

Denis Glover: *Printer's Devil or an Affair with Angels*

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In his autobiography, *Hot Water Sailor*, a typically brazen Denis Glover proudly proclaimed: "Interested as I am in the techniques of verse construction, I would forsake a poet for a worker from the Cobb Hydro-Electric Scheme."¹ Interested as Denis Glover might have been in the techniques of power generation, it is probable that he would have forsaken both these people to talk with a printer.

Printer, poet, publisher, Denis Glover assumed all these roles — and others — but this article will present him in another of his guises — typographer, a term, like poet, he regarded with suspicion as being composed more of pretence than profession. Yet Glover and his Caxton Press were the fulcrum that tipped New Zealand into an era when the arts became an acceptable professional occupation, and his own role at the intersection of text and image prefigured the emergence of another profession in New Zealand, that of book designer. Wit, paradox and subversion are central to Denis Glover's personality, but they are also key ingredients of the designer's art. However, Glover's book design and typography was more science than art. Taking up this paradox, I intend to examine Glover's significance as a designer, the influence of Eric Gill and his time with John Johnson at Oxford University Press.

W.C. Williams described the 1920s as a time when "the world was going mad about typography."² This *typus* fever spread to New Zealand, where Denis Glover set up the Caxton Club at Canterbury University College in October 1932 "for the purpose of studying printing and typography."³ He soon graduated to publishing, for, in his own modest words, "any young man with the means of disseminating opinion would be unworthy of his salt if he didn't try to print something that would practically reform the world overnight."⁴ His first attempt appeared in April 1933. This 'revolutionary' document was along similar lines to Bob Lowry's *Phoenix*, but, as its title suggests, *Oriflamme's* origins were less political and more literary (see Plate 22). With Glover at the helm, the self-proclaimed "spasmodical" was certainly less earnest than its Auckland counterpart (as evidenced by his own contribution to the first issue — an article entitled "Papology"). No doubt gratifyingly for Glover, the first issue was promptly banned by the University Council. At issue was a most seditious article called "Sex and the Undergraduate," which vaguely advocated sex out of wedlock. However, this merely served to confirm the existence of oppressive forces at work and helped to keep alive this modest spirit of revolt. Glover's response to these events was typically pragmatic: "*Oriflamme*

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was editorially weighed and found wanting by the pundits of the popular press. *Oriflamme* sold out in two hours.⁵⁵ This was the statement of a true publisher.

1934 saw Caxton's first book publication, *New Poems*, edited by Denis Glover and Ian Milner. Glover later claimed that this anthology "started the plague of anthologies that now infest us like hydatids."⁵⁶ This compact booklet set out in a brief foreword to delineate the 'New' in poetry: the poet's responsibility was "two-fold. First he is responsible to his creative impulse: he must be a good maker." Second, "[t]he poet is the focal point of awareness in his time."⁵⁷ This second part was typical of the spirit of heroic modernism that infused the establishment of the press, and that is perhaps best exemplified in the opening poem "The New People" by Jean Alison⁵⁸:

Neither night nor day
 Nor wind hath power
 To stay us
 We are of the vital stream
 Seed of the first flame
 Absolute, integral;
 ...
 We will build swiftly
 In the savage days
 Our city of the sun
 Wanting no praise

A selection of these 'new people,' those who contributed to this important volume, was listed on the contents page in upper-case Gill Sans-serif. In the convention-bound world of book design this typeface was a further assertion of modernity.⁵⁹

Modernity, however, was not a feature of Caxton's equipment. In 1935 Caxton acquired its first power platen, and the first book produced on it reveals the essentially apprentice nature of the firm's printing. In a note on *Another Argo* in Caxton's February 1941 catalogue, the editor (presumably Glover) states, "[t]here were meant to be 150, but only 70 complete copies survived the paper storm around the machine. Through the ink the type may be seen to be Garamond 14-point."⁶⁰ As well they made the classic apprentice error of substituting "0" for "O" on the title page and cover. However, *Another Argo* also contained a graphic glimpse of the future in the form of a startling frontispiece by future partner Leo Bensemman (see Figure 1).

Much has been made of Allen Curnow's 1945 anthology (and rightly so),⁶¹ but it is in one of his — and Caxton's — earliest volumes that the origins and aims of this 'new' generation of writers is most clearly detailed. *Poetry and Language* (1935)

is nothing short of a Modernist manifesto in its content, tone and presentation (see Plate 23).¹² From the outset, the austerity of the title page and the marked absence of any decorative embellishments graphically support the writer's rejection of the 'excesses' of Georgianism. The distribution of white space and the stark sans-serif — designed by Eric Gill as a typeface appropriate to the machine age — were as much an assertion of a new age as Curnow's writing. Eric Gill's *Art & a Changing Civilisation* was clearly a powerful influence not only in terms of literature but all the arts at this critical time in New Zealand (see Plate 24). Gill proclaimed:

our industrialist commercial empire has achieved a thing never before achieved in the whole history of the world. It has achieved a division of the human race never before attempted ... a division of artist from workman ... You cannot write about art as if it were an affair of angels, of purely spiritual beings. You cannot write about things as if they only existed in the imagination, as though they were bought by nobody and as though they were not made of material which somebody has to pay for.¹³

