

Blowing the Crystal Goblet:

Transparent Book Design 1350-1950

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by

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Abstract

In 1932 Beatrice Warde delivered to the British Society of Typographic Designers what has since become one of the most recognizable statements about the design of books: “The Crystal Goblet, or Printing Should Be Invisible.” In it, Warde defines good typography as a crystal goblet, “because everything about it is calculated to *reveal* rather than hide the beautiful thing which it was meant to *contain*.” Her address argues that the true art of designers is the creation of transparent interfaces which allow readers to imbibe deeply of the intellect captured within the pages of the book without external distractions.

Warde’s ‘Crystal Goblet’ is fundamentally contradictory. Typographers must strive to make themselves and their work invisible so that only the voice of the absent author speaks through the text; but there is no voice, only words on page produced through a great deal of human labour at a specific moment in history. But, Warde did not create her metaphor; she adopted existing imagery from the Western tradition. Nor was she the first typographer to do so. The writings and work of those involved with the creation of books has, since before the invention of the printing press, revolved around attempts to create ‘perfect’ communicative interfaces – books which allow the reader an unobscured view into the mind of the author. The resultant page is that with which we are most familiar: a block of black Roman-style text on a white or off-white page with blank margins.

This study tracks the rise and influence of the ‘crystal goblet’ motif, the dream of perfect readability, in the discourse of those directly involved with the creation of books: scribes, printers, type-cutters and typographers. It postulates transparency, or perfect readability, to be the primary motive underlying the actions of those making books, but does not assume all printers in all times have been motivated by the same forces or to the same extent. Rather, it traces the thread of transparency through many incarnations and examines the social and political factors underlying each permutation and how new elements are introduced into the discourse without completely erasing all traces of the old.

Chapter One studies the Italian Renaissance and how the writing style of a small group of humanist scholars comes to dominate the printed book of the sixteenth century. Chapter Two begins with an examination of the perceived decline in typographic practice in the seventeenth century and the subsequent emergence of both writings about typography and of a new style of Roman typeface: the Modern. Chapter Three deals with similar events in the nineteenth-century – first there is a perceived decline in and then a revival of printing standards. Chapter Four discusses the reconciliation of machine-production and traditional practices in the early to mid-twentieth century and the unsuccessful challenge to traditional typography posed by the Bauhaus and other Modernist schools of design.

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Introduction

In 1932 Beatrice Warde delivered to the British Society of Typographic Designers, formerly the British Typographers Guild, what has since become one of the most recognizable statements about the design of books: “The Crystal Goblet, or Printing Should Be Invisible.” In it, Warde defines good typography as a crystal goblet, “because everything about it is calculated to *reveal* rather than hide the beautiful thing which it was meant to *contain*.”¹ Her address argues that the true art of designers is the creation of transparent interfaces which allow readers to imbibe deeply of the intellect captured within the pages of the book without any external distractions, just as the true purpose of a wine glass is to enable the connoisseur to appreciate a fine vintage wine without having the experience clouded by fingerprints, body heat or coloured glass.

Historical precedents for Warde’s metaphor are not difficult to find. John Milton draws upon similar imagery in *Areopagitica*, his argument against restrictive licensing of printers in seventeenth century England: “... for books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them.”² Indeed, the root image of a ‘pure intellect’ which can only be seen through an intermediary screen is fundamental to two of the core philosophies of Western European thought: Plato’s Allegory of the Cave and the Bible (“For now we see through a glass,

¹ Warde, Beatrice. “The Crystal Goblet or Printing Should Be Invisible.” *The Crystal Goblet: Sixteen Essays on Typography*. Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1956. 11-17. 11. Emphasis in original. For a further examination of Warde, see Chapter 4.

² Milton, John. *Areopagitica: A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*. H. B. Cotterill, Ed. Toronto: Macmillan and Co, 1961. 5. For a discussion of *Areopagitica* and its treatment of authors, see D. F. McKenzie. *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*. London: British Library, 1986. 24-25.

darkly” I Corinthians 13:12).

