

A PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIC STROLL ROUND THE BARBICAN

PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY:

the effect of a geographical location on the emotions and behaviour of individuals.

*Places are potent. Seventeenth-century events
linger in the Barbican's twenty-first century cityscape.
The past throws shadows forward.*





1. EXTRAMURAL

We're strolling in 'Cripplegate Without', inside the City of London but outside the City's ancient walls. **St Giles Church** and the **City wall** are the main structures surviving from the seventeenth century. Both have been ruined, rebuilt and repaired over the centuries; but remain recognisable. Other places on this stroll require imagination.

Being extramural gave this part of the City a semi-detached character. Main roads to the north brought travellers and transients. Residents looked outwards as much as inwards. Many were poor.

'the miserable condition of St Giles Cripplegate is more to be pitied than any other parish in or about London.'

(John Tillotson, 1665)

2. WATER

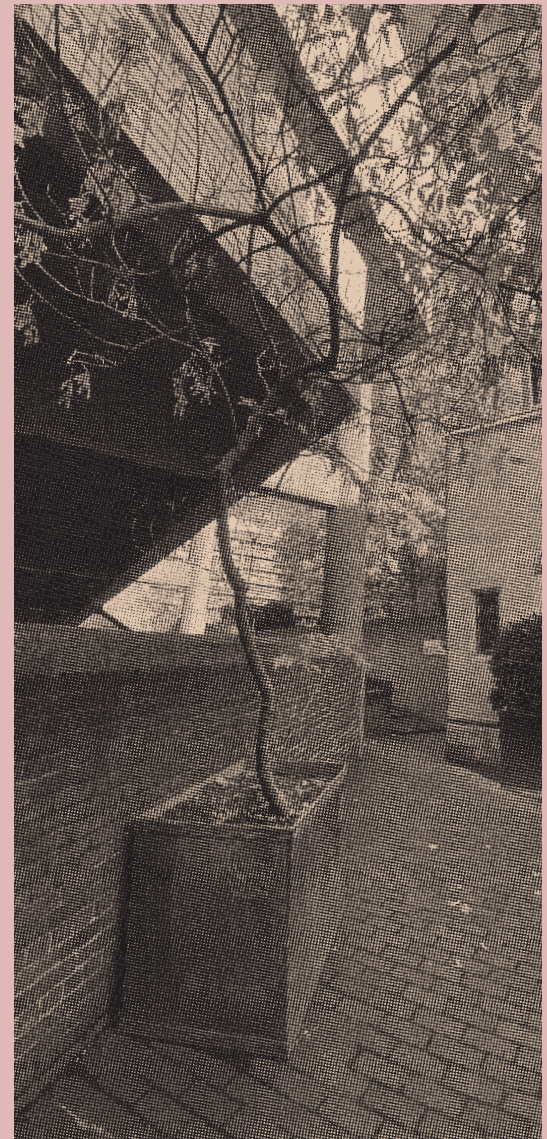
(site of) **Crowders Well**, its water a cure for hangovers (reputedly).

This was the watery side of the City. Pools, wells and streams were fed by water draining downwards from the northern heights at Islington. Water made the ground rotten and marshy. But water was also life-giving. Fresh water, channelled through pipes, cisterns and conduits, supplied citizens, rich and poor.

By the seventeenth century, a cluster of aristocratic mansions had settled on this side of the City: Bridgewater House, Lauderdale House, Thanet House and Norfolk House (aka the Charterhouse). The presence of fresh water enhanced the attraction of this extramural location. So long as pollution was kept at bay.

'There was also a bosse [spring] of clear water in the wall of [St Giles'] churchyard ... of late the same was turned into an evil pump and so is clean decayed.'

(John Stow, 1598)



3. REBELLION

(site of) **Thanet House**, one-time home of the Earl of Shaftesbury, 'a fiery soul ... resolved to ruin or to rule the state' according to poet John Dryden. Shaftesbury and his secretary John Locke were controversial political figures. Their ideas stoked the political and intellectual unrest that fuelled the (failed) Monmouth rebellion of 1685; the ('glorious') revolution of 1688; and the later American Revolution of 1789. Shaftesbury and Locke remain controversial today, their legacies dark as well as light.

Thanet House is long-gone. The site is now occupied by Ironmongers Hall built in the 1920s, its style evoking a more comforting view of the past.

'Revolt is the Right of the People.'

(John Locke, 1689)

4. DISSENT

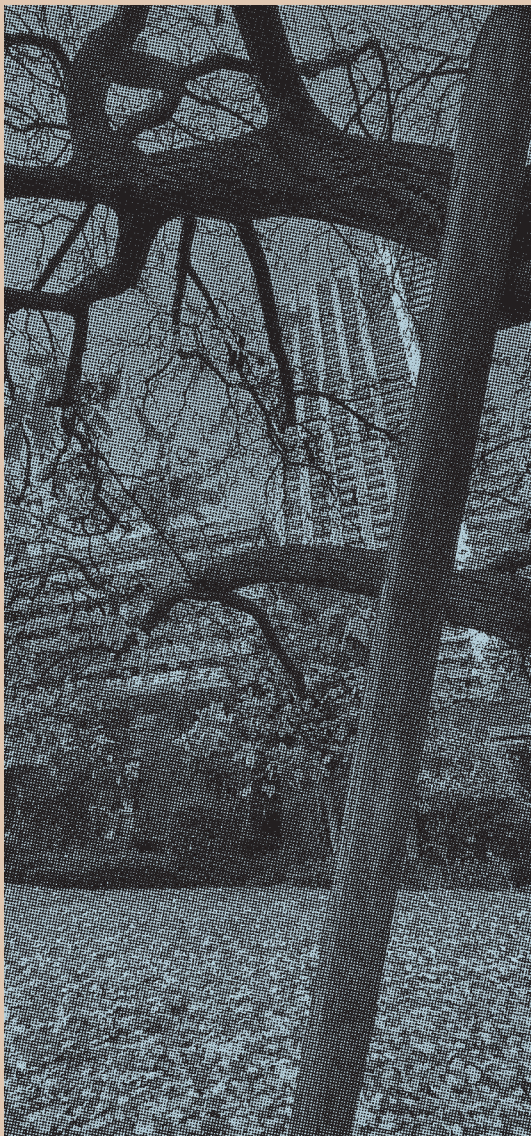
(site of) **Jewin Street**. Protestants who ‘dissented’ from the religious practices of the Church of England made up much of Cripplegate’s population. Subject to prejudice, and sporadic persecution, Quakers, Anabaptists, Calvinists and Presbyterians worshiped in their own meeting houses but might attend Anglican churches on Sunday to keep on the right side of the law.