Gill had set out to debunk the elitism of art and his broad definition extended from spoons to aircraft engineering and architecture (today broadly encompassed within the term design¹⁴), and this subversive view clearly appealed to Glover. But it was this notion of the artist as worker that was to prove so central to the emerging professionalism of the arts and the vocational seriousness with which this generation took their poetry and the importance of printing and typography.

Gill was even clearer in terms of his prescription for printing:

Machine printing must be invisible — in the sense no "artistic business" must be allowed to obtrude between author and reader ... there can no longer be any architectural sculpture whose business is purely ornamental, any more than there can be typographical enrichment in books ... This tendency to reasonable plainness in industrial products is obviously all to the good.¹⁵

Glover clearly concurred, articulating his own position as follows: "the definition of typography is beautifully clear. It is the printing of words in the way in which they can best be read and understood. Taking for granted the best possible technical perfection, typography is simply good printing."¹⁶ Aesthetics was secondary to 'readability' but he did reject Gill's dogmatic "Sahara of sensibility" in favour of restrained decoration, or as he so graphically put it: "A few conventional leaves on a pie crust are wholly admirable; nobody wants a pastry garden of Eden between him and the steak and kidney."¹⁷ Focussed as it was on books, his typography falls within what Robin Kinross calls "the new traditionalism," a modern

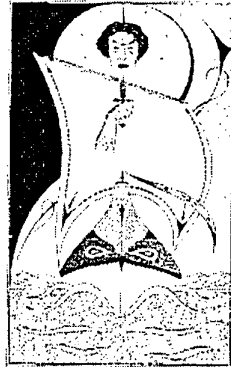


Figure 1.

Another Argo

Three
poems from *The*
CANTON CLUB PRESS
1933

Figures 1—4. Aventura und Kunst 1935—40: Denis Glover and Leo Benemann formed a remarkable partnership. Despite Benemann's portrayal of Glover as jester on the title-page of Cold Tongue [190mm] (Fig. 2), Glover took his typography seriously, and the growth in his confidence is evident in the transition from Another Argo [220mm] (Fig. 1) to the deft and dexterous asymmetry of Not in Narrow Seas [220mm] (Figs. 3 and 4). Collection of the



Figure 2.

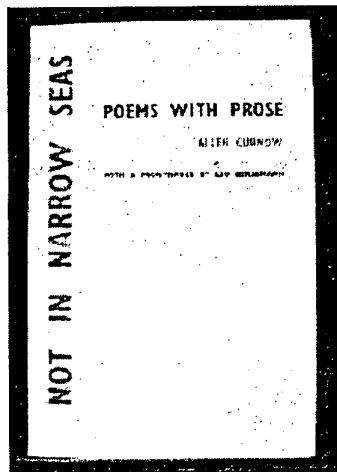


Figure 3.

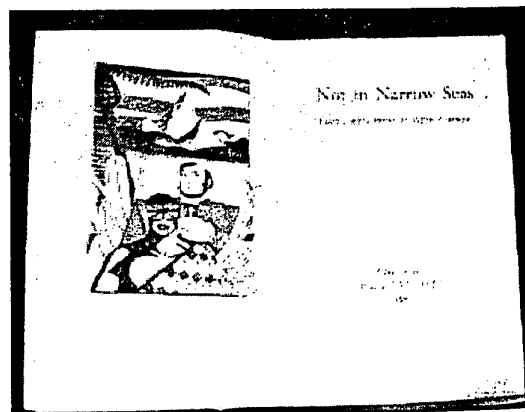


Figure 4.

approach to typography that accorded greater precedence to the historical conventions of books than to formalist experiment.¹⁸

Glover had been working like the devil at the Caxton Press and a number of small publications had appeared. A clue as to how the Press managed to sustain such an output can perhaps be found in the outward title of the Director's book of verse, *Six Easy Ways of Dodging Debt Collectors*, but more revealing is the actual title page: "Several poems . . . called upon the outside, because of the difficulty of selling verse, Six easy ways, etc." In their witty 1941 catalogue, Glover simply described this publication as "a feu de joie for the pleasure of handling Caslon Old Face."¹⁹ While Caslon placed Glover in an Anglophile tradition, the playful addition of a 'Bauhaus' dot to this symmetrical cover design prefigures his comic intentions.