Given the pervasiveness of this metaphor, on one hand it should not be surprising that Warde would characterize the book as a ‘crystal goblet,’ or, as she does elsewhere in her essay, a window into the author’s mind. On the other hand, however, Warde is a member of, and talking to, that select group of individuals charged with the task of making books. If anyone should be aware that a book is not a direct portal into the captured essence of a genius and of the role the typographer plays in creating meaning for the reader, one would think it must be this group. Much recent research into bibliography and the history of the book focuses on the influence printers, publishers, illustrators and other persons involved in the book trade have on the creation and reading of texts. In *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, D.F. McKenzie forwards the argument that the different forms of any text are relative to the specific time, place and people that produced that edition of the text.³ Not only can each of these individual instances of a text differ in content, they may, and most likely do, vary in regards to their physical appearance. These changes in the physical appearance of the text are crucial for the reader for, as Jerome McGann proposes, “the very physique of a book will embody a code of meaning which the reader will decipher, more or less deeply, more or less self-consciously.”⁴ The words of the author do not exist for the reader without being physically reincarnated by the printer and others, and thus understanding a text is, at least in part, reliant on interpreting the work’s bibliographic codes.

Warde’s ‘Crystal Goblet’ is fundamentally contradictory. Typographers must strive to

³ McKenzie, D. F. *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*. London: British Library, 1986. 50.

⁴ McGann, Jerome. *The Textual Condition*. Princeton, Princeton UP, 1991. 115.

make themselves and their work invisible so that only the voice of the absent author speaks through the text; but there is no voice, only words on page produced through a great deal of human labour at a specific moment in history. But, as mentioned earlier, Warde did not create her metaphor; she adopted existing imagery from the Western tradition. Nor was she the first typographer to do so. The writings and work of those involved with the creation of books has, since before the invention of the printing press, revolved around attempts to create ‘perfect’ communicative interfaces – books which allow the reader an unobscured view into the mind of the author. The resultant page is that with which we are most familiar: a block of black Roman-style text on a white or off-white page with blank margins.⁵

The present study aims to track the rise and influence of the ‘crystal goblet’ motif, the dream of perfect readability, in the discourse of those directly involved with the creation of books: scribes, printers, type-cutters and typographers. It focuses on the book in English but, as will be discussed, for much of their history English printers have relied upon Continental typographers for their models and fonts. Thus, many of the figures discussed will be German, French or Italian, and English printers will not figure prominently until Caslon and Baskerville in the eighteenth century. It is also by no means an exhaustive study; rather, it focuses on those figures who are consistently identified by their peers and by those who come after as providing the best models for future books. A canon of the ‘best’ typographers emerges from successive writings on printing: Jenson, Manutius, Tory, Granjon, Garamond, Grandjean, Caslon, Baskerville, the Fourniers, Bodoni, the Didots,

⁵ Stanley Morison identifies Aldus Manutius’ 1495 edition of Pietro Bembo’s *De Aetna* as the first “modern” book because of its clear typeface, as opposed to the Gothic used by Gutenberg and his contemporaries, and large margins free of commentary See *The Typographic Book* 32.

Morris, Walker, Cobden-Sanderson, Rogers, de Vinne, Updike, Morison, Warde, and Tschichold. Others, such as the Elzevirs and Ibarra, have not received the same universal approval by their peers and have thus been left off.

This canonical list of printers may seem anachronistic given the theoretical framework of a study which clearly focuses on a diminishment of the veneration of the solitary creator-genius in favour of a recognition of the social and ideological creation of meaning, but it serves a purpose. In studying the dominant elements in a discourse it is necessary to first establish what those elements are and how and why they became dominant. Examining why certain figures have been left out of the canon provides insight into the methodology underlying its selective processes, but these exclusions cannot be fully understood within their particular social and historical contexts unless the dominant strains of the discourse which excluded them have been established. This particular canon is also useful because not only are its members recognized as the ‘great printers,’ they are the sources for much of our knowledge of the history of printing. In teaching and discussing the principles underlying ‘good’ printing, these typographers crafted histories of the art and craft of printing, histories where they re-fashioned the careers and motives of those who came before them in order to give the approval of tradition to their present arguments.

