

The Scrimshaw Press
149 Ninth Street / S.F. 94103

March 29 '72

Nell Dorr
Nettleton Hollow Road
Washington
Connecticut

Dear Nell,

The book has been unfolding in entirely new ways before our eyes and it makes me sing, simply exulting that such a project ever could exist. I have been able to give not nearly enough time to it for the countless stupid details which keep breaking in, but I can give you a preliminary report.

What I have seen shows me that the offset lithography process of printing is far more demanding as to print quality. The minor imperfections which do not disturb the eye in the general diffused softness of *garvure* tend to become exaggerated (relatively) in offset. We will be printing on "soft" paper, so it won't be as through some slick & shiny surface was reflecting every pinhole imperfection, but we still have to deal with what I have to call the "major" imperfections.

It's my wish to discard entirely the halftones already prepared and to retouch and make clean the master prints which will, whether we like it or not, show their imperfections to the world. I don't mean that I want to change any prints, adding something that isn't there, but it seems unwise for us to accept them as they are and then for me to lament the act for all the life of the book. I've allowed it to happen with *Hoace Lyon's* prints in the Robinson Jeffers book and I've kicked myself ever since.

I want to discard the halftones because they, of course, have picked up all the small scratches. More important, there is always the motive that a printer who makes his own negatives is responsible for a far greater part of the whole assignment; he cannot defend a poor piece of printing by pointing back over his shoulder and claiming that he got bad negatives. If the work looks bad on the press, he will pull it off and shoot again, since he made the error in the first place.*

I'm sorry to be suggesting that the work you have done with your friend will go for naught, but perhaps you saw it coming. May I mention some details now?

*This contradicts the cheerful prophesies I was making 10 days ago. We were then learning that your halftones "might work," might be faithful to the originals. Now we want to re-spot and clean your originals; there is, if we pursue this course, great risk in using one-third of your halftones and two-thirds new. It seems to be either all-new or nothing . . .

✓ The covers. I think that you should remake the cover print in just the tonal ranges you wish to have, in one print, the overall size to be about an inch greater in size than the trim size of the book. That is, the print should be at least 18" wide by 11" deep. If it's more convenient for you to make two separate prints to the format you have used in preparing the other master prints, that's fine with us. We'll determine the point at which to divide the print after the negatives are made, so as to print the two covers. You know that it's always better for us to reduce from a master print rather than expand . . .

The endsheets are just fine as they are. I would like to use the originals and have prints of them from you, *now, already.*

The abstract print which you have as 3L, facing the title page, is better in the dummy print than in the master and we would like to work from the dummy print.

The title page needs some work. Since we will be resetting all the type, we need to make a new abstract to back the type. I see that you have sent a copy negative of that abstraction and we can work from that.

✓ The verso title page and dedication. It would be best if we could have an entire new print from you for this two-page spread. We cannot use the right-hand section, since we'll be setting new type, and the left-hand section could (and should?) be a cleaner print, better if made at the same time and in same ranges as the dedication page.

THAT'S ALL. We ask no more new work at this point. Now I must get home to dinner and continue this tomorrow...

So, it's now tomorrow.

As for the book itself, we have been thinking about the difficulties of laying an end-paper in a paperback or softcover book. If you'll recall, the normal thing in a softcover book is to see the left-hand page (the verso of the cover) in a coated stock or a surface which is clearly the back of something and the right-hand page in a different texture--the first page of the rest of the book, different texture, different "feel." Now if you'll look at the paper version of John Brook (and I hope you have one, as well as a clothbound), you'll see that the bindery glued down an endsheet ("end-paper"--the words are imprecise) and gave the softcover book some of the advantages of a more elaborate book. (At a high price, I might add. It's all hand-work to some extent)

Well, we could have the same glued-down endpapers in M & C II. Or we could have a floating endpaper, as Greta has in the paperback Gift of Place. The endsheet is in the book, but it's standing as a separate pair of pages, blank on the outside (page 1, as it were), printed on pp 2 and 3 and blank on 4, after which you move into the text of the main book.

Neither of these ideas seem feasible to us. The former is difficult to do and forces the price of a paperback up to the range of a clothbound. The latter is not suitable because *in your book* it's not colorful or decorative paper--it's white stock--thus to leave the blank sheet, the unprinted side, of no particular

visual interest at all. AND it's a poor idea because the endsheets themselves are very powerful elements in the whole book--setting a mood. They aren't just flowery decorations.

So, we are thinking that instead of trying to produce an expensive paperback, we will opt for an inexpensive ~~cloth~~ hardback. Not unlike the Hill and Wang Terra Magica series, first-class in all important respects, with imprinted paper-over-board covers, end-sheets glued in where they belong, manufactured to sell for \$7.50

I am sending along some old copies of John Brook and Greta's books so that you can see what I have so long-windedly tried to say above.

I am rather dazed at the amount I've tried to cram into this letter and can hear you pleading for a respite. I'll stop now. We will have to discuss the financial strictures placed upon us by the loss of your halftones and the work on your prints which we would like to do. As I read back over this letter, I see that I have probably been very unclear in some places and presumptuous in others. I hope that there is nothing in all the forgoing to interfere in this simple thought: the joy of creation outweighs all!

Love,

Fröök

Aside to Gregory: we will write!