them in the two following years: The Golden Bed of Kyndo by Evadne

Lascaris and the Cockerel Songs of Songs by Eric Gill. Both of these were illustrated by Sandford's wife Lattice. After Sandford came out of the the army in 1950he felt "theGoldenCockerel achievedin collaboration with its artists, everything that could be done to develop engraving in black and white" (29,p100). Thus he turned tocolour. Subsequently the woodengravings for Salmacis and Hermaphroditus by John Buckland were done in Golden yellow, grey and blue producing green when combined. This was followed in 1955 by Against Women, a satire, the engraver being John Petts, who used pale blue, a pink on ivory yellow, "skin" colour, a yellow and a dominant black. A purple Indian lizard skin was used for binding. Christopher later sold the press to Thomas Yoseloff Inc.(1,p80). Under Sandford the press had continued to be associated with a high standard of wood engraved books for a good many years. Although it had not been as financially and artistically successful as it was under the directorship of its prior proprietor and never was as successful in the years that followed.

In the following four chapters consideration will be given to the elements that made the productions of the Golden Cockerel Press the finest of their period.

Most significantly the best of this work can be attributed to Robert Gibbings for both his successful directorship and his contribution as an individual illustrator of the press which will be discussed in the next two chapters.

Noel Rooke and Eric Gill also played a part in the success of the

press's work. Firstly due to their contribution as individual artists of the press. Secondly as influential figures of the revival who inevitably enhanced and strengthened the artistic style and ideas of Gibbings. A third principal element to the press's success was the successful use of design which in it's discussion in a chapter to follow will be divided into three sections:

a. variety in the styles of it's illustrators
b. the selection of typefaces used by the press and the use of type as a part of the overall design layout
c. the use of devices and trademarks and it's incorporation into the overall design.

C H A P T E R T W O

ROBERT GIBBINGS AS DIRECTOR

Background On Gibbings Role.

Robert Gibbings was an Irishman, born in Cork in 1889 and also educated there, although he later spent much of his time in England and abroad. He established the Press's reputation from 1924-1933 but he was already a well known wood engraver before he took it over having studied woodengraved book illustration at the Central School London. He joined the Royal Munster Fusiliers during the war. At the age of 25 he helped found the Society of Wood Engravers in 1920 of which he became Honorary Secretary. When he sold the Press he became lecturer in book production and typography at the University of Reading.It was his involvement in the society that kept him in close contact with other modern wood engravers of the revival movement during that era.

Gibbings was a creative man both versatile and prolific. Sixty seven books were published by the Press while under his nine years directorship in it's great days at Elms Cottage, Waltham, St.Lawrence(29,p28). Gibbings during his directorship fulfilled the functions of typographer, artist, both illustrator and sculptor, author and book designer.

> "Of the Golden Cockerel, as of the young man
> in the bab ballads, it might be said
> Even those who loathed his style
> admitted he was versatile" (1,p103).

As commented of him in the prospectus from the proprieters that were to follow, Christopher Sandford and Owen Rutter.

It had been Gibbings aim "to do some decorations for really first class books, especially where it would be possible to keep in touch with the printer and treat the book as a whole".(24p.13).

As Christopher Sandford remarked, Gibbings was "more interested in the aesthetic than the commercial aspect of book production." (1).

Of the 1,500 engravers published in the books produced under Gibbings directorship, forty-eight were adorned with wood engravings and ten with copper engravings. (11,p19). Gibbings under his directorship produced books of the same genre but on various themes. The choice varied from new editions of classic texts, the work of Chaucer, Aesop by Roger L'estrange 1926 and selections from the Bible for example tonew translationssuch as Abd-er-Rhaman, In Paradise bu Julies Tellier 1928 and illustrated by John Nash and Lucien and contemporary writers such as H.E.Bates, L.Powys Mather and Simon Gantillon. The liveliness of the narrative and the skill of the engraving remained constant through them all. The last book Till End My Song by Robert Gibbings is proof "that he never lost his zest and skill".(15,p92).

Gibbings never kept a record of his work and no business records are traceable for his period at the Golden Cockerel Press. However, the Berkshire collection in the Reading Public Library contains copies of nearly every book printed by the Golden Cockerel Press, Waltham, St.Lawrence. For forty years Gibbings stood as an outstanding figure in the world of books. Gibbings books covered a wide variety of subjects not alone by other authors but by himself and also books for the sole purpose of illustrating the works by many of the engravers of the press, for example, Fourteen Wood Engravings by Robert Gibbings.

There is one rudimentary cause to Gibbings' successful directorship, his versatility. Because of the many roles he had accomplished in life, he had an interest in every aspect of book production. Consequently he produced the best works of the modem revival movement. All elements in every book designed and published by the Press were equally balanced. Gibbings' success as director can be subdivided into four sections:

a.
His efficacious choice of the most suitable and talented illustrators for his varied books.

b.
Good design which was achieved by typefaces that were successfully integrated with the engravings.

c.
Good materials and a very high standard of slanted craftmanship. Also the use of various devices and trademarks.

d.
A successful use of typefaces and the Golden Cockerel Press's use of it s own illustrators.

A.

Throughout his directorship Gibbings attracted various wood engravers to the concept of illustrating books for the Press. 19 books were illustrated by Gibbings, 15 by Eric Gill and 14 books by other artists. Among the fourteen other artists he employed, those on very first books were John Nash, David Jones, Eric Ravilious (24). The latter did the cover wood engraving for the Prospectus's Season (1932) and Spring (1935) and engravings for the book Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare (1932).

There is a variety of contrasting styles used. From the use of strong black and white areas, as in Gibbings own engravings for Keat's Lamia (1932) which will be discussed in the chapter on his style,and the decorative, stylized designs, such as Eric Ravilious's work for Twelfth Night (1932). These styles can be compared to the fine delicate textures seen in engravings by Blair Hughes-Stanton for A Crime against Lamia (1934). What is remarkable is that the differing styles of artists such as John Nash, John Farleigh, David Jones, Rene Ben Sussan and Agnes Miller Parker have been incorporated into a body of work which is recognizable at a glance as that of the Golden Cockerel Press.This is because the design layout image with type which will be discussed in the next section is the same. The talented work of these artist in decorating these books helped establish an efficacious name for the Press.

