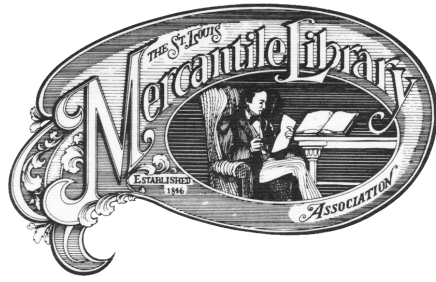


EXHIBITION HANDLIST



St. Louis Mercantile Library
www.umsl.edu/mercantile
314-516-7248

THE TERN PRESS:

Printing And Illustrating Timeless English Literature and the Art of Nicholas and Mary Parry

The Mercantile Library has collected the works of private presses for generations, and has built some extraordinary holdings in the book arts, fine bindings, and fine printing which can be used for study and projects in a number of research applications—from museum and design studies, to literary research. The main interest at the Mercantile has been to collect a broad, exemplary collection of American presses and printers, such as Baskin and Janus Press, heirs to Rogers, Updike, John Henry Nash and the Grabhorn Press. At the same time the Library never neglected the English presses and possesses a strong collection of William Morris's Kelmscott Press as well as the work of Gill and others in the early 20th century and their "heirs" such as the Whittington, and Rampant Lions Presses. Some large archives of type manuals, printing ephemera, broadsides and prospectuses are also present. When a press demonstrates a particular adeptness in merging art and design with print and paper, the Library, with its additional mission of providing an unusual museum setting as well, is particularly interested, and no press here has been more admired or more fully collected than Tern Press because of that artistic quality.

Named for a little river that runs through the proprietors' garden, the Tern Press was founded in the 1970's by Nicholas and Mary Parry, who performed all the design, editing, typesetting, illustrating, binding, marbling and selling of the seemingly endless creations from their imagination. The Parry's, who died shortly after one another in only the mid decade, had essentially started printing and illustrating editions after art school in the 1950s. Winning prize money from a Welsh Arts Council painting competition allowed them to buy their first press from a local retiring job printer, which they subsequently wore out on editions of *Beowulf* and other classics. Parry has stated that "our initial aims were to relate each subject to a relative set of materials, to think of the book as a n overall work of art, rather like an opera, with a body (stage-props-paper-binding), intellect (thoughts-words-libretto) and feelings (music-color-prints), to try, as in all art, to produce a form that lives and breathes. Thus our books are not conceived, designed, produced through process, but are perceived, arranged and produced through craft." Something of this stage-setting is present in all the great fine presses of the past and the present, but the Tern Press clearly had a very artistic and visionary stance at its core.

The press was energetic and very productive. It used the greatest variety of typefaces, paper, bindings and illustration techniques to reflect an even broader range of subject matter, from the earliest Old and Middle English poets, to modern poetry and natural history. A press that can be identified through such variation successfully, is remarkable—one knows a Tern Press book, whether it is an edition of Jeffries, or Milton, Carroll, Blake, the Mabinogian, or Yeats or Gurney. The Parry's taste was impeccable, flawless in selection, and they can even take credit in part for helping reshape an appreciation of somewhat forgotten poets like John Clare, the peasant Wordsworth. Quite often, so active were the Parry's, that half of an entire press run would be composed of (1) a set of hand lettered copies with original watercolors, and (2) a set of lithographed and printed copies. Press runs were necessarily very limited. The Mercantile holds a number of unique proofs of books, as well as entire manuscript versions of subsequent printed editions. The delicate and subtle art by Nicholas Parry reveals a major talent and intellect.

The Parry's created over 100 titles in a 35 year period, often several variant editions for each title, each a true work of art. The Mercantile possesses nearly all of these, forming a strong archive of the Tern Press, a remarkable fine press, one of the major English presses of our time, which used a vast array of formats, styles, subjects, illustration techniques, from watercolor, to lithography and etching to create, paradoxically, a very consistent body of work—it is said the Nicholas Parry continued to draw and paint in bed to the day he died. His and his wife, Mary's, dedication and productivity, their commitment to "operatic" productions of fine printing, was a monumental achievement among the great presses.



Image: Detail of Illustration for "Authors" from *Twenty Poems of Elizabethans* by Ivor Gurney. Tern Press, 2005.

CASES 1, 2, 3: A CONSISTENCY IN VARIATION– BINDINGS OF THE TERN PRESS:

The Songs from the Dynasts by Thomas Hardy (1980); *Poems of Place* by William Butler Yeats (1991); *Poems* by Else Lasker- Schüler (1980).

CASE 4: REDISCOVERED ENGLISH POETRY– JOHN CLARE:

The Morning Wind (2006); *The Summons* (1989); *Aphorisms* (2002); *Flitting* (1991).