In an effort to put their finances on a firmer footing, the Caxton Club was revived to assist publication with advance subscriptions. A.R.D. Fairburn's *Dominion*, described as "certainly the most important single work written by any New Zealand poet,"²⁰ appeared in March 1938. Glover immediately sent a copy to Eric Gill for his opinion, noting, "it's only lino-typed, & I know you won't like the big headings. But we haven't the range of types to make our choice as often as we'd like. The poem should interest you, however, quite apart from the typography." He also sent Leo Bensemann's remarkable *Fantastica*, predicting "he [Bensemann] is 25 — there should be great improvement yet."²¹

A considerable number of other notable typographic pieces were published in the years leading up to the war, or, more specifically, Denis Glover's departure for active service in Europe in 1941. Glover's own published works included *Thirteen Poems*, a short story *Till the Star Speak*, and the satirical *Cold Tongue*, where Bensemann's mask of the menacingly prickly jester lurks subversively, like Glover, behind the conventionally symmetrical title-page (see Fig. 2). *Thirteen Poems* was set up in 12-point Gill Sans Italic "purely to gratify experimental curiosity."²² As the edition was one of only 30 copies (of which only 15 were for sale), Glover was quick to point out that "[e]xcept for this reason, the highly private edition is to be deprecated; the business of printing being to put things abroad, private printing is a whim not lightly to be indulged."²³

In a similarly short run, *Till the Star Speak* was an experiment in the use of Linotype Garamond, upon which Glover's judgement was that it was inferior to the Monotype version Caxton already possessed.²⁴ Typographical experiment, then, was a legitimate design pursuit, and Glover's writing provided "the necessary something."²⁵ As he was later to write in "Some notes on typography," "the typographer should experiment and let us see the results of his experimenting. Just as the great traditions of printing are something no one can afford to ignore, so its

latest evaluations have importance."²⁶ This experimentation extended to typesetting and Allen Curnow's *Not in Narrow Seas* was set in Linotype because of the mixture of prose and poetry. This mixing of forms is also evident at a typographical level with the striking asymmetric cover with sans-serif titling followed by the very traditional centre-aligned title-page and striking frontispiece by Leo Bensemann (see Figs. 3 and 4).

Caxton's 1940 *Specimen Book of Printing Types* and the 1941 *Catalogue of Publications* (Plates 25 and 26) represent the culmination of Glover's design practice and theory. The *Specimen Book* is graphically more exuberant as one would expect, but it is the intelligent integration of witty literary and historical texts with typographical maxims from Stanley Morison and Eric Gill that distinguishes it from the display-driven publications produced by other printing houses. The playfulness and innovation have a serious purpose that connects directly to Morison's prescription for typography: "to aid to the maximum the reader's comprehension of the text,"²⁷ and this signalled the firm's dual function as printer and publisher. The more restrained 1941 *Catalogue* conventionally described the contents of the Press's publications (although, unconventionally, included many negative reviews of those publications), but also devoted considerable critical attention to the typography of each book, providing rationales for their design choices and honest assessments of their strengths and weaknesses. Both publications display a commitment to continual improvement and a ready acknowledgement of the dangers of utopianism, or as Glover put it in the Foreword to their *Catalogue*: "Our difficulties and mistakes are still with us: we continue to learn from them."²⁸ It is these publications that distinguish Denis Glover as a typographer and book designer because they demonstrate a commitment to what Donald Schön describes as "a reflective conversation with the situation."²⁹ These books function as a record of that conversation and mark Glover out from other printers and publishers of the period.

This period also saw an upsurge in the number of books that could be classified as private press publications, which offered further opportunity to experiment with type. *Nastagio and the Obdurate Lady* is such an example, running to only twenty-five copies, of which fifteen were for sale. It was hand-printed on hand-made paper and ran to an extravagant two colours, and included another illustration by Bensemann. It was not just caprice or boredom that led Caxton to experiment in such a way, as the benefits were considerable in terms of the constant improvement of general presswork and a growing reputation for quality production. Nor was it a deliberate push into the private press market (which scarcely existed in New Zealand anyway), as is reflected in the scarcely hard-sell note in Caxton's catalogue regarding this publication: "This experiment in fine book pro-

duction has been made to satisfy a private ambition: we need not, therefore, detail what labour and expense we have been at to make it a memorable production ... but intending buyers are warned that there is not much of it for the money."³⁰ A similar experiment was made with the publication of *The Adventures of Chanticleer and Partlet*, which employed Gill's device of a broken right-hand margin to preserve even word-spacing. Although this technique was later denounced by Glover as being too inflexible,³¹ this example serves to demonstrate Glover's interest in typographical theory and development and his willingness to try something new and, thereby, develop his skills.