B. Design

Gibbings has perhaps made the mostsignificant contribution to English book production not only for the quality of his engravings and the opportunity he gave artists to display their work but also his success as a competent designer in accompanying text with image in an aesthetically satisfactory manner. Pages of his river books extended to the field of commercial printing the mastery of book design which he had developed in his private press day. He concerned himself in every detail of design and production. In his River books Coming down the Wye, Lovely is the Lee, Over the Reefs and Sweet Thames Run Softly, of which he both illustrated and wrote, theillustrations are principally designed to edudicate the text though their decorative function is nevertheless still apparent. These books printed by the Temple Press under Gibbings supervision had all remarkably balanced pages.They achieved the finest harmonies of the modern letterpress where "the type and the wood have therefore an affinity which creates a natural harmony on the page betweentext and illustration". (32,p89) as remarked by Gibbings of all his books.The type design of his books was usually classic format with illustrations to decorate the page.

Robert Gibbings in his notes to the introduction of Chanticlear remarked:

"The typography of the Press while seizing every opportunity for experiment, has never wandered far from the paths of traditional form".(36,p72)

Gibbings approach was somewhat different from that of the founder of the press, Harold Taylor. Taylor was less concerned with the appearance of the blocks than with a rather unsuccessful ideal of an artist's co-operative in which they wrote, set and printed their own own books (10,p18). Most of Taylors books were typographical and lacked a distinctive sytle. Yet under Gibbings the success of the Press was slow to start in the beginning. His first book published, was Bratomes Lives of Gallant Ladies, which was started by Taylor. This was then followed by Henry Carey's Songs and Poems (1924) which along with Red Wise by E.P. Mathers (1926) was experimental in terms of balancing engraving and type. (29). Both books were the beginning of the relationship between type and imagewhich culminated in The Four Gospels (1931). The first volume in which the type, paper and decorations made a pleasing whole is believed to have been Sonnets and Verses by Enid Clay,Gill's sister.This book was crowned by the Double Crown Club as the best printed book of the year.(24,p20). For students of typography and even for collectors, the prospectus issued by the Golden Cockerel Press are of particular interest. These were printed with all the care and much of the magnificence of format devoted to the limited editions.

Gibbings sought to produce books where the engravings were not an end in themselves but an integral part of the book. Each book had therefore a different design solution. Gibbings had two approaches to book design

(i) based on contrast: wood engravings where heavy blocks could be successfully combined with the text if careful page composition allowed enough space to separate them from the type. This approach is seen to be used in his earlier books, where he commissioned small head pieces, tail pieces and viginettes. This design style is particularly evident in Robert Gibbings book Iorana (1932) (illus.1) an example of a small head piece can be seen illustrated on the title page illustration and less obviously in Sweet Cork of Thee by Gibbings (illus.2) and Lovely is the Lee also by Gibbings (1945) (illus.3)

(ii) based on unit texture: To harmonize with letterpress the engravers lines in his illustrations had to approximate the texture, colour and thickness of the type. He was advocating in this approach sensitive use of the black line technique, such as that in Eric Gill's work for the Press after 1925. The approach allowed for the use of wood engravings marginal decorations for example those used in the book The Canterbury Tales 1928 (illus.4) and he decorated title pages like those displayed in Lamia by Keats (illus.5) and The Four Gospels.

Gibbings did not experiment using different typefaces but generally used the Caslon Old Face until 1921 when Gill designed the press's own Golden Cockerel typeface. Variety was introduced into the typography through the use ofcoloured or decorated initials, designed in many cases by Gill for example, The Four Gospels by (illus. 6 & 7)andGibbings for example in

Lamia 1928 by Keats (illus.8) and paragraph marks. He also introduced beautifully decorated title pages which gave an aesthetically pleasing effect to the introduction to these precious books for example Lamia (illus.5) and Lovely is the Lee (19) by Gibbings (illus.9), In the book Lamia the balance between type and illustration is particularly effectively achieved using large almost calligraphic bold capital letters that compliment the style of imagery as the lines used have a decorative fluid quality. (illus.10)

Gibbings style of layout and decorative borders used in Lucien's True Historie 1927 translated from Greek into English by Francis Hickes with introduction by S. Phillimas are reminiscent of the style of William Morris. His use of illustrative broders creates an elegant format and medieval quality to it's design. Many of Gibbings illustrations are enclosed in boxes particularly his early work for example, those for his book Iorana 1932 (illus.11). This enabled him to align the engravings more easily with the type. But this box enclosure did vary in some instances as inthe case of Lucien's True Historie where it's prutuberant figures emerged from the rigid constraints of it's box as in illustration.(illus. 12 & 13). Gibbings had financial problems particularly during the war, and some of his books were designed without illustrations or else with copper engravings. He also had to cope with a shortage of type; although he preferred 14pt or 18pt type he occasionally had to use 11pt as in Thoreau's Where I Lived (1924) and Swift's Selected Essay 1925 (29).

I will now proceed in discussing Sandford's use of the integration of image with type and thus inevitably proving how Gibbings contrasting ideals were more effective. Sandford believed "that illustrations should not be made to accord too closely with the colour of the type. They should have the strength to stand out from their typographic background and make their strong impact as authors do in their stage set".(1,p38) Sandford was less typographically concerned on the basis of its overall impact on the design, layout and placed more emphasis on illustration. He differed from Gibbings in allowing artists to do full page illustrations as well as small head-and-tail-pieces (illus. 14). Although surprisingly he used a more varied range of typefaces Caslon Old Face, Perpetua and the Golden Cockerel face designed by Eric Gill which will be discussed more thoroughly in a chapter to follow. Later he used Bembo, Pastenchi, Poliphilus and Baskerville (13,p116). Sandford had been less successful when compared to Gibbings, integrating on equal effective balance between all elements of the design layout of the books as Gibbings had achieved so successfully.

