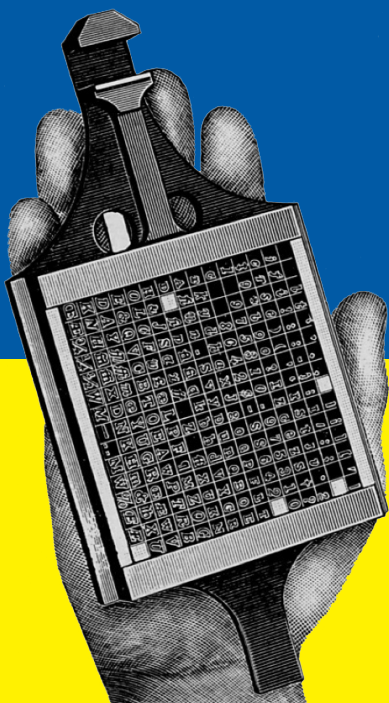
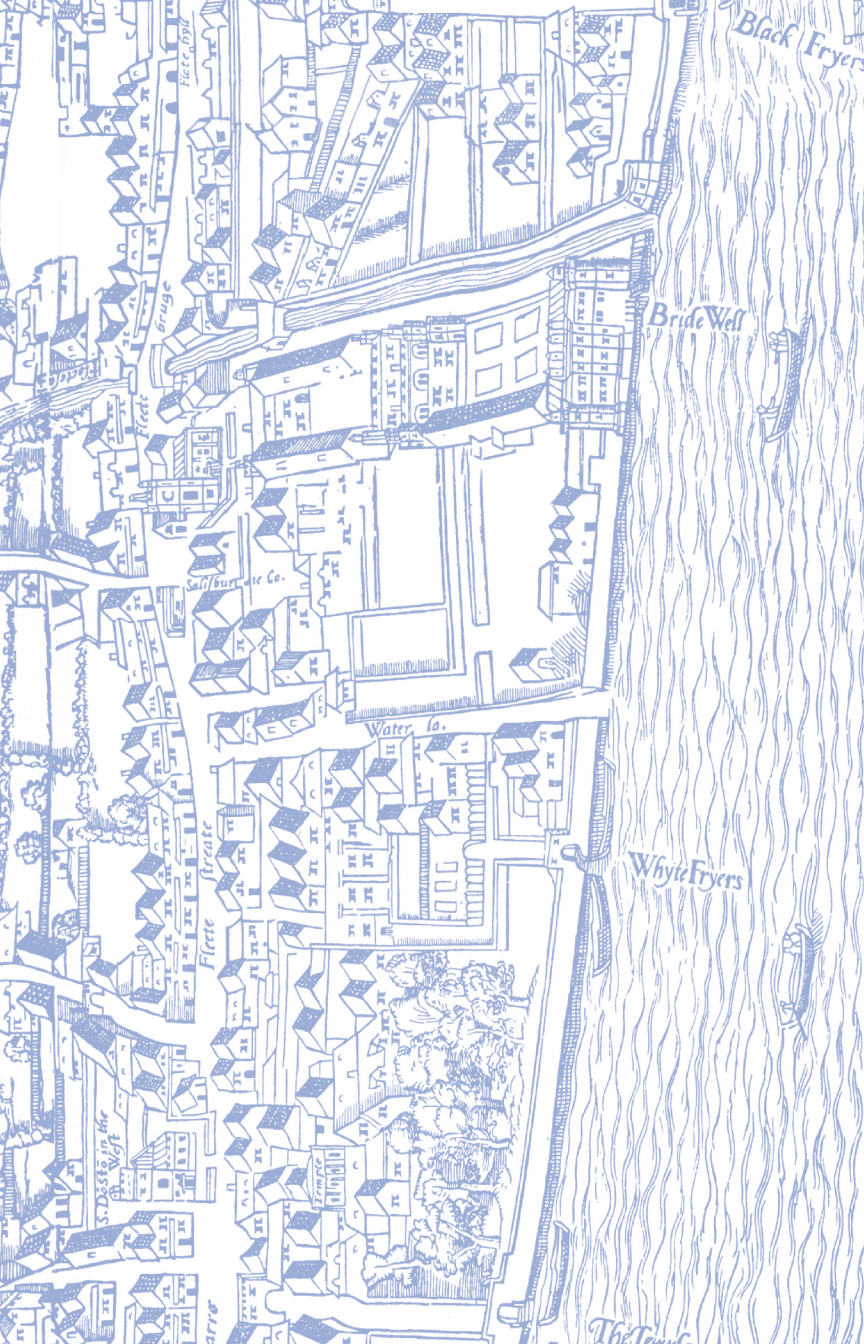