The decision to publish *Areopagitica*, Milton's classic vindication of the freedom of the press, was as much a calculatedly subversive act as an opportunity to measure the craft and skill of Caxton's book production. In both form and content³² this book was a subtle but direct response to the effective closing down of *Tomorrow*. With *Areopagitica*, Glover was in his element, and his irreverent streak was reflected in this gentle gibe that appeared in their catalogue: "The work does not appear generally known in New Zealand, and some in high places may be favoured with a complimentary copy"; it continued in a similar vein by pointing out that, "[a]s interest in the subject-matter does not appear to be widespread, only 150 copies will be printed."³³

Book (1941-7) is another subversive result of this catalytic period, but its subversion is more visual than textual. Having become somewhat lost in the shadow of its more portentous sibling, *Landfall*, *Book* merits closer analysis if for no other reason than that it has received so little attention, when it embodies many of the formative ideas of that more well-known journal. Further, in a quirk of time that perhaps only Allen Curnow could appreciate, it was perhaps more suited to being *Landfall's* successor, especially in terms of design and layout, rather than its predecessor. When one considers *Landfall's* current incarnation under the editorship of Dunedin Public Art Gallery curator Justin Paton, its move from a literary magazine that covered art to an integrated package of visual and verbal culture have brought it closer to Glover's initial conceptualisation in *Book*.

Book also provided space for external critique. In "A Few Harsh Words on *Areopagitica* as Printed" J.C. Beaglehole gave a particularly critical analysis of Caxton's publication, and although much of what he said may have seemed like pedantries, his contention was that such was the nature of printing: it "is in more ways than one, all small points."³⁴ However, in a letter to the Timaru architect and book collector Percy Watts Rule, Glover acknowledged the potential detriment of Beaglehole's article: "It may be bad publicity from a sales view, but I feel we can, and ought, to take it," because, he continued, "[o]ur whole business has been built on the frankest internal and external criticism."³⁵ This willingness to

accept criticism seems to reflect a genuine desire to maintain, and improve, typographical standards, that is everywhere evident in Glover's design process and publications.

A small note inside the front cover of *Book 5* (1942) recorded that Denis Glover had arrived in England for military service. According to Charles Brasch, Glover went to England, not to fight a war, but "for two things only, to see the Clarendon Press and 'learn to print,' and to meet Eric Gill."³⁶ In his letters to Leo Bensemann he was very enthusiastic about the cornucopia of printing information that was available to him in England from places such as the St. Bride Typographical Library and the Monotype Corporation.³⁷ In a letter dated 10 May 1943 and pasted inside Glover's copy of Stanley Morison's *First Principles of Typography*, the Monotype Corporation added Caxton Press to *The Recorder* list, commenting, "we shall be glad to see it in such good hands as yours." He spent time visiting papermakers,³⁸ foundries and "the all-important cloth manufacturers,"³⁹ and establishing a number of important contacts; among them were John Lehmann, Stanley Morison and Oliver Simon of the Curwen Press. He also corresponded with H. E. Waite (compiler of *Alternative Type Faces* (1936) and author of *The London Society of Compositors* in 1948), who provided "informative and helpful typographical letters."⁴⁰

But perhaps of more significance was his friendship with Dr. John Johnson, Printer to the University of Oxford who maintained his famous 'Sanctuary' where he stored his unrivalled collection of printed ephemera. Now consisting of over twenty-five hundred folio filing boxes, they are housed at the Bodleian Library, as are Glover's letters to him. In *Hot Water Sailor* Glover recalled "Everything that was useful to me he put me in touch with, besides teaching me more about printing and typography than I had ever learned."⁴¹ The Sanctuary was just that for a war-weary Glover who described it as "his private magnetic pole"⁴² where "no sailor ever found a happier shore."⁴³ There followed an extensive exchange of books and ephemera.

Soon after his arrival in England, Glover arranged for copies of Caxton books to be sent to Johnson at Oxford, who reciprocated by posting *Hart's Rules for Compositors and Readers at the University Press, Oxford* to Caxton.⁴⁴ As well as receiving Caxton copies himself, Glover continued this practice of exchanges throughout the war, commenting to Bensemann that "[i]t may well be important to us."⁴⁵ He obtained copies of various typographical books, as well as some copies of the periodical *Signature*, and also managed to find time to arrange distribution with some booksellers in London. Time spent at the Curwen Press proved to be particularly inspiring. He found the Stephenson Blake foundry type used in their specimen book interesting and was taken by some exclusive borders by Edward

Bowden. He was similarly enthralled with the array of available papers and bookcloths, and went as far as pricing coloured Curwen Press covers.⁴⁶ His enthusiasm for Fell types and his toying with the idea of specimen collecting suggest a wholehearted engagement with English book culture.⁴⁷