While the self-serving nature of these histories may be maddening for the person seeking the ‘true’ facts about a given printer’s life, for the person interested in tracking the development of a specific discourse they provide much information about the specific conditions under which each re-telling of the history was written. This study postulates transparency, or perfect readability, to be the primary motive underlying the actions of

those making books, but to assume all printers in all times have been motivated by the same forces or to the same extent would be folly. Rather, I trace the thread of transparency through many incarnations and examine the social and political factors underlying each permutation and how new elements are introduced into the discourse without completely erasing all traces of the old.

Over the past 600 years ‘readability’ has been brandished for and against religion, capitalism, socialism, science, modernism and classicism. It has its roots, however, in humanism’s concern for the timelessness and universality of the individual genius, and throughout its many mutations it has not lost contact with its origin. Beatrice Warde’s understanding of the reading process as a window into the mind of the author differs little from Machiavelli, who read in order to “enter into the ancient courts of ancient men.”⁶ Despite challenges to the humanist model since Warde’s time, many readers, especially those outside academia, continue to read in order to discover what the author thought. Pierre Macherey identifies this treatment of the work as an object to be received as the empirical fallacy, the result of which is that text exists only “to be consumed, to move out from the provisional container of the book into the minds of possible readers.”⁷

The continued survival of this model of information transfer is understandable when one considers that *what* people read influences *how* they read. Macherey writes, “[T]he conditions that determine the production of the book also determine the forms of its communication.”⁸ Readers, who by their very title are identified as the consumers of texts, can engage with a work only through the intermediary of the book. The form of the book

⁶ Quoted Grafton, Anthony. "The Humanist as Reader." *A History of Reading in the West*. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, Ed. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999. 179-212. 180.

⁷ Macherey, Pierre. *A Theory of Literary Production*. Geoffrey Wall, Transl. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1978. 13-14.

⁸ Ibid. 70.

not only presents the material to be consumed, it conditions a method of reading. Since the Italian Renaissance those who serve as the intermediaries in the communicative process have increasingly, and generally willingly, become the voices in the blank margins of the books they produce. The book has hidden or erased all references to the labour involved in its making, teaching the reader to believe that it miraculously sprang forth from the mind of the author.

Chapter One studies the Italian Renaissance and how the writing style of a small group of scholars comes to dominate the printed book. While it is generally recognized that the first incunabula were imitations of the manuscript, it is less often acknowledged that this applied to books printed in both Roman typeface and Gothic. These very categories are misleading, given that the Roman typeface is actually based on Carolingian manuscripts and the term Gothic is a derisive usage by humanists wanting to authorize their new/old style and connect medieval work with the barbarians who sacked Rome. The chapter also examines how Roman and Gothic style books appeared simultaneously after the invention of the printing press and co-existed for at least a century afterwards; the more familiar story of evolution from Gothic to Roman is nothing more than a later fabrication of those interested in portraying Roman as an advancement in readability. The books of late fifteenth and early sixteenth century printers, especially Italian printers Nicholas Jenson and Aldus Manutius, provide examples of how this tension between Roman and Gothic influenced the market and how printers declared, and switched, allegiances simply by changing typefaces. By the time the mantle of typography is passed from Italy to France in the mid sixteenth century, humanism has triumphed over scholasticism, a small number of type foundries produce the fonts for most of Europe, and the practice of book design

becomes one of tradition, adaptation and subtlety.