C. Devices

Another obligatory factor to the success of the press under Gibbings was his use of materials of high quality and his maintaining of good craftmanship. He used good paper in his books. For his first publications he was experimental in his use of materials and used Arnold paper for his book Songs and Poems by Henry Carey, which proved to be too hard and white for the 18pt type and very black engravings. Later he progressed and employed in more harmonious papers, especially handmade paper varying in thickness and texture. He also used good materials for the binding of these delicate books.

Another distinctive element that Gibbings used in his book design was his implementation of trademarks and devices, three in particular. These were his use of sail type binding, his own motif and the trademark of the Cockerel.

Sail type binding was a device used frequently on the press's books under the directorship of Gibbings which is evident for example, in his books The Wreck of Whale-Ship Essex (1935) told by Owen Chase, Thomas Chappel and George Pollard and The Voyage of the Bounty's Launch by Owen Rutter (1934).

His own motif consisted of a quill pen and engraving tool crossed with a vertical staff down the middle, all with initials R.G. The upright Staff represents, in fact, a Polynesian Club. The device can be seen in A True Tale of Love in Tongo by Gibbings (1935 and 1954) and differently in Blue Angels and Whales and in the case of this illustration (illus.15) in the book by ThomasBalston on Robert Gibbings which is used on the title page. Gibbings implemented

the device as his book plate. Another trademark was that of its Cockerel (illus.16). Many of the books published by the Golden Cockerel Press contain an illustration of a cockerel, usually either below the colophon or on the title page as in illustration 7, which is an example of the first type. The Golden Cockerel trademark derives from the engraving of a cockerel and palm tree that adorns the press's prospectus, which Gibbings issued on his return from Tahitiin 1929. The palm tree cut away to leave simple striding cockerel which was two and three quarter inches high. It was to serve as the basis for a whole series of similar cockerels in other sizes.

It appears in three forms and sizes.

The first is the ruffled cockerel which stands on one leg and always faces to the left, and was designed by Desmond Chute. It is featured in all 17 works published by the Press under its first owner, Harold Taylor. It appeared intermittently in the Press's books until the publication of the Atrocities of the Pirates in November 1929 by Aaron Smith. Preferably its final appearance was on Salambo by Fiaubert, published in 1931. It can also be seen in Carey's Songs and Poems illustrated by Gibbings, and in many other books illustrated by him.

The second type of cockerel stands firmly and arrogantly on both feet and is highly decorated facing to the right. It is illustrated by David Jones. First seen inLemuel's Gulliver's Travels (1925) also illustrated by him,and later in many other books.

The third type of cockerel is running and occurs in four sizes, and usually runs to the right. It is illustrated or designed by

Gibbings. This Cockerel was first used in the Press on October 1929 when it had a background of tropical foliage. It appears in Maya, by Simon Gantillon and many other books.

Gibbings various devices and concepts in all aspects of his directorship had proved very successful, and his role of leadership continued after he sold the Golden Cockerel Press to Christopher Sandford. After leaving the Press, he became directly involved in commercial publishing, as well as undertaking individual commissions for various publishers. He also became art director for a new series of Penguin, illustrated classics in 1928 for which he employed ten wood engravers.

D. Type Selection.

Having discussed some of the reasons to Gibbings success as director and the incorporation of type and design, I will now analyse anotherdistinctive determinant to the press's overall success. This section is based on the selection of typefaces used by the Golden Cockerel Press, particularly the Golden Cockerel typeface, and the involvement of Gill as typographer and designer of it s typeface.

Most of the Golden Cockerel books were hand-set in Caslon Old Face by compositors Frank Young and Harry Gibbs, always in close association with Gibbings who supervised and checked every stage of production(36,p29). This typeface was used throughout the Taylor proprietorship as the hand printers had neither the inclination or means of having their own private type designed for them. The typeface itself was revived by the Chiswick Press for its use in the 1840's. Elizabeth Yeats at the Cuala Press, Hilary Pepler at the Dominic's Press and A.H.Bullan at the Shakespeare Head Press were all users of the Caslon typeface (34,p118). When Gibbings took over the Press he was, as he remarked himself "almost completely ignorant of typography". (36,116). However,Gill had the advantage of having experience with type working for twenty years on projects with Harry Kessler, first at Insel Verlag and then Kessler's Cranach Press. Gill had also been involved in the work of the St.Dominic's Press for which he had mademany engravings. Early in 1924 Gill joined an association calledtheMonotype Corporation.This association had

show outstanding skill in adopting historic types for mechanical composition. Stanley Morison was its typographical designer. Gill designed the Gills Sans which came in 1928 before the new Roman Typeface. Morison himself remarked of Gill:

"It was to make him more widely known as a type designer than he would ever be as an engraver or sculptor".(33,p74).

Gill also designed an italic for the Perpetua typeface when involved with the Golden Cockerel Press of which he later remarked himself to Morison:

"I was very pleased because I thought such a good thing had been made and it was an honour to me".(33,p72).

He was also very pleased with the results of the Perpetua roman typeface in the publications of two particular books of the Golden Cockerel Press, The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity (1929), and The Fleuran.

Gill later designed the press's own distinctive typeface'The Golden Cockerel Type'(illus.17 & 18) which is a reduced original drawing of the design. It is a variation of the Perpetua typeface. Gill drew finished drawings of each character from which brass pattern latters were cut. These were used on a Benton-style punch cutting machine to make punches from which the matrices were struck. J.Collinge, was the Caslon's chief punch-cutter. But as Eric Gill remarked when this arrived we found that lacked something of the distinction of the 18 point (32,p57). The thicks and thins had lost a little of their balance in the larger size. And yet the work was mathematically correct. It was interesting to Gill that mathematics and aesthetics do not always agree, and that one of

the greatest changes you can make in a design is to alter its scale. Eric worked again on his designs, reducing the weight of the horizontals in proportion to that of the verticals and so retrieved the lost elegance of the design. (34,p72).