GLENN FLEISHMAN
LONDON
KERNING

Typographic Perambulations
around a City That Remembers





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LONDON KERNING

*TYPOGRAPHIC PERAMBULATIONS
AROUND A CITY THAT REMEMBERS*

GLENN FLEISHMAN

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*Dedicated to the memory of Berthold Wolpe,
an inspiration to me for three decades*



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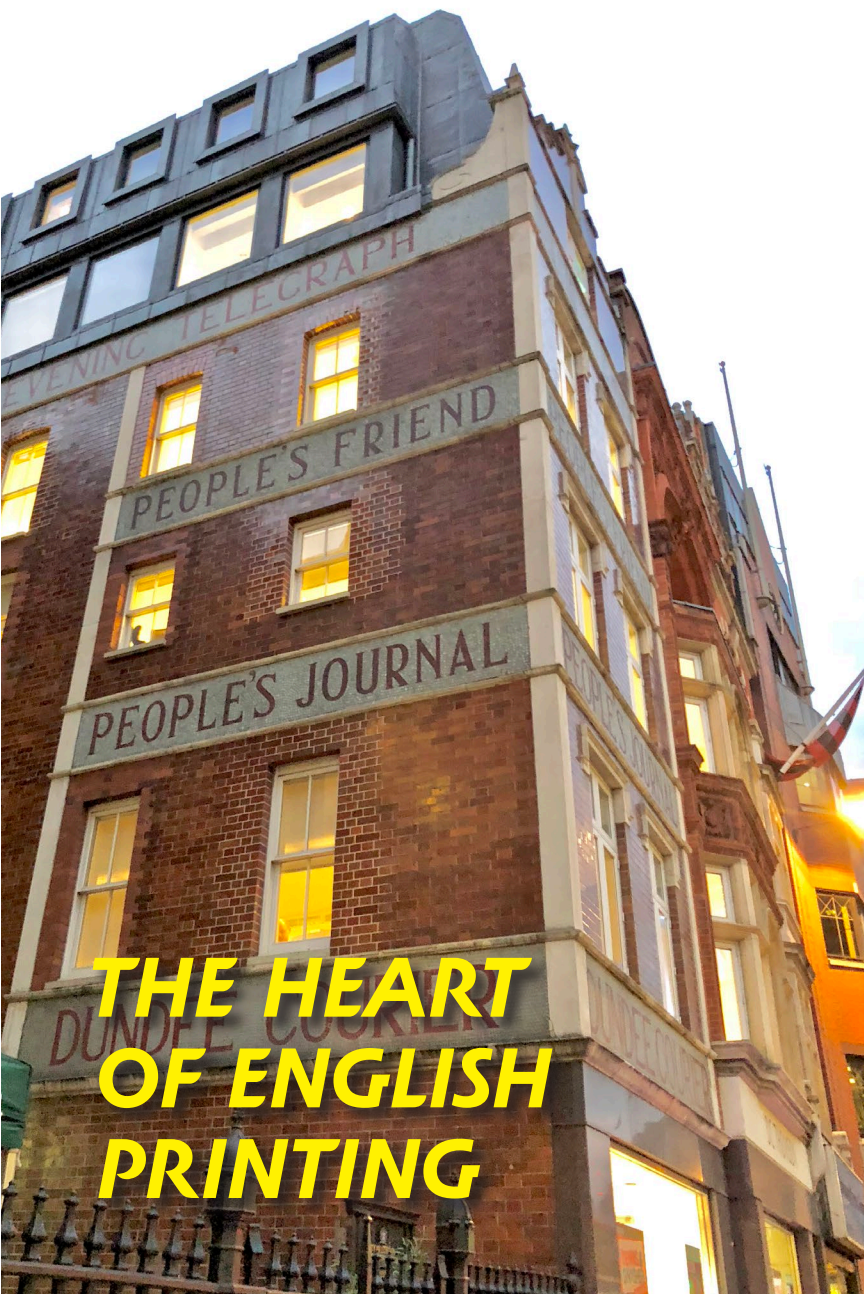
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Cover image from Monotype Operator (1912). Inside front cover a detail from the “Agas Map” (1633), depicting London in the 1560s via British History Online. Inside back cover map from Ordnance Survey 1:1056 (1893–1896). Back cover image of Anchor brewery building sign in Southwark, London, by the author (2017).

