Jeannine Green and Éric Leroux

John Lane. *Early Type Specimens in the Plantin-Moretus Museum, Annotated Descriptions of the Specimens to ca. 1850 (Mostly from the Low Countries and France) with Preliminary Notes on the Typefoundaries and Printing Offices*. New Castle, Del.; Oak Knoll Press and The British Library, 2004. 352 pp. US \$95.00/UK £55.00. ISBN 1584561394.

Christophe Plantin, who was born and trained in France, moved in 1548 to Antwerp, where he started a small business binding books and making the leather-covered boxes once beloved by northern Europeans. He established his own printing works and publishing house in 1555. Two sons-in-law, Jan Moerentorf (latinized as Moretus) and Frans van Ravelingen (who would become the eminent arabist Franciscus Raphelengius), later joined him in the business, and the Officina Plantiniana remained in continuous operation, owned by Moerentorf's descendants, until 1801. The firm was sporadically active again from roughly 1828 to 1866, but never active enough to suffer from earnest modernization. In 1876, with admirable foresight, it was bought by the city of Antwerp and preserved as a museum. Presses, punches, matrices, cases of type, the desks of editors and proofreaders, design sketches, business accounts, correspondence and the enviable library remained fundamentally intact and astoundingly well preserved.

Several important works of scholarship have emerged from this treasure house over the years, and much has been learned by sifting its vast contents. Between 1883 and 1918, Max Rooses, first director of the museum, published nine volumes of Plantin's correspondence. In 1960, Mike Parker and Karel Melis completed an inventory of the matrices and punches. Leon Voet published a two-volume history of the press in 1969–72 and then a six-volume bibliography of Plantin's publications. Important works by Harry Carter, W.G. Hellinga, H.D.L. Vervliet and others depend extensively on the Plantin-Moretus collections. John Lane's detailed catalogue of the museum's collection of type specimens builds upon this legacy and lays another brick in the foundation of future typographic research.

Plantin was a businessman of the sort who evidently never sleeps. He was involved not just in printing, binding, and publishing on a very impressive scale, but also in the retailing of books and the wholesaling of paper and binders' materials. As a prominent publisher living in interesting times, he was also necessarily involved in religious disputes with church and government authorities, in the ever-changing intricacies of international trade, and, during the last years of his life, in meeting or deflecting the extortionate demands of an occupying army only nominally under the control of his principal patron, King Philip II of Spain.

Typography was one of his great loves. Plantin bought, traded, rented and collected punches, matrices, and type – yet never opened his own foundry. His punchcutting and casting was done by the independent craftsmen – Robert Granjon, François Guyot, Hendrik van den Keere, and others – whose work he quite rightly admired. The small foundry added to the works after Plantin's death started casting type in the early 1620s, quit about 1660, and operated again during part of the 18th century, but it did not produce new type (or type specimens) of historical importance.

Plantin, himself, issued two substantial guides to his type collection, but only under duress. The first, a 32-page quarto printed in 1567, was in its time the biggest specimen book ever made. It was part of a campaign to impress the court of Philip II, who had not yet agreed to sponsor Plantin's great labour of love, the Polyglot Bible. The second major specimen, a 20-page folio dated 1585, was produced after the Spanish had occupied Antwerp, when Plantin gloomily presumed that it might be wisest to sell everything and leave.

Lane describes eight other minor specimens issued by Plantin and the Moretuses over two centuries. The remainder of the catalogue – 210 of the 220 items – consists of specimens collected by Plantin and his successors but issued by some 50 other typefounders and printers in the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. Among them are, for example, the only known copies of tiny specimens pulled in the 1570s by Granjon and by Van den Keere. At the other extreme, there is also one of the bloated 360-page albums issued in 1768 by Pierre-Simon Fournier: a precursor of the mammoth, self-congratulatory specimen books created by Giambattista Bodoni and by the major 19th-century commercial foundries.

The most valuable portions of Lane's work are not the catalogue entries themselves but his painstakingly researched discussions of the sources from which the specimens come.

The book is handsomely designed by the Dutch typographer Sander Pinkse, set in an excellent digital type (Christoph Noordzij's Collis), and printed on good paper. Given Lane's legendary passion for detail, I was surprised to find that typographical errors are frequent in some sections of the book. One of these errors (which Lane laments in his addenda) is on the title page, where *Moretus* is inauspiciously rendered as *Mortus*. Elsewhere, Jeanne Veyrin-Forrer becomes Veryon-Forrer, Berthold Wolpe turns repeatedly into Bertholp, Vicenza into Vizenza, Cambridge into Cambrigde, and so on. I fear what this may mean is that the publishers were happy to lend their imprint to the title page but declined to offer even elementary editorial support.

A greater misfortune is that only 19 of the 220 specimens are illustrated here, and not all of these 19 illustrations are technically up to par. Some of the specimens (such as Fournier's) have of course been reproduced as full facsimiles. Others can be found in John Dreyfus's two albums of *Type Specimen Facsimiles* (1963 and 1972) and in dozens of other books and journal articles published over the years. This is fine if you have an elephantine carrel in a major research library where no one else has commandeered the classics of typographic scholarship, or if you started, with a generous endowment, buying typography books on your own around 1960. Most students of typography, however, will need, and all will want, a second volume of this catalogue, containing several hundred illustrations, carefully scanned, digitally tuned, and as crisply printed as the text. How good such illustrations could be is revealed by the excellent enlargement of an undated Garamond specimen reproduced on the present volume's dust jacket. I know some good typographers who will study that jacket much more carefully than the book that it enfolds.

ROBERT BRINGHURST

Quadra Island, British Columbia

Stephen Füssel. *Gutenberg and the Impact of Printing*. Trans. by Douglas Martin. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005. 200 pp.; US \$59.95. ISBN 0754635376.

Noting in his foreword that an American team of journalists designated Johann Gutenberg as the "man of the millennium" due to his immeasurable impact on human communication, Stephen