The Golden Cockerel font which Gill designed is a big type, big on its body, and looking, as Gill remarked to Morison, a couple of sizes larger than it is. This suited Gibbings, whose preference was for large books (while Gill preferred small ones). The font's wide letter is more suited to a broad page. From my research I agree with Colin Franklin and James Mosley that the font is not Gill's "most sensitive invention". It is sometimes graceless in comparison with Gill's own typeface made for himself, "Joanna". Yet it is "a heavy closely massing type suitable for use with modern wood engravings. (33,p70).

As James Mosley phrased it so precisely:

> "its stout serifs, robust modelling and generous proportions seem admirably suited to the requirements of its owner Robert Gibbings, a man built on similarly generous lines and one of the mostlikeable figures of the whole private press movement". (33,p73).

For hand composition, the Golden Cockerel type is available in two sizes:

the "English (roughly 14pt.). Roman caps and lower case with italic lower case only (for use with Roman caps).

and the "Great Primer" (roughly 18pt). Roman caps and lower case (not italics). Those types being rather large and bold on their body, the Press used 2 point lead,the 18 point lead, 1 point lead and 14 point lead. There is also a tilting in 24 point and 36

point.(34,p75).

The Four Gospels and Songs and Poems, both books illustrated by Eric Gill display the use of the Golden Cockerel Typeface in its greater magnificance.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

COLLABORATION

Another contributory factor to the success of the Press was the successful collaboration of two great masters Gibbings and Gill (1882-1940) when under the prior's directorship. Many of the finest works of the Press can be attributed to them. He was one of the most prolific artists working for thePress. Their collaboration can be seen at its best in the production of The Four Gospels (1931), and Gill surely accounts largely for the successful integration of type and illustration in the book. From the start Gibbings and Gill worked together. Gibbings as printer and designer of the page and Gill as illustrator and designer of the type and Press's own typeface, duscussed in the previous chapter.

Eric Gill was a friend of Noel Rooke, Edward Johnston and Robert Gibbings. Count Harry Kessler was his patron. Gill did great pictorial wood engravings for St.Dominic's Press at Ditchling and the Golden Cockerel from 1927-31. The success of his work for both presses can be attributed to his German patron Kessler as it was due to his encouragement and financial help. It was because of him that Gill began engraving his letter designs on wood instead of paper, for photographic reproduction which stopped him doing pictorial engraving on woodwhich were used by both The Golden Cockerel Press and St.Dominic's Press (33,p75).

Kessler started the Cranach Press in 1913, and it was the involvement in the work of the Press that he became in close contact with Gill. Rooke and Gill were both closely involved with Kessler at this time, with type designing, lettering and the wood

engravings of his books. (22,p180).

Eric Gill was both a friend and neighbour of Robert Gibbings as well as a working companion. They formulated, together their conception of a book, which was beautifully printed in a limited edition, on handmade paper and illustrated by the imaginative young engravers of their day.

Eric Gill is best remembered today as a calligrapher and typographical designer and for his sculpture, but his prolific work as a wood engraver is central to his career.(20,p80). He delighted in scenes of passion, both sacred (illus.19) and profane, (illus.19) represented in ahieratic manner derivedfrom Romanesque sculpture and manuscript painting. The hesitant depictions of sexual themes are sometimes beautiful, as in the Song of Solaman wood engravings, but often simply embarassing.

Much more satisfactory are his elaborate series of decorations on religious themes, and his distinguished books printed at the Golden Cockerel Press. Eric Gill was also one of the most influential early members of the Society of Wood Engravers, and also a sculptor as well as a scribe.

Gill engraved many blocks for the publications of the Press. They were engravings in black and white outline, both techniques of which are illustrated in the Naked Girl with Cloak (illus.20) in the book Sonnets, and Verses by Enid Clay 1924 illustrated by him. Gill had some feeling for a simple, flowing line as seen in illustration (21) inthe figures cupid and venus illustrated around the letter H in the Golden Cockerel's book. The Canterbury Tales (1928) by Geoffrey Chaucer 1928, and in the Dancer, in the

book The Songs of Songs 1925 by Gill (illus.22) But Gill's mannered Byzzantine figures, skinny and elongated, and coy,whose affection of sexual frankness in many of his prints are sometimes an obstacle to any enjoyment of his work. Though this is less evident in hiswork forthe Golden Cockerel Press.Also highlighted in some of his illustrations,is a balanced use of white and black masses as in illustrations 23 & 24.

Gill illustrated and designed several ambitious blocks for the Golden Cockerel Press including "Troiluis and Criseyde" (1927) by Geoffrey Chaucer,The Songs of Songs (1926) by Eric Gill, and The Passion of Jesus Christ (1926). Gill was also a fellow member of the Society of Wood Engravers. The antecedants of the Press and Gibbings own temperament and aims harmonised with Gill's ideas of what was fitting in printing and book production. There is an echoe of Gill in Gibbings pronouncements aboutthe press:

> "A well known typographer once remarked that the Golden Cockerel books look clean and honest.... The honest appearance may be due to the fact that there is no deception. The Golden Cockerel does not believe in artificial deckle"(22,p76)

Gibbings made several visits to Gill at Capel-y-ffin (a Welsh monastery where Gill was a layman) which were recalled in Gill's diary. They were good friends with a respect for each other's work which is vividly evident in the books which their collaboration produced. The first of these 'Sonnets and Verses' (1925) by Gill's elder sisterEnid Clay, which received great recognition as we know from the Double Crown Club.

The harmony between type and block illustration is a constant theme of Gibbings which he thought especially successful in

Gill's "Songs of Songs".This relationship between type and image is also evident in illustration 25 the title page to Troilius and Criseyde (1927) where there is a harmonious flud quality throughout the page which was brought to its finest portrayal in The Four Gospels (illus.26) (Fig.30).