CONTENTS

THE HEART OF ENGLISH PRINTING	5
Foreword	6
Introduction	7
I KNOW THAT FACE: MEETING AND RE-MEETING BERTHOLD WOLPE	11
Wolpe's life and work	15
Typefaces with lasting impact	16
Keeping Wolpe's memories alive	22
JOHNSTON AND ALBERTUS: THE FACES OF LONDON	27
THE TYPE ARCHIVE AND ST BRIDE: ENGLAND'S PRINTING HISTORY	33
St Bride Printing Library	36
The Type Archive	46
TYPE DESIGNERS IN LONDON	55
The Double Crown Club	56
Robert Green	57
Toshi Omagari	59
Jeremy Tankard	60
LETTERPRESS IN LONDON	63
Hand & Eye LetterPress	64
New North Press	66
The Counter Press	68
CODA	70
BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES	71
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	73
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	75
COLOPHON	76

Signage near the west end of Fleet Street, left over from the heyday of newspapers



EVENING TELEGRAPH

PEOPLE'S FRIEND

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL

DUNDEE COOKERY

**THE HEART
OF ENGLISH
PRINTING**

FOREWORD

This book arose from a unique opportunity: a potentially once-in-a-lifetime exhibition of the work of type designer Berthold Wolpe at The Type Archive in London. Pondering the logistics of making the trip led to the idea of planning chatty meetings with type designers and letterpress printers while I was there. And that, in turn, sparked a thought: shouldn't I document what I learn, given the precariousness of these people and places remaining in London?

A few weeks before my trip, I floated the notion of supporting this project as a crowdfunding campaign, and people quickly helped me double my goal. Thank you, both to all who supported it in its early phase, and to those who purchased it at a later point, as it coalesced into a real thing. The campaign enabled me to travel to London, talk to many amazing people while I was there, and then research and produce this book. Since my return, I had email exchanges and conversations with a few people I couldn't squeeze into the trip.

While in London, many fortuitous bits of luck let me meet more people and see more archives by far than I'd hoped. While the trip wasn't predestined, my arbitrary timing revealed much more than expected.

This is an idiosyncratic book, akin to the kind of titles published when travelers returned from distant lands in the 17th century, bearing tales of bony-plated rhinoceroses and oddly shaped birds called dodos that were easy to catch but tasted a little funny. It's not an exhaustive account of everything to do with type and printing in London, but a path I carved out that provides a personal picture of the whole.

— Glenn Fleishman, 2018



My goof on the City of London's signage

INTRODUCTION

London was already around 1,500 years old when Englishman William Caxton returned from Bruges, the Netherlands, with the craft of printing. He set up shop in 1476 in Westminster, a city that is part of what is now Greater London. But a printer he brought with him, Wynkyn de Worde, receives due credit for later establishing the heart of the city's printing industry and much more:

The City's modern role, at the forefront of a global financial network, derives above all from the traditions of printing, typefounding and publishing which stem back to before 1500, when Wynkyn de Worde, who was buried in St Bride's Church, brought the printing press to Fleet Street.

— Founder's London A-Z (1998), Justin Howes & Nigel Roche

In late November 2017, I found myself passing where the Strand turns into the west end of the short length of Fleet Street, a place whose symbolic value has outlasted its concrete meaning. Newspapers and magazines once flourished on Fleet Street, but none remain. Ghosts still linger, like brickwork that promotes the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* and related publications on the side of a building, plaques in the sidewalk, and an iron hand letterpress in the front window of DC Thomson — obscured by window decals from the animated *Dennis the Menace* reboot. DC Thomson is a media company that cherishes its letterpress past, a friend who works there informs me, and has printing archives at its Dundee, Scotland, offices.