He modestly declared in one letter to Bensemman that “[m]y typographical knowledge is increasing very widely I find: I grow in wisdom daily.”⁴⁸ In January 1942, he had written, promising to “track down some of the real materials we’ve been looking for so long,” which included a good Perpetua typeface.⁴⁹ Implicit in this statement is an acknowledgement of the remarkable degree of improvisation on Caxton’s part prior to the war, and consequently their output can be seen as doubly impressive. However, his increasing knowledge of printing and newfound enthusiasm were tempered by an awareness of Caxton’s limitations (although it could probably be argued that his initial ignorance of these limitations was exactly what allowed Caxton to print to such a high standard with such limited resources.) Glover identified the restricted range of mechanical typefaces possessed by Caxton as a major weakness, adding “11-point Baskerville can’t do everything.”⁵⁰ Ultimately, Glover was still optimistic: “I think muchly of what little we have done together and doubt not that we shall do more and better. But contact with the limitless resources of England makes our few broken types look rather pathetic. Onward and upward.”⁵¹

Unfortunately, Glover’s enthusiasm was tempered by his war experiences, and he returned to New Zealand deeply unsettled. Nowhere is this better captured than in one of his candid letters to John Johnson in 1943:

“It’s not so much the destructive element of war that now appals me – death & destruction attain the impersonality of forces of nature — as its overwhelming negation, the sense of living in a vacuum. When the bubble eventually breaks it will not be easy to throw off indolence & a certain inconsequence of outlook that the times breed.”⁵²

To counter his despondency, he seems to have thrown himself somewhat desperately into an extravagant publishing programme, which included all literary genres. A personal highlight for Glover was Curnow’s *A Book of New Zealand Verse*, although Brasch was critical of the design of the anthology, expressing concern about the footnote type and the fact that it was not page-width. Glover willingly concurred, admitting “[w]e get too much ignorant praise and not enough useful criticism.”⁵³ This admission was a telling acknowledgement of the absence within New Zealand of established professional standards by which to judge their efforts. However, it was a measure of Glover’s success at the Caxton Press that he not only published a book which provided a new benchmark in New Zealand literature,

but the books themselves set new production standards and encouraged a more professional book culture in New Zealand.

Glover apparently succeeded in tracking down his desired Perpetua type, as it was used freely in publications that appeared after his return. His enthusiasm for this acquisition was amply expressed in *Hero & Leander*, in which the ampersand was employed frequently "because in Perpetua it seemed too beautiful to overlook."⁵⁴ A relaxation in the austere standards of typographical design was also evident in the increased use of printer's flowers, usually tactfully on the title page, but in the case of his own book, *Summer Flowers* (the title to some extent giving licence), on the cover as well. Similarly, the November 1946 booklist was contained within floral borders and the 'prettier' italic used freely. This slight change in style can be attributed, at least in some part, to the exposure Glover had to private press models and originators while in England. However, at home in New Zealand the critics were fulsome in their praise: "Pioneers in typographical experimentation, the Caxton Press has, in the short time of its existence, done more to encourage new writing in the Dominion than any other such organization."⁵⁵

Caxton can certainly be said to have set a new standard for what was expected of book design, but there was always room for typographical play as evidenced by the illustrated collaborations with Fairburn (see Plate 27). In *Book 8* there was also an advertisement for Fairburn's *How to Ride a Bicycle in Seventeen Lovely Colours* as well as a four-page insert by Robert Lowry and Patrick Dobbie's Pelorus Press which included "some colour combinations never before taken seriously" and a jibe at Glover.⁵⁶ Glover's contribution was, for a change, more serious: an article entitled "Typography: Bob Lowry's Books." In it, he passed a critical but usually admiring eye over Lowry's "hot house tropical" typography, very different as it was from that of Caxton: "Lowry has not cared greatly for restraint. If he wishes to out-Herod Herod, he will do it with a capital H the size of goalposts." Glover's comments about Lowry's work reveal much about his own attitude to printing. "He is apt to turn a text into a pretext, into an opportunity for spectacular gymnastics, with type as a trapeze. The danger is that his work may speak for itself rather than for the writer who briefs it, in spirited defiance of the edict that typography is a subsidiary art."⁵⁷

Book 9 was a suitable finale for this fiery comet of a magazine, which included "LUNA park and incidental effects by the Caxton Press Psychological Warfare Department"⁵⁸ (see Plate 28), "Luna Park" being a colourful and playful response to Lowry's efforts. It also marks the transition from "comet" to "punctual planet"⁵⁹ with an advertisement, inside the front cover, for the first issue of *Landfall*. Appropriately enough, the final words of *Book* were "Cheer up, Chum! New Zealand is too glum."⁶⁰

