

handpresses, and my own Arab treadle platen is one such machine. The primary characteristic, if there is a primary one, is that the impression be activated by hand. This means that the paper is impressed against inked type by pulling or moving a bar or lever with one's hand or hands. I hesitate to be that simplistic. But, contrary to what a number of otherwise informed people have said and written about Hawk Press, *The Death of Captain Cook*⁵ is the first and only book we have so far printed with a handpress.

Seventh, there is the 'issue' of *élitism*. I must confess to not having read at all in this idea. Most expressions I've heard in conversation about 'élitism' amount to a confused and easily disposed of body of 'devil's advocacy'. No doubt Marxist theory would enliven the matter. But the counter-*élitist* would have to deal squarely with the nature of handpress printing, the high costs of materials and the low production capacity of the method. He or she would also have to deal with the somewhat naive sounding fact that even the best-selling Bible is not owned by everyone, nor does everyone want to own a copy. That is, in some sense even Holy Scripture is published in limited editions. The question is, if anyone wishes to make a question of it: Where does one draw the line, and for what reasons?

So, taking up my line once more: without teachers, without a local tradition, without a body of 'received' information which is active among printers and available to the public, why print fine books on a handpress in New Zealand? Two quotations ought to fix it. The first is from the American poet Cid Corman: 'Every instance is particular'.⁶ That is, one doesn't have to justify an activity in general terms before being capable either of conducting oneself in that activity, or of responding to an instance of it. The proper question is not Why do it? but rather What do we have here? For the second quotation I return to the wonderfully helpful Lewis Allen:

... with knowledgeable use of the handpress, truly beautiful printing is possible—crisp, glowing, three dimensional impressions on lovely handmade paper. Why is this a fact? Simply because one enjoys complete control of the tool: every inking, every impression can be adjusted quickly towards perfection. There is a certain satisfaction in this use of mind and hand and superb materials to produce printing not attainable on motor driven high-speed machines.

... Edwin Grabhorn of the Grabhorn Press had this to say: 'One of the modern criticisms of William Morris and the private presses that he inspired is that too much stress was placed on method. Method means how a thing is done, and how a thing is done is of very vital importance if we want to give our work durability. Morris knew, because he was a collector of the earliest printed books, that those books could not have descended to him looking as vital and sparkling as the day they left their makers' hands, without honesty of craftsmanship. It was the craftsmanship that Morris revived, and that we today will have to revive again before our books can have any claim to a long life ...'