Heading east towards St Paul's Cathedral, turn right down Bride





Navigation from Fleet Street

Lane, a narrow alley that passes St Bride's Church. Where it takes a curve to the left, you see a stately tall brick building. It's the home of the St Bride Foundation, which contains the extraordinary historical printing-related book collection and other archives of St Bride Library, including work by aforementioned Caxton. There I saw remarkable pieces of typographic history in a library that has nearly closed on multiple occasions, and the future of which remains shaky.

Its precarious state isn't unique.

In pre-travel emails, a week of visits with printers, type designers, and historians in London, and email and video calls afterwards, I find that five and a half centuries of printing in London appear balanced on the edge of a precipice.

The work cited above, *Founder's London A-Z*, documented what in 1998 was already a distant memory in the city of its printing history, and that was when aspects still flourished in modern forms throughout Greater London. As once-London-now-Cambridge type designer Jeremy Tankard said in a talk in 2012, "Never mind 'standing on the shoulders of giants'; in London, we can walk in their footsteps, and perhaps even shiver a little."

While there remain letterpress printers in the metropolitan area, and St Bride lies smack dab in the middle of the City of London, nearly everyone I spoke to who didn't have the luck or timing to purchase a house or building some years ago is concerned about how long they can keep their shop, studio, or rented flat or house.

One printer, Phil Abel, has moved his Hand & Eye Press twice in the last seven years. Another told me the rent of his former studio went up twentyfold over 20 years, leading him to give it up. The folks who

run Counter Press in the East End have a lovely bijou space, but have seen construction and change start to sweep through what was once a distant neighborhood from the center. Yet another owns their building, home to many artists, but the noise of construction is nearly deafening at times during the day, making work difficult.

My trip to London was to capture what I fervently hope isn't the dying breath of the last vestiges of printing history and letterpress shops. Some parts will surely survive in place, or be put in storage and reclaimed in the future, as has happened multiple times in the last several decades. In academic institutions, at St Bride, at The Type Archive, and elsewhere, letterpress shops have been set up anew or refreshed, used for pedagogical purposes. And some printers have decamped with equipment to elsewhere in England, where they keep hot-metal composition and presses active.



St Bride Institute, almost exactly as it was in 1894; buildings around it have changed

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

This work relies on a combination of first-hand examination of objects, primary sources, and secondary accounts, such as contemporary reporting and correspondence, and modern reporting. Printed and online sources appear here; interviews and conversations that contributed to this book are credited in Acknowledgements.

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Dated items, chronologically

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London Kerning became reality through the kind help and generous donation of time by email, phone, and in person of a large number of people. Notably, Sue Shaw, founder of The Type Archive, and Bob Richardson, Library Manager at St Bride Library, who devoted substantial time in touring their collections. Type designer [Toshi Omagari](#) of [Monotype](#) also gave unstintingly of his time in person and by email.

A call to action: [Donate to the St Bride Library](#) by becoming a friend at £5 a month (cancellable at any time). The Type Archive currently accepts donations [by check](#) via instructions on its site.

Great thanks as well for the time, kindness, and frequently tea or other libations offered by [Phil Abel](#) ([Hand & Eye Press](#), now merged into [Social Enterprise Printing Ltd](#)), [Richard Ardagh](#) and [Graham Bignell](#) ([New North Press](#)), [Robert Green](#) ([The Doves Type](#)), [Keith Houston](#) (author of *Shady Characters* and *The Book*), [David Marshall](#) and [Elizabeth Ellis](#) ([The Counter Press](#)), [Jeremy Tankard](#) ([Jeremy Tankard Typography](#)), and [Toby Wolpe](#).

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This book is only possible because of patrons who contributed when it was a fast-moving gleam in my eye, timed to get me to London before an exhibition concluded. I'd like to thank all the campaign backers for their support, and in particular folks who contributed at the “pond kicker” level to, er, kick me over the pond to England: [Sam Roberts](#), [Henry and Darcy Burner](#), [Patrick Weyer](#), and [Todd Rowell](#). And an extra special thanks to my long-ago colleague [Elizabeth Stauderman](#), who helped me at the beginning of my career and now at what I would like to pretend is the middle.

Alistair Hall generously let me use some of his beautifully daylit photos of the Wolpe exhibition. Jeff Carlson provided his usual excellent editing skills and wit in taking me from draft form to a final version.