Hampered by lack of space and equipment, production slowed after the initial, furious post-war burst of energy. However, Caxton still published an impressive array of literature in the later years of the forties, but most significantly from a design point of view was their remarkable second specimen book of printing types (see Plates 29 and 30). The new *Printing Types* was more substantial than its forebear, appearing as a hardcover of some eighty pages at the not inconsiderable price of fifteen shillings. Within, quotations about typography were again interspersed with excerpts from a wide range of European literary texts. Its introduction on the dust-jacket stated, “[t]his specimen BOOK is an anthology of agreeable quotations just as much as a parade of printing types ... It has been designed to make good reading and at the same time to show a wide range of type faces, each in an appropriate setting.” It therefore had a double appeal and carried through, *par excellence*, the craft objectives of typography already outlined. (Its impact in typographical circles was not confined to New Zealand: some eight years later, Bob Gormack wrote to Glover telling him how he had spent the afternoon with Beatrice Warde of the Monotype Corporation, and they had spent most of their time discussing the Caxton type books.⁶¹)

Ever since visiting England during the war and having contact with the “limitless resources”⁶² there, Glover was only too aware of Caxton’s deficiencies. In a letter to Brasch in October 1947, he was less than exultant at the arrival of over £100 of Caslon from England: “(half the order, blast them, at double the ordered price) ... there isn’t a type case in the country or space to put up a rack if there were any. So that it lies at my feet like a dead dog.”⁶³ Attempts to source type

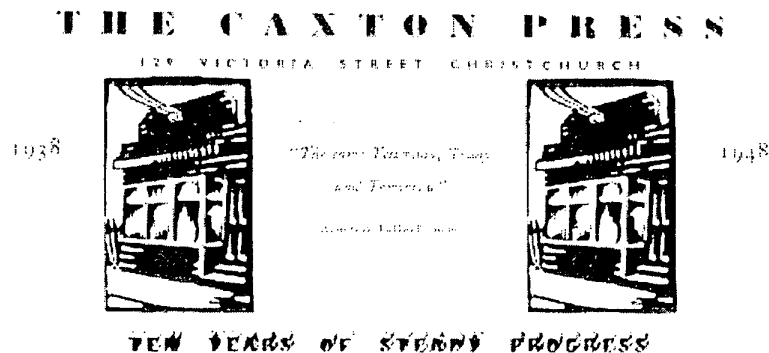


Figure 5. *The paradox of progress: business card from 1948. [118mm]
Collection of the Caxton Press.*

elsewhere were really only stopgap measures until Glover had in place his desired solution: "Things will be different when we get this Monotype in. There will be infinity sizes of type, and it won't be like trying to play a violin with one string."⁶⁴

By the end of 1948, Glover had convinced Cyril Steel to set up Monoset, a Monotype-setting operation, in premises close to Caxton. The availability of Monotype faces (which had been selected by Glover and Bensemman) offered substantial benefits, but it was not a cost saving. Linotype was still the fastest and least expensive means for uncomplicated composition. Monotype, however, was more practical for setting complicated material, because it was simpler to set a mixture of typefaces or styles on a single line, it had more spacing options and it could be corrected by hand. Also its typefaces were better designed and the metal was harder than that used for Linotype. All these attributes were particularly advantageous in the setting of the irregular lines of poetry, but the demand for such services could not have been high.

By the beginning of 1951, Steel's plant was for sale, and Glover was determined not to relinquish the asset he had arranged. He was unequivocal as regards its importance to Caxton's operation: "Between us and Pegasus we are doing our best to take it all over ... Yet without that plant we are back in 1938."⁶⁵ The provision of Monotype services should have been the culmination of Glover's efforts to emulate the paragon he had encountered in England, but it proved to be a bathetic swansong. Part way through the negotiations with Pegasus, Glover was fired from Caxton by Dennis Donovan. However, this did not prevent the publication, after his departure, of Samuel Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1952). John Johnson had given Glover a copy of the celebrated OUP edition designed by Bruce Rogers,⁶⁶ and Glover's typographic design combined with Leo Bensemman's unique graphic talents to produce a fitting tribute to Glover's mentor. While such a private press offering may have strayed into the territory of angels, it offered an unequalled opportunity for the restrained classical typography of which Glover had become a master.

In *Design Humor: The Art of Graphic Wit* Stephen Heller perhaps offers an insight into the more devilish aspect of Glover's nature: "wit and humor ... are the most important ingredients in any creative stew, particularly for creativity that strives for memorability." He goes on to define design humour as "the deliberate merging of incongruities into some kind of credible communication that is not overshadowed by reason but is nevertheless governed by it."⁶⁷ This is a fair description of Glover's practice and allows for the incongruity of his egalitarian conception of design — "the typographer ... has an interpretive function to fulfil. He has also an economic one. Printing is a social art, and in this respect is like architecture. It is design not only to a purpose but to a cost"⁶⁸ — and his produc-