Towards the end of this Capel-y-ffin period the Golden Cockerel Spring list for 1928 announced: "The Press has signed an agreement withEric Gill by which he will engrave exclusively for them".

The four Gospels was the finest books of of the 20th Century and due to the collaboration of Gill and Gibbings.In 1931 Gibbings wrote:

> "It was a great day for the Press when Eric Gill came into collaboration. For the past six years we have been working together he was executed over 300 engravings for us and it would be hard to estimate the value of his assistance and advice. For him as to us, the book is the thing and all other considerations must be subordinated."(24,p92).

It s success was achieved by initial careful planning and painstaking setting of the type where the type must be in command of the page followed by Gills detailed drawings.

Gibbings himself admitted

> "With Eric in particular the collaboration worked smoothly. He was tremendously conscientious. He did splendid work for his own firm in later years but I like to think that those engravings he did for our edition ofthe Gospels were the greatest he ever produced"(14,p62).

Gill considered his engravings as page decorations not wall decorations. They were featured in a dozen of the books by Gibbings before he gave up the direction of the Press in 1933.

Gill not alone involved himself in the Golden Cockerel Press but also had his own firm 'Hague and Gill' which was started by his son-in-law Rene Hague in 1930 for which he designed the Joanna typeface.(22,p25) Both Presses helped successfully establish his reputation as a renowned figure of the revival movement.

C H A P T E R F O U R

GIBBINGS AS ILLUSTRATOR

Influences and Style Treatment.

Having discussed Gibbings overall success as a director, I will now proceed to discuss his contribution in the roles as illustrator and author in the publications of the Golden Cockerel Press during his directorship.

Firstly before discussing Gibbing's style of illustration, I will consider it s influences:

(i) nature (ii) travel (iii) primitive art (iv) and other various artists, Gordon Craig, Bewick, Gill and Rooke.

(i) Gibbings was a naturalist. Whether he is portraying birds, beasts, fish, buildings, boats or implements,trees or flowers, landscapes or sea scapes, northern or tropical they are seen studied and rendered with equal technical virtuosity.This is displayed particularly well in his River Books of which he also displayed his role as author and designer. His river books were Sweet Thames Run Softly (1940), Lovely is the Lee, Over the Reefs (1948) and Coming down the Seine (1953). It was remarked by Star Telegram of Lovely is the Lee that

"his capacity as a writer, and outstanding naturalist and one of England's foremost artists in wood, Robert Gibbings had created a work of great beauty".(24,p200).

These beautiful books exemplify his passion for solitary observation. Their illuminating engravings were an entrancing "hotch-patch of descriptions of scenery, anecdotes, dialogues, folklore, vivid observations of birds (illus.27), beasts (illus.28), fishes (illus.29) and human beings (illus.30)" (14,p21)

(ii)

Another influence was that of his extensive odysseys around the world which added variety to his choice of subject matter and style used in his engravings. For example, his book Iorana (19) which was written, published and illustrated by him, featured a largely imaginary account of his adventures on his travels in Tahiti. He visited places like Malta, Salonica. Tahiti, Bermuda and Serbia during his time in the Royal Munster Fusiliers. He also had a passion for his home country, Ireland, seen in his beautiful depictions in river book "Sweet Cork of Thee" 1951 (illus.31) He featured the darkskinned people of his travels in his engravings. As Gibbings himself commented "wood engravings" in his opinion are "essentially white on black. For dark skinned people it is a perfect medium because with them it is a matter of engraving lights on dark... as I have always disliked the black line".(36,p24).

Yet although the people he has featured are generally all Polynesian, he also illustrated some white people with success. (illus.32).

Gibbings spent long periods of time in Polynesia where he lived with the natives, and featuring many of them in work, like Over the Reefs (1948) (illus.32) on which he worked for three years. It is an intimate, agile and sometimes unique account of events in their daily lives. These accounts are also abundantly illustrated with engravings of scenes and objects which had never been depicted before. According to Balston these engravings were works

of 'consmumate mastery'.(15,p116) Art he observed on his travels played an important part in influencing his style, for example in A Street in Macedonia 1920 (illus.34) which was very similar to Macedonian designs of the period. (15,82).

(iii)

Robert Gibbings was much influenced by primitive art which subsequently effected his style of illustration. As a young boy growing up he had been surrounded by his mother's collections of Polynesian antiques. These primitively carved antiques had a great influence on his style, which is particularly evident in his simplictic portrayal of the human form in his earlier work, for example in his book Iorana (illus.35) and On the Slip 1923 (illus.36). They possess a cubistic rigid solidness similar to that of the carvings. Gibbings also visited many primitive regions. His reactions as a modern engraver to the art of Lascaux can be seen in his book Coming down the Seine published in 1953. The engraving is remarkably accurate and in the book Gibbing's sets down some of his reactions to the cave of Lascaux. His vivid descriptions show how profoundly moved he was by this primitiveness. He wrote, "Wherever one stands in the caves, the effect on the mind is the same - overwhelming. But they have left an awesome sanctuary, the most impressive picture gallery that I have ever entered".(17,p42).

(iv)

I will introduce the influences of other artists on Gibbing's work, in the process of discussing his style and how it was effected by these other artists. There were four principal stages

to Gibbings illustrative style:

1. The use of simple silhouette images.
2. Black silhouette images relieved by a few white lines.
3. A more fluid use of purely line drawings sometimes combined with silhouette shapes.
4. More detailed engravings

Gibbings started with pure silhouette, the simplest kind of engraved design and achieved such excellent results as The Two Pigs (illus.37) and The Crest of the Hill (illus.38). His prints were characterised by an effective balance of black and white masses. The style of illustration of Gibbing's earlier work as a young man was a result of the influence of the work of Edward Gordon Craig. Craig similarly produced work of remarkable simplicity, whichrely for their effect mainly on the silhouette of the black figure against the white ground. This is evident in both artists illustrations London Bridge Today (illus.39) and View over Florence, which in all their simplicity, nevertheless create a very powerful impact. Gibbings tried to co-ordinate patterns of black& white silhouette masses in contrasting harmonies as in Tulips (illus.41), and Clear Waters (illus.42).