The typography of the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, by contrast, has long been considered substandard: “Types were poor, paper was brownish and shoddy, and the work of the printer careless and tasteless.”⁹ Chapter Two begins with an examination of potential causes for this decrease in quality, the most notable being censorship and strict restrictions on printers. However, there are some notable events in the history of book typography during this time, including the rise of Dutch publishing and the first printed treatise on printing, Moxon’s *Mechanick Exercises on Printing* (1685). These events provide the opportunity to examine the motives of later scholars and typographers who dismissed seventeenth century work: is it the typography they dislike, or the political control of the press, or the commercialism that drove the Dutch industry? Chapter Two then moves on to the French *romain du roi*, the typeface designed by the Royal Academy and cut by Grandjean at the end of the seventeenth century. This face set the fashion for the next 150 years, and the political reasons for its creation and later negative aesthetic reactions to it provide another example of historians of the book rewriting history so that their contemporary positions toward readability hold sway. This period also sees the rise of English typography in the work of Caslon and Baskerville and the classical revival led by Bodoni and the Didots. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the ‘Modern’ typeface with its flat serifs and exaggerated hair-lines has emerged, setting up the first significant struggle between schools of book design since the Renaissance.

Chapter Three follows much the same pattern as Chapter Two. There is a perceived decline in printing quality during the Industrial Revolution as mechanized printing becomes

⁹ Jennett, Sean. *Pioneers in Printing*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1958. 47.

standardized and the ‘Modern’ typeface is adopted for machine-printed books. And again, the question must be raised, have later writers simply used a critique of nineteenth century printing and ‘Modern’ fonts to further their own positions about industrialization and the role of the press in society? Like the seventeenth century, this period has been chastised for poor readability but it saw tremendous increases in reading and book production. The remainder of the chapter deals with the well-documented ‘Revival’ of fine printing led by William Morris. Morris and his peers turn away from the ‘Modern’ typefaces and seek out what they perceive to be the best models, first the humanist books of Nicholas Jenson and then the medieval manuscript. Another classical revival ensues, and this return to the past provides yet another opportunity to see the politics and beliefs underlying attempts to make the book more ‘readable.’¹⁰

Along with the revival of fine printing at the end of the nineteenth century come two other developments crucial to the history of book design: the rise of the typesetting machine and renewed interest in the history of printing. The success of Monotype and Linotype results in printers replacing their boxes of old fonts with the new machines. At the same time, the revival of fine printing led by Morris sparks general interest in the history of the book. Chapter Four discusses the confluence of these streams of activity. The new machines need typefaces, and these are found by reviving past designs. Although he disliked the new machines, the writings of D.B. Updike exposed many printers to the history of their profession. Stanley Morison and Beatrice Warde, two of the most active scholars of book history during the early to mid twentieth century, were also employees of the Monotype

¹⁰ Morris, however, was not content to stop at the Renaissance and turned to pre-Renaissance forms of the book. The responses to this apparent transgression of the traditions of printing provide fascinating evidence of how entrenched Humanist ideals of reading had become by this time.

Corporation, and the revivals of older typefaces encouraged by their writings become the standard fonts in any shop utilizing this machine. At the same time, the Bauhaus School in Germany embraces the new technologies of printing and proposes a 'new' typeface for books: the sans-serif. The struggle between classical and modern emerges once again, with both sides claiming superior transparency and thus readability. Old-style wins out, and the twentieth-century book is printed in the typefaces of the sixteenth.

Chapter 1 *Castigata et Clara* – Humanist Books, Humanist Printers

Gutenberg may have invented the press, but in their search for the foundations of modern book design scholars pass over the products of the early German presses and turn their gaze southwards to Italy. Depending upon the author and the era, one of two men are named “Founder of the Modern Book”; Morris, Updike, and their followers give the credit to Nicholas Jenson, while Fournier, Morison, and most scholars after Morison cite Aldus Manutius’ work as the genesis of our book.¹ Regardless of which man is named, the invention of the Roman type face is portrayed as a movement away from the difficult to read Gothic typeface first employed by Gutenberg and towards clarity and legibility.