It was a pleasure to stay with my friends Tom and Kirstin and their kids for part of my London journey, and they took me into their family life: thank you so much. And my heartiest gratitude to my family, for sparing me for a week without them in London—I will repay that with a trip for all of us there soon—and my endless talk about hot-metal composition, the details of stereotype manufacture, and type design.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Glenn Fleishman considers himself a recovering typesetter, in that he was trained in the profession during the end of the phototypesetting era, as one of the last large wave of people to work solely in that capacity—and he still misses that work in some ways. He fell in love with type in his teenage years, and didn't originally understand how difficult it was to draw it. He soon did. He worked as a typesetter through his college years to help fund his degree in graphic design from Yale University from 1986 to 1990.

Glenn worked at the university's printing service after graduation, running its imagesetting department, working alongside presspeople, plate makers, and designers of all ages. He left Yale for the Kodak Center for Creative Imaging in Maine in 1991, where he ran the computing infrastructure and planned curriculum for artists and production people back at the start of proper digital training.

Glenn went on to work for a book packager, which produced computer books for Peachpit Press; to co-found Point of Presence Company, one of the first Web hosting and development firms (1993); to work at Amazon as employee #104 or so (1996–97); and ultimately shifting to freelance reporting and how-to book and article writing for publications that include the *Economist*, the *New York Times*, *Wired*, *Macworld*, *Fast Company*, *MIT Technology Review*, *Increment*, *American History*, *Boing Boing*, the *Atlantic*, and many others.

In 2017, he became the first designer in residence at Seattle's School of Visual Concepts, getting back up to speed in letterpress printing, and then designed and printed a book of his reporting on type, printing, and language. He spent the year writing about, researching, and talking about historical and contemporary printing and related fields, which culminated in visiting London and writing this book.

All of Glenn's work—electronic, print, and otherwise—can be found and much of it available for purchase via these pages:

<https://glog.glennf.com/books-by-glenn>

<https://glog.glennf.com/the-store/>



COLOPHON

This book's text and secondary heading are set in Enigma from Jeremy Tankard Typography. Enigma was chosen as a compact face that is highly legible at small sizes, as you can see in this book.

All the type on the cover, the book name on the title page, chapter initial cap, and the page folios are set in Monotype Albertus Nova. The remainder of the text on the title page, the chapter opening heading, and the main headings are set in Monotype Wolpe Tempest. Monotype Wolpe Fanfare and Fanfare Inline are used on the spine of the print edition. All these faces were revised and revived by Toshi Omagari from designs by Berthold Wolpe.

Portrait of Wolpe in the book's dedication by Omagari in the style of Charles Mozley. The Wolpe portrait appears as a glyph in all the Wolpe revival faces.

The ebook edition created in Seattle by the author. The print edition produced by Bookmobile in Minneapolis, Minnesota on 70# Boise offset white in an edition of 400.



• 33.6

• 29.2

LUDGATE
27.9
Street
CIRCUS

Urinal

ST. BRIDE'S AVENUE

BRIDE'S AVENUE

32.3

St. Bride's Church
(Vicarage)

B.M.
27.90

P.H.

P.H.

27.8

P.H.

BRIDE CT.

38.83

BRIDEY LANE

Infant School

P.H.

BRIDE LANE

BELL'S BUILDINGS F.P.

St. Bride
Foundation
Institute

B.P.

Police Station
(3rd. Division)

P.O.

DORSET BUILDINGS F.P.

Vicarage

DORSET STREET

DORSET CT.

B.P.

BRIDEWELL PLACE

Bridewell Hospital
Offices &c.

For over 500 years, the center of financial and judicial power in England has grown and remained in and near a square mile of buildings called the City of London. And at the heart of it is arguably the art of printing.

From a modest start in a small shop founded by Wynkyn de Worde near Fleet Street and Henry VIII's Bridewell Palace, printing's importance in the City grew ever larger. It cemented London as the center of empire during expansion, and the center of media and money in the modern era.

That history has been well preserved through two institutions, the St Bride Library and The Type Archive. But their future in the city remains uncertain. Faced with the constant pressure of urban growth, letterpress printers and type designers attempt to remain in a place that remembers its roots.

Join author Glenn Fleishman's jaunt around London, visiting collections and meeting printers, designers, archivists, historians, and contemporaries — and especially examining and discussing the work of type designer Berthold Wolpe (1905–1989), who helped shape the face of lettering in London — as he faces the uncertain future of London's legacy of printing in *London Kerning*.

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