A John Clare Glossary of Children's Games (2011) with a unique proof copy of the original art for this book.

CASE 5: AN EXUBERANT VARIETY OF ARTISTIC MEDIA USED BY THE TERN PRESS:

Dido and Aenius by Virgil (2009), a unique copy illustrated and lettered entirely by hand; *Beowulf* (1984);

An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard by Thomas Gray (1995); *Il Penseroso* by John Milton (2009);

Comus by John Milton (2003), two copies, one with original watercolor illustrations, in variant bindings.

CASE 6: THE BIBLE (& RELATED WORKS):

Gilgamesh (1992); *The Book of Ruth, a Pastoral Idyll* (1994); *The Gospel According to St. Mark, Purvey Translation, 1380* (1981);

The History of Susanna (1990); *The Taaras of the Field, Matthew/John Wycliffe* (2005);

Verses from the Psalms, Book II (1986); *The Book of Job* (1997); *Wycliffe's Translation of Saint Matthew's Gospel* (1988);

and the original watercolor proof of *A Crown of Flowers* by Susan Summers (1997).

CASE 7: THE TRAGEDY OF WAR:

The Unreturning by Wilfred Owen, original watercolor unique proof copy (2003); *Bosnia* by David Grubb (1996);

August 1914 by John Masefield (2005); *Twenty Poems of War* by Ivor Gurney (2008); *The Disasters of War* by Randolph Ellis (1975).

CASE 8: EARLY ENGLISH TEXTS, TRANSLATED & TRANSLITERATED:

Piers the Plowman by William Langland (2001); *The Riddles from the Exeter Book* edited and translated by John Porter (1978);

Four Masks From the Mabinogion by Isabel Arrowsmith (2006); *The Dream of the Rood* edited and translated by John Porter (1992);

Brief Comments from the Old English Herbals selected and edited by Bill Griffiths (2005); *Blore Health 1459, An Elegy* (1987).

CASE 9: WORDS OF LOVE AND...

Woman Sweet, Witching Woman by John Clare (1993); *The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis* by William Dunbar (2002);

Don Juan by John Clare (1998); *Love Will Find a Way, From Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1998);

Rybaiyat of Omar Khayyám translated by Edward Fitzgerald, two copies, binding variants in cloth and leather, one copy with original watercolors (1996); *Return to the Abode of Love* by David Grubb (1981);

The Seasons by Thomas Orszag-Land (1980); "Love" by Else Lasker- Schüler from *Poems* (1980).

CASE 10: A WIDE RANGE OF ENGLISH CLASSICS, FROM FANTASY & SATIRE TO THE GOLDEN AGE & FAR BEYOND:

Through the Looking Glass and Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll (2001, 1997); *The Hue and Cry* by John Clare (1990);

The Three Wayfarers by Thomas Hardy (1991); *Nymphidia, the Court of Fayrie* by Michael Drayton (2004); *Meditation* by Thomas Traherne (2008);

Dictionary of English Queens by J.L. Carr (2003); *Notes and Numbers; Music in the Lyrics of Robert Herrick* (2007);

The Hounting of the Chivyat by Richard Sheale (1981); *The Tail of the Scheip and the Doig* by Robert Henryson (2007);

Bindings for *I Saw my Lady Weepe* by Eleanor Cooke (2007); *Verses* by Robert Dowland (1983).

The Chinese Lion by Mary Webb (1989); *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Houseman (1990).

CASE 11: NATURE WRITING:

The Skylark by Henry Lawes (2009); *The Primrose Bank* by John Clare (1986);

Winter by Bill Griffiths (2000); *The Phoenix* by Bill Griffiths (1998); *A Rook Book* by Richard Jeffries (1988);

The Birth of a Naturalist: An Unpublished Chapter from Round About a Great Estate by Richard Jeffries (1985);

The Call of the Cuckoo by K.A. Perryman (1997); *Thoughts on the Migration of Birds* by Richard Jeffries (1999).

CASE 12: WALES AND THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE, VIVIDLY AND WISTFULLY DEPICTED:

Lines From the Black Book of Carmarthen (2007); *Lines and Landscapes* by Francis Gilvert (2010); *Bardsley* by Gerallt Jones (1976);

From Garn's Summit by Gerallt Jones (1999); *Gloucester* by Ivor Gurney (2007); *Twenty Poems of Walking* by Ivor Gurney (2007);

Eight Village Poems by David Grubb (1986); *The Gododin*, translated by Bill Griffiths (2011).

CASES 13, 14, 15: EXEMPLARY BOOK ARTS, INCLUDING TEXTS LENDING THEMSELVES TO THE PARRYS' VERSATILE & EXPRESSIONISTIC ART:

The Battle of the Trees, by Cad Goddeu (1992); *An Island in the Moon* by William Blake (2007); *Remembrances* by John Clare (2003).