tion of private press limited editions as both tribute to and exploration of the history of the book. Glover clearly deserves recognition as one of New Zealand's pre-eminent typographic designers and wits. Design has evolved significantly from Glover's time, but his practice stands comparison to international efforts and even seems to conform to the provocative definition proffered by design thinker Wolfgang Jonas: "Both design thinking and designing set up the fertile hybrid swamp, where the new is created through the association and synthesis of the incompatible."⁶⁹ As Gordon Ogilvie so eloquently summarized it in his high fidelity biography: Denis Glover "teemed with paradoxes. He was sensitively tough, a radical conformist, a warring pacifist, a free enterprise socialist, a boyish adult, a meticulously casual poet ... and a disciplined craftsman with uncontrolled cravings."⁷⁰ I would also add that he was typographic traditionalist who believed in innovation and took design seriously enough to have fun with it. The reproductions of his work that accompany this article reveal both a mischievous devil and an angelic spatial harmony. For Glover, like Gill, design offered an inclusive and holistic practice that bridged the refined imaginative world of art and the adventurous material world of commerce.

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Endnotes

¹ Denis Glover, *Hot Water Sailor 1912-1962 & Landlubber Ho! 1963-1980* (Auckland: Collins, 1981), 107.

² William Carlos Williams, *I Wanted to Write a Poem: The Autobiography of the Works of a Poet* ed. Edith Heal (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), 48.

³ Glover, 83.

⁴ Glover, 86.

⁵ Glover, 86.

⁶ Glover, 94.

⁷ Glover and Ian Milner (eds), *New Poems* (Christchurch: Caxton Club, 1934), n.pag.

⁸ Jean Alison, "The New People" in *New Poems* *ibid.*

⁹ See Noel Waite, "Invisible Typography and Concealing the Matrix," in *BSANZ Bulletin* v. 22, no. 2 (1998): 95-97.

¹⁰ *A Catalogue of Publications from the Caxton Press Christchurch up to February 1941* (Christchurch: Caxton, 1941), 9.

¹¹ Allen Curnow (ed.), *A Book of New Zealand Verse* (Christchurch: Caxton, 1945).

¹² For a more detailed analysis of this volume, see Noel Waite, "Poetry and Language & Typography" in *Journal of New Zealand Literature* v. 15 (1997), 16-25.

¹³ Eric Gill, *Art & a Changing Civilisation* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1934), vii-x.

¹⁴ See John Heskett's suggestive *Toothpicks and Logos: Design in Everyday Life* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹⁵ Gill, 126.

¹⁶ Denis Glover, "Some Notes on Typography" in *Yearbook of the Arts in New Zealand* 5 (1949), 165-7.

¹⁷ Glover, "Some Notes on Typography", 170-1.

¹⁸ Robin Kinross, *Modern Typography: An Essay in Critical History* (London: Hyphen, 1992).

¹⁹ *A Catalogue of Publications from the Caxton Press Christchurch up to February 1941* (Christchurch: Caxton, 1941), 15.

²⁰ *A Catalogue of Publications*, 20.

²¹ Denis Glover, letter to Eric Gill 6 April 1938 reproduced in *A Book in the Hand: Essays on the History of the Book in New Zealand* eds. Penny Griffith, Peter Hughes and Alan Loney (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2000), 245.

²² *A Catalogue of Publications*, 26.

²³ *A Catalogue of Publications*, 26.

²⁴ *A Catalogue of Publications*, 26.

²⁵ In his introduction to Glover's *Selected Poems* (Auckland: Penguin, 1981), the poet Allen Curnow suggested that the publication of his 1946 volume *Jack without Magic* simply met Glover's voracious desire to print: "Glover had the paper, the typeface, the press; my poems, in this case, were the necessary something" (xv-xvi).

²⁶ Denis Glover, "Typography and the Librarian," in *New Zealand Libraries* 10 (1947): 228.

²⁷ *A Specimen Book of Printing Types* (Christchurch: Caxton, 1940), n.pag.

²⁸ *A Catalogue of Publications*, 8.

²⁹ Donald Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic, 1983), 93.

³⁰ *A Catalogue of Publications*, 38.

³¹ In a letter to good friend Bob Gormack in 1973 Glover wrote: "Gill in 'The Procrustean Bed' essay set the then heresy of the ragged right in print; but look at it now? Everything looks like our Newsi verse ... Gill's claim was for even word spacing. Even in thick-spaced verse I query it: but Gill was too much of an amateur printer." 21 August 1973, Alexander Turnbull Library Glover ms. 418-65.

³² See Noel Waite, "Invisible Typography and Concealing the Matrix," in *BSANZ Bulletin* v. 22, no. 2 (1998): 100-03.

³³ *A Catalogue of Publications*, 42.

³⁴ J.C. Beaglehole, "A Few Harsh Words on *Areopagitica* as Printed" in *Book v. 4* (Christchurch: Caxton, 1941), n.pag.

³⁵ Denis Glover, letter to Percy Watts-Rule 2 September 1941. Alexander Turnbull Library, Rule Ms.

³⁶ Charles Brasch, *Indirections: A Memoir 1909-1947* (Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1980), 312.