Light and Shade plays an important part in suggesting these silhouette blocks, for example seen on the rectangle houses he had seen in Malta Melleha, 1919 (illus.4B). The illusion of sunshine is also suggested in Evening Sunshine (illus.44) This is a feature throughout many of Gibbings earlier illustrations. Gibbings himself remarked simple silhouettes had an "austere quality of dignity, that could be achieved by other means. Clear,

precise, statement, that was what it amounted to" (36,p82). Another exaample of his earlier work is Dublin under Snow (illus.45) where only the bare minimum of white highlight is used to suggest acubistic image of house roof tops. His illustrations of this period were geometric in design and fundamentally impressionistic, and very individualistic instyle. Geometric patterning was evident in many of his engravings to follow like City Walls of Salonica (illus.46), Hamrun (illus.47) and Jowey Harbour (illus.48).

In most of his early work he used a device called 'the vanishing line' for example in Dublin Under Snow (illus.45). We can see from looking at the illustration that one white plane is partly in front of another and he has omitted the conventional vertical bounding lines, of the planes parallel to the picture surface, and left it to the spectators imagination to complete its shape, and so separate the planes.(14p.15). In City Walls (illus.49)he has used the same device in the opposite way where the black planes are separated from the white with thin black lines. The device is again used in Melleha (illus.41).Evening Sunshine (illus.42) and then again,Clear Waters (illus.90) where one light on dark surface is seen against another of the same tone, the line of demarcations being omitted altogether. In the illustration Clear Waters, the girls arms are left entirely to the spectators imagination, so subtely, that we are not aware of the lines absence. In Hamrun (illus.45) the vanishing line nearly extends to an inch and a half long. In these last two illustrations the device has created a dazzling illuminating effect. The device had been used before

by Edward Wadsworth unknown to Gibbings, but was used to better effect by Gibbings and continued to be used regularly by him in his illustrations for some years to follow.

The next stage was Gibbings use of his black silhouette images relieved with white lines to create more of an outline and thus leaving less to the spectators imagination. This style can be seen in the head pieces, tail pieces and front piece he did for his book Erewhon by Samuel Butler, for example Top Hat (illus.49). This illustration (illus.49) was the only one he was pleased with, he regarded other illustrations he did for this book "twinges of remorse whenI think of the paltry efforts with which I served them" (24,p102). This style can also be seen effectively in Carey's Songs and Poems (illus.50).

Later Gibbings progressed to using more white lines creating half toneslikethat in the illustrations for Samson andDelilah from the book of judges according to the authorised versions (illus.51) with less use of pure silhouette form. It can also be seen again in Iorana (illus.35), The Beauty Spot (illus.) 1932 and Onthe Slip (illus.36). This approach represents a firmness and cleanness in his style of illustration.

In the years that followed. Gibbings ameliorated to a more decorative approach in his illustrative style. He used a balance of black and white masses in his approach, in which the white masses are outlined with a fluid elegant line and the blackareas are highlighted with white lines. It successfully created an illuminating, decorative effect. This style is particularly effective in his illustrations for Lamia by John Keats (illus.13)

and Lucian's True Historie 1927 (illus.52). The line used in the illustrations for both these books is almost calligraphic with its variations of thick and thin particularly those fluid lines which outline the figures, hair and leaves a distinctive feature to this approach. The influence of Eric Gill's style is also prevailent in the textural and line treatment of the figure and foilage of Lamia (illus.13) and True Historie (illus.52), similar to that of Gill's treatment of The Dancer (illus.22) and the leaves inTheKiss (illus.53) in Songs ofSongs by Eric Gill 1925.

Gibbings line posesses an admirable spontaneity and freedom contradictory to the rigid constraints expressed by the black and white masses of his earliest very urbane work for example Hamrun 1918 (illus.47).This approach by Gibbings is a personal favourite as it's eminence arrives from the combination of both a decorative and yet simplistic approach which creates an illuminating effect when incorporated with type.

The final stage of Gibbings style in his illustrations for books of the Golden Cockerel can be seen to their perfection in the river books. For example Lovelyis the Lee (illus.54). His illustrations for these portray a mature artist working with self assurance and authority. Strong lines remain important and he used lines on black areas to build up a variety of delicate textures. These lines were often very small and simple to give a more detailed effect like that of the work of Thomas Bewick. The similarities to the work of these illustrators can be seen in illustration 55 and illustration 56 yet, Gibbings had not yet

achieved the mastery of detail that Bewick had achieved.

The engravings of Gibbings combine beautifully with the text and contain all the observations and liveliness of the narrative skill he achieved as author of these books. The textured detail of these engravings for example in illustration, are a complete contrast to that of the more stylised simplistic silhouette type illustration of his earliest work.
Nearly all Gibbings engravings were done on Turkish boxwood. He not alone did engravings for books of the Golden Cockerel Press, but also for commercial advertising. Examples include the seven blocks, with eastern subjects to advertise Matinee cigarettes of the Imperial Tobacco Company, the first commission of this king. These illustrations are an example of the first two stages of his illustrative style (illus.57) they are principally pure silhouette, except for a few white lines used to illustrate the trees in the very bottom illustration.

Influence of Noel Rooke.