This chapter aims to interrogate these claims from a number of positions. Jenson and Manutius did not create their typefaces *ex nihilo* but rather adapted existing scribal models. The origin of these exemplars and the political and commercial reasons why printers turned to them must be examined if we are to understand why Roman typefaces eventually replaced Gothic. At the same time the chapter will examine the persistence of the Gothic, for it was not immediately superseded by the Roman; the two coexisted for over a hundred years (and much longer in Germany), each serving a specific role. The careers of Jenson, Manutius and those they influenced will provide a framework for these questions, and the re-fashioning of their reputations by later scholars will show how the beliefs and prejudices of the earliest printers and their clients continue to replicate themselves in attitudes towards the form of the book. Rather than being a simple matter of superior

¹ For Jenson see Morris, William. *The Ideal Book*. William S. Peterson, Ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. 60; Updike, Daniel Berkeley. *Printing Types: Their History, Forms and Use*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1962. 1.73. For Manutius see Fournier, Simon Pierre. *Fournier on Typefounding*. Harry Carter, Transl. London: Fleuron Books, 1930. 284 and Morison, Stanley. *Four Centuries of Fine Printing*. London: Ernst Benn Limited, 1960. 25.

legibility winning out, the success of the Roman typeface must be seen as the outcome of competing market forces, conflicting ideologies and historical revision.

In his letter to Boccaccio dated October 28, 1366, Petrarch describes books written in his ideal script, as practiced by Giovanni Malpaghini,

not in a rambling and luxuriant script as that used by the copyists or, rather, the painters of today - delightful to the eye from a distance but confusing and tiresome when seen closeby, as if it were intended not for reading but for some other purpose and the word *litera* (letter) would not in a sense signify *legitera* (that which is legible), as says the Prince of Grammarians - but in a book-hand which is exact and clear [*castigata et clara*] and pleasing to the eyes. Nor will you find any orthographic or grammatic errors.²

Petrarch's praise for his young disciple contains all the elements which have since become associated with good printing. Beauty is not to be found in the complexity of a letterform; rather, it is the utility and legibility of the letter that makes it beautiful. The letter must be restrained in appearance in order to be clear and pleasant, instead of fatiguing, to the eyes. Beauty and utility are intimately related to thorough scholarship and careful composition.

In the following chapters these points will be repeated frequently in regards to the practices of the best printers. However, to take Petrarch's strictures for copyists out of their original context is to elide the reasons for the development of this script. Petrarch and his humanist peers did not create this form – they adopted an already extant form because it suited their needs. The manuscripts of the classics which formed the foundation of the humanist movement were, by and large, copies created during the Carolingian Renaissance of the eighth to twelfth centuries. In order to establish a connection between his empire and that of the Romans, Charlemagne decreed in 789 that scribes adopt a scriptural form related

² Petrarch. *Petrarch: Four Dialogues for Scholars*. Conrad H. Rawski, Ed. Cleveland: Case Western UP, 1967. 78

to Roman handwriting and inscriptions.³ This vogue for things Roman carried over to the scriptoria, copies of classical authors were produced, and it was these copies that reached the hands of the Italian humanists.

Littera Antiqua, the hand-writing style developed and first practiced by Petrarch, Niccolo Niccoli and the other Italian Humanists, was simultaneously an attempt to recover the classical past and a rebellion against the current scholasticism of the Gothic Medieval Church. According to E.P. Goldschmidt, Gothic was used originally as humanist pejorative by Leone Battista Alberti in his description of architectural ornaments and was first applied to the handwriting of traditional scribes by Lorenzo Valla in the Preface to his *Elegantiae Lingua Latinae* (before 1450).⁴ The Gothic page was a dense mass of information. The primary text, generally in two columns, occupied the central, but often not the largest, area of the page. Surrounding it were hierarchies of marginal glosses and authoritative commentaries on the text written in various sizes representative of importance. The script was Gothic in that it was written with a series of angular lines reminiscent of the spires of a Medieval cathedral. The script was extremely efficient because it could be written quickly and condensed a large amount of material onto the page, thereby reducing the amount of parchment required. However, because the individual letterforms were not easily distinguishable and were often quite small, legibility was severely hampered; Petrarch complained that “the reader ends up buying not a book, but blindness along with it.”⁵

Legibility was no doubt further hampered because there is not one single Gothic script – the

³ Morison, Stanley. *Politics and Script*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972. 170ff

⁴ Goldschmidt, E. P. *The Printed Book of the Renaissance*. Amsterdam: Gerard Th. van Heusden, 1966. 2. See also Lowry, Martin. *Nicholas Jenson: and the Rise of Venetian Publishing in Renaissance Europe*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991. 143.