St Giles itself came under suspicion following the ejection of its vicar Samuel Annesley for his non-conformist sympathies. Annesley’s grandson, John Wesley, founded the Methodists – another dissenting sect with roots in this neighbourhood.

Today, Jewin Street’s meeting houses are long gone. But a dissenting presence survives in nearby Bunhill Fields, Bunhill’s Quaker meeting house and the Jewin Welsh Presbyterian Church in Fann Street.

‘In the reign of Charles II non-conformists abounded in this neighbourhood, as they do at the present day; and perhaps there is scarcely a spot of ground of equal compass, in all London, where there are so many meeting houses.’

(description of Jewin Street, 1809)



5. EXPERIMENT

(site of) **Prince Rupert’s House**. Prince Rupert of the Rhine was a Royalist soldier who devoted his retirement to scientific curiosity. A founder member of the Royal Society, he was an inventor and active experimenter, sometimes on himself. Rupert was not the only local aristocrat interested in practical science. The Duke of Buckingham built an experimental glass furnace behind his house in the Charterhouse precinct (today’s Glass House Yard). This may have been the source of ‘Prince Rupert’s drops’ – glass droplets with puzzling properties which fascinated the Royal Society in 1661.

‘... take Moonwort, Mousear, Plantain, Sanicle, Adders Tongue and the roots of Solomon’s Seal. Cut and beat them in a stone mortar, then Boil them in the Oil till crisp always stirring it, then strain it out and twice a day anoint the part with a feather. This is Prince Rupert’s ointment for a Burn or Scald [and is] good also for sore eyes if anointed on the eyelids.’

(John Locke, 1700)

6. DISINFORMATION

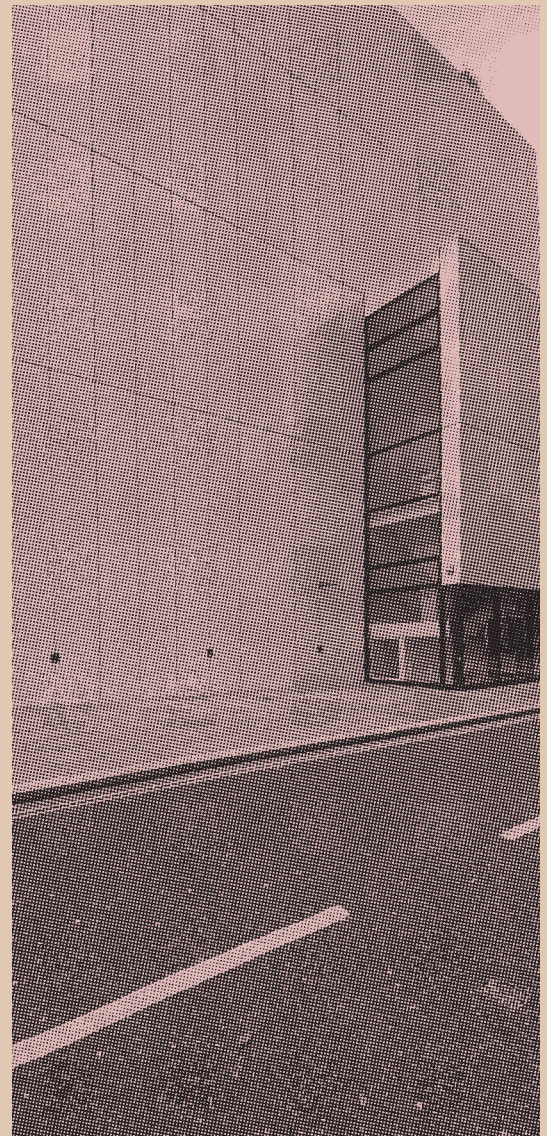
Milton Street was formerly **Grub Street**, notorious for its ‘hackney authors’ (hacks) churning out ‘... a prodigious number of seditious and libellous pamphlets and papers tending to exasperate the people and increase the confusion in which the nation was involved.’

Late-seventeenth-century England was unique in Europe in having very little state censorship. Printers, authors and booksellers made the most of the free market for free thinking – both low and high brow. John Dunton, son in law of Samuel Annesley, published religious sermons alongside his own erotic adventures: *Bumography: a Touch at the Lady’s Tails* was one of his.

Grub Street was renamed Milton Street in the nineteenth century: perhaps in honour of poet John Milton; perhaps in honour of a property developer who tried to make the place less seedy.

‘Grub Street then abounded with mean and old houses, which were let out in lodgings at low rents to persons whose occupation was the publishing of anonymous treason and slander.’

(John Hawkins, 1787)



BARBICAN THE ROUND STROLL A PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIC

Quickfry Zines

#1: **A psychogeographic stroll** (2025)

Forthcoming:

#2: **John Dunton**

#3: **Kibbo Kift in the City**

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