Alot is to be attributed to Noel Rooke for the success Gibbings achieved for his work as both illustrator and director of the Golden Cockerel Press. It was Rooke's enthusiasm and approval for his work as a young man that encouraged Gibbings as an illustrator when as a student he was uncertain about his career as an artist.Rooke introduced him to the woodcutting medium of illustration and encouraged Gibbings to buy his first press, the Crown Albion Press. Initially Gibbings was largely influenced as a student, when Rooke was lecturer in the Central School of Art, London. It was Rooke who had been very much dissatisfied with the mechanical reproduction of drawing, which had dominated illustration since the middle eighties and turn to the wood block medium.(32,p201). He believed that both engraver and artist should be one in the printing process. Rooke also aroused the interest of Eric Gill. These ideas and enthusiasm for wood engraving led to the founding of 'The Society of Wood Engravers' in 1920 of which Gibbings was later appointed Honorary Secretary. The ten original members were Pissaro Lee, Gordon Craig, Rooke, Gibbings, Gill, Gwen Raverat, Hagreen, John Nash and Dickey all of whom encouraged the new woodcut revival. It was also Rooke's encouragement that led to Gibbings taking over the GoldenCockerel Press (32). Rooke taught Gibbings that:

"disciplineof thought that was necessary toevery artist"(32).
Gibbings regarded Rooke with great esteem
"Such was his regard for Noel Rooke and his judgement that whenever Robert was ready to bring out a newly illustrated book he used to invite Noel to come and have a little private view of the prints he had done for it"(32,p202).

Gibbings was also influenced by his style of illustration. Rooke made use of a pure silhouette style of illustration seen in his treatment of illustration 58 Glacier 1955, and in illustration 58 Wind Over the Matterhorn, which used a silhouette of a mountainbut is highlighted with sharp white lines. Thisis similar to Gibbings approach in his earlier work although Gibbings line and shapes are more fluid compared to Rooke's more dramatic, vigorous approach. Rooke also contributed as an illustrator for the Golden Cockerel Press, for example he did illustrations for the book The Nativity and Twelfth Night.

C H A P T E R F I V E

THE FOUR GOSPELS

To conclude my thesis the final chapter will analyse the greatest work of the Golden Cockerel Press, The Four Gospels, A Work that posesses the finest combination of all the qualities that made the Press the greatest triumph of fine book production during that period. The original copies are worth over £5,000 and generally in special collections or rare book libraries. The original was printed in 1931 on a Phoenix platen two pages to view .

It was produced as we know under the directorship of Robert Gibbings with the collaboration of Eric Gill. Though a work of great mystery, it is not without fault. The pages containing blocks were less well aligned than that of the pages containing type, subsequently the resultant 'back-up' is not particularly good. It's pressman was Albert Cooper. It was printed on vellum, fully bound in white pig skin and bound on buckrum boards. It used Bachelor handmade paper and had a special water-mark. (37,p24)

The engravings were done by Gill for this book in 76 and a half days and completed in 1931. The Four Gospels consist of 276 pages with eight full page illustrations (illus.60) and thirty-two substantially illustrated and decorated words (illus.61), and initials (illus.6) fourteen minor engraved initials (illus.62). There are only three double openings which contain more than one engraving and they are simple flourished initials as in illustration 63 which are usually flourished with leaves or in the case of illustration 65 the letter A is flourished with a cock and spear. Thus there are still mant remaining plain pages in

what initially appears to be richly decorated. These decorated initials and words are as remarked by Christopher Skelton subserviant to the wording and their form springs from the needs of the letters (22,p38).

The initials to each opening chapter were either two line flourished initials or sometimes a more ambitious decorated letter. These initials provided a variety, fitted in with great ingenuity that enlivened the page. The decorated text posessed remarkable pictorial and dramatic qualities, and the letters are combined beautifully by Gill in a similar way to the illuminated manuscript. The letters are decorated with a simplictic representation of figures, leaves and sometimes with the introduction of a cockerel as in illustration 65. The simple Byzantine style figures weave elegantly around the letters in various positions and sizes, but always balancing appropriately with the text. The elongated figures are generally outlined in black with black overalls relieved with only a few white lines. The line used is fluid and calligraphic.

Some of the plainess of those pages without decoration are relieved by stars and roses that Gill uses as paragraph marks for use with the Golden Cockerel type. These are generally used to mark the sections as they appear in the traditional printing of the King James Bible stemming from Bentley's eighteenth century Cambridge printing (20,p72).They are comparatively widebeing cast on an em body,and are usedas fillers for short lines and merely omitted where there is no room. A depiction of a leaf is sometimes used as a line filler as in illustration 66.

Whilst the sub-titles of this book can be appreciated in the original, the achievement of this simplicity can be seen still in a copy. The glory of this book lies in its simplicity and the "marriage of wood and metal" that is so happily shown within it's pages. It is a simple book with black and white pictures or illustrations.The harmony or balance between text and illustration was achieved by setting text before the illustrations or illustrated initials. Thus Gill's task was to slanted fill in the spaces left by the typesetting. There was a perfect rightness among all the elements so that a flourishedserif or marginal intrusion fitted without affecting the spacing or balancing of the letters. The design and positioning layouts are executed in preliminary sketches made by Gill.

Subsequently due tothe close collaboration of two protagonists, Eric Gill and Robert Gibbings, themarrying ofillustration and text is successfully achieved. There is hardly a misplaced illustration orline that could be better positioned in the book. The harmony betweenillustrationandtext is not aloneachieved by its successful balance of spacing but also by use of various sizes in the GoldenCockerel typeface from 36pt to 18pt which read successively from the largest, to the smallest creating an overall balanced effect between the large heavily decorated letters to the small type as in illustration 63. Another element that adds to the harmony is the use of the fluid, calligraphic line in Gibbings' illustration which harmonises particularly well with the bold serifed Golden Cockerel typeface. The integration of the

illustration with the type can be seen in various positions on the page design, the illustration can be placed to the middle as in illustration 60 , top half as in illustration 26 top two thirds as in illustration 60 or bottom, butall remain equally balanced in the page'd design.