⁵ Quoted Grafton, Anthony. "The Humanist as Reader." *A History of Reading in the West*. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, Ed. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999. pp 179-212. 184.

term obscures the fact that the libraries of the day were filled with books written in a vast diversity of regional and historical scripts.⁶

To the humanists, the physical appearance of the Gothic manuscript was indicative of what they disliked about scholasticism – the emphasis on reading the classics only through the eyes of previous authorities and out of their original context. In opposition to this, the humanists wanted to have a personal relationship with the text, its author and the past. Machiavelli famously describes his reading rituals:

When evening comes, I return to my home, and I go into my study; and on the threshold, I take off my everyday clothes, which are covered with mud and mire, and I put on regal and curial robes; and dressed in a more appropriate manner I enter into the ancient courts of ancient men and am welcomed by them kindly, and these I taste the food that alone is mine, and for which I was born; and these I am not ashamed to speak to them, to ask them the reasons for their actions; and they, in their humanity, answer me;⁷

In the pages of a humanist manuscript, or a printed book based on one, the reader could forget that he was reading the physical product of intermediaries and instead imagine that he was in direct contact with the author or with God. Crucial to this illusion was the removal of the marginal glosses. The humanist style came into usage for the texts of the church fathers, and Philipp Melanchthon writes in 1518, "Now away with so many frigid petty glosses, these harmonizings and 'disharmonies' and other hindrances to the intelligence, and when we shall have redirected our minds to the sources, we shall begin to taste Christ."⁸ The margins of the manuscripts produced by and for the humanists were cleared and the primary text assumed its current position as the dominant element on the

⁶ The term Gothic continues to be problematic for those interested in categorizing the diversity of non-Humanist letterforms. See Johnson, A. F. "The Classification of Gothic Types." *Selected Essays on Books and Printing*. Percy H. Muir, Ed. Amsterdam: Van Gendt and Co, 1970. pp 1-17.

⁷ Grafton, 180

⁸ Quoted Tribble, Evelyn B. *Margins and Marginality: The Printed Page in Early Modern England*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993. 11.

page [FIGURE 1.1]. Commentary might later crowd the margins again, but it would be written there by the reader as he corresponded with the original text. By changing the format of the book, the humanists were demanding a change in how that book was to be read.

The humanist book, written in a round Carolingian script on pages without commentary, grew in importance and was disseminated throughout Europe as humanism spread. This dissemination was undoubtedly assisted by political forces within and outside of Italy. During the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, members of the humanist movement centred in Florence ascended to positions of scribal influence: Coluccio Salutati became Latin secretary in 1375, and after 1403 Poggio Bracciolini was a Chancery clerk for Pope Boniface IX and later the principal secretary to Martin V.⁹ At the same time the city administration was growing exponentially in size and requiring large numbers of new scribes.¹⁰ These were trained in the new style, and between Florence's economic power and the influence of Florentine scribes at the Papacy, the humanist style spread throughout Italy. This same period in Italian history was also marked by numerous conflicts, and accompanying diplomatic exchanges, creating a situation where aristocrats from countries north of the Alps could acquire, through gift, purchase or looting, humanist manuscripts.¹¹ However, one should not overstate the importance of the humanist book style in the early fifteenth century, for it was the preferred book style of only a small minority of the population: aristocratic scholars and their associates, largely in Italy, but slowly

⁹ *Politics and Script*, 266.

¹⁰ Lowry, Martin. *Nicholas Jenson: and the Rise of Venetian Publishing in Renaissance Europe*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991. 38.

¹¹ Goldschmidt, 4.

ut lignum patellamq; deorū cābere possint. Ceteri
senatores libram argenti tm̄. aeris signati qnq; mi
lia in singulos patrefamilias relinquamus. Cete