³⁷ These are all to be found in the Leo Bensemann ms. 3983-7 at the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

³⁸ Alex Cowan & Sons (NZ) wrote to John Drew on 10 August 1942, informing him that Glover had just looked over their English paper mill. Alexander Turnbull Library Glover ms. 418-75.

³⁹ Denis Glover, letter to Leo Bensemann 12 July 1942 Alexander Turnbull Library Bensemann ms. 3983-7.

⁴⁰ Denis Glover, letter to Leo Bensemann 12 July 1942 Alexander Turnbull Library Bensemann ms. 3983-7.

⁴¹ Glover, *Hot Water Sailor*, 177.

⁴² Denis Glover letter to John Johnson 29 October 1943 reproduced in D.F. McKenzie (ed.) "Poet as / Poet to / Printer: Letters from Denis Glover to John Johnson" in *Sinnlichkeit in Bild und Klang*:

Festschrift für Paul Hoffman zum 70 Geburtstag ed. Hansgerd Delbrück (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag, 1987), 37.

⁴³ Denis Glover letter to John Johnson 29 October 1943, 33.

⁴⁴ Denis Glover, letter to Leo Bensemann 14 February 1943 Alexander Turnbull Library Bensemann ms. 3983-7.

⁴⁵ Denis Glover, letter to Leo Bensemann 24 April 1944 Alexander Turnbull Library Bensemann ms. 3983-7.

⁴⁶ Denis Glover, letter to Leo Bensemann 9 May 1943 Alexander Turnbull Library Bensemann ms. 3983-7.

⁴⁷ Glover wrote to Bensemann: "it occurs to me that New Zealand printing must be a Victorian paradise second to none, pure and unalloyed because of the lack of other tradition and material." 28 February 1943, Alexander Turnbull Library ms. 3983-7.

⁴⁸ Denis Glover, letter to Leo Bensemann 9 May 1943 Alexander Turnbull Library Bensemann ms. 3983-7.

⁴⁹ Denis Glover, letter to Leo Bensemann 16 January 1942 Alexander Turnbull Library Bensemann ms. 3983-7.

⁵⁰ Denis Glover, letter to Leo Bensemann 13 June 1943 Alexander Turnbull Library Bensemann ms. 3983-7.

⁵¹ Denis Glover, letter to Leo Bensemann 31 July 1944 Alexander Turnbull Library Bensemann ms. 3983-7.

⁵² Denis Glover letter to John Johnson 6 October 1943 reproduced in D.F. McKenzie (ed.) "Poet as / Poet to / Printer: Letters from Denis Glover to John Johnson," 36.

⁵³ Denis Glover, letter to Charles Brasch 21 October 1945 Hocken Library Brasch ms. 996/30.

⁵⁴ *Books from the Caxton Press Go Out of Print Quickly. The Following Only Are Available at the End of November 1946* (Christchurch: Caxton, 1946), n.pag.

⁵⁵ Palette, "Library of NZ Poets Being Issued" in *Southern Cross* 8 July 1948, 6.

⁵⁶ Robert Lowry and Patrick Dobbie, Pelorus Press advertisement in *Book* v. 8 (1946): n.pag.

⁵⁷ Denis Glover, "Typography: Bob Lowry's Books" in *Book* v. 8 (1946), n.pag.

⁵⁸ Anon., *Book* v. 9 (1947): 49-54.

⁵⁹ Anon. "Note to Subscribers" in *Book* v. 7 (1946): 46.

⁶⁰ Anon., *Book* v. 9 (1947): 54.

⁶¹ Robert Gormack, letter to Denis Glover 14 March 1956. Alexander Turnbull Library Glover ms. 418-65.

⁶² Denis Glover, letter to Leo Bensemann 31 July 1944 Alexander Turnbull Library Bensemann ms. 3983-7.

⁶³ Denis Glover, letter to Charles Brasch 31 October 1947 Hocken Library Brasch ms. 996/30.

⁶⁴ Denis Glover, letter to Charles Brasch 2 February 1948 Hocken Library Brasch ms. 996/30.

⁶⁵ Denis Glover, letter to Charles Brasch 23 January 1951 Hocken Library Brasch ms. 996/30.

⁶⁶ Gordon Ogilvie, *Denis Glover: His Life* (Auckland: Godwit, 1999), 274.

⁶⁷ Steven Heller, *Design Humor: The Art of Graphic Wit* (New York: Allworth, 2002), xxxi.

⁶⁸ Glover, "Typography and the Librarian", 229.

⁶⁹ Wolfgang Jonas, "The Basic Paradox" (2002) <http://www.verhaeg.net/basicparadox/expose.php> Retrieved 29 November 2002.

⁷⁰ Gordon Ogilvie, *Denis Glover: His Life* (Auckland: Godwit, 1999), 467.