Gill justified the typesetting with ragged right-hand edges. The setting of type in this manner was used to maintain evenness of word spacing. The method was later regretted by Gibbings. It is suggested that this method could also have been used for distinguishing those capital letters that begin sentences from those that denote the opening of direct speech,thus it is a theory that the jagged right-hand edges were also used for this purpose.(33,p42) Spoken phrases also open with acapital even though they start in the middle of a sentence.
This book was seen by Gibbings as his greatest accomplishment. Gibbings also believed that the engravings Gill did for the Four Gospels were the greatest he ever produced.(22) 38. The book was conceived in the fruitful mind of Robert Gibbings, and is the Golden Cockerel book that usually compares with the Dove's Bible and the Kelmscott Press's Chaucer. The Four Gospels is a flower among the best productions of the English romantic genius. It is the book of the Golden Cockerel Press where the text is best mated with it s complimentary illustration.

C O N C L U S I O N

In my thesis I hope to have portrayed a vivid perception of the several rudimentary concepts which led to the achievements of this private. The publications of the Golden Cockerel Press possessed an unpreturbed, self assurity in all aspects of it s design. The work of the press was to be reminised as a phenomenal success and a focal point to the modern wood engraving revival 1990-1940 and the private press movement. The Press enclosed the work of an entensive variety of talented artists, the two protagonists, Gill and Gibbings, and many other British illustrators. Many of these illustrators themselves gained extensive recognition home and abroad as talented, up and coming artists because of their productions within the Press. The excellence of the Golden Cockerel's productions was an ambition thrived for by all other partners in the private press movement of that period. It was followed by such presses as the Gregynog and Nonesuch presses who also produced great works but not as efficacious as those of the Golden Cockerel Press. But this period was soon marked with the decline in book illustration and the disappearance of the private press movement, a Golden era in the art of the woodcut medium.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

National Library, Kildare Street, Dublin.

1. Chambers David and Sandford Christopher
   Golden Cockerel Press:"Bibliography Sept 1949-Dec.1961".

2. Coppard A.E.
   "Count Stephan"
   The Golden Cockerel Press

3. Gibbings Robert
   "Lovely is the Lee"
   New York Dutton 1945.

4. Gibbings Robert
   "Coming down the Seine".
   1953

5. Gibbings Robert
   "Woodcuts by Robert Gibbings"
   Falloden (Edward Grey Ist. Viscount)
   The Golden Cockerel Press.

6. Gibbings Robert
   "The Hundredth Story A.E.Coppard"
   Coppard (A.E.).

7. Gibbings Robert
   "Till I end my Song..."
   1957 New York Dutton.
   The Golden Cockerel Press.

8. Gibbings Robert
   "Iorana"
   The Golden Cockerel Press.

9. Gibbings Robert
   "Fourteen Wood Engravings" - from drawings on the Orient Express"
   The Golden Cockerel Press.

10. Golden Cockerel Press Bibliography 1921-1949
    3 Volumes in one p.48 p.52 p.112
    London Talkstone Dawson 1975

11. Kirkus (A.Mary)
    'Robert Gibbings a bibliography'
    Edited by Empsan Patience and Harris John
    London Dent 1962
    National Library.

12. Melville (Merman)
"Typee"
Woodengravings by Robert Gibbings
The Golden Cockerel Press.

13. Sandford Christopher, Taylor Harold and Gibbings Robert
"prospectus - Chanticleer (1963), Perelote (1943) and Cockalorum (1950) and Cook a hoop (1976): 1921-1949"

Secondary Sources.

Books:

14. Balston Thomas
"The Wood Engravings of Robert Gibbings" N.C.A.D.

15. Edited by Balston Thomas and Empsan Patience
"The Wood Engraving of Robert Gibbings" National Library.

16. Calloway Stephen
"English Prints for the Collector". N.C.A.D.

17. Garret Albert
"A History of British Wood Engraving" N.C.A.D.

18. Godfrey T.
"Printmaking in Britain" N.C.A.D.

19. McCarthy Fiona,
"Eric Gill" N.C.A.D.

20. Yorke Malcolm
"Eric Gill - Man of Flesh & Spirit". N.C.A.D.

21. Salomon J
"A Collectors Guide to Print and Printmakers"
Thames and Hudson N.C.A.D.

22. Skelton Christopher
"Eric Gill - The Engravings" N.C.A.D.

23. Oxford Dictionary.

Catalogues:

24. Catalogue of Pamplets, "Gibbings and the Press"
National Library

25. Garret Albert
"A History of British Wood Engraving" N.C.A.D.

26. Catalogue of Exhibition
"4 Aspects of the work of Robert Gibbings" T.C.D.

27. Garret Albert - Catalogue
"British Woodengraving of the 20th Century" N.C.A.D.

28. Sewer A.C. introd.
"Catalogueof Modern British Woodcuts and Wood Engraving in the Whitworth Art Gallery" N.C.A.D.

Periodicals:

29. Bigham Julia
"The Golden Cockerel Press" T.C.D. 1987

30. Brett Simon
article "Woodengraving Then and Now"
magazine,Matrix U.K. No.8. (Winter 1988) T.C.D.

31. Howes H.
article "Noel Rooke: The Early Years"
magazine, Matrix U.K. No.3 (Winter 1983) T.C.D.

32. Cumming H.
article "Under A Wing of the Golden Cockerel"
magazine, Matrix U.K. Vol.2.(Winter 1982) T.C.D.

33. Mosley J.
article "Eric Gill and the Golden Cockerel Type"
Matrix U.K. No.2 (Winter 1982) T.C.D.

34. Sandford C.
article "A Note on the Golden Cockerel Type"
magazine Matrix U.K. No. 2 (Winter 1982) T.C.D.

35. Sandford J.
article "Gay colours, brave crow: The Golden Cockerel, Private Press".
magazine, Country Life U.K. Vol.170 (29 Oct.1981) T.C.D.

26. Hatfield John, editor
article in "Robert Gibbings Thoughts On Wood"
magazine The Saturday Book 17.

37. Skelton Christopher
article "In the Golden Cockerel's Footprints"
magazine Matrix U.K. No.8 (Winter 1988) T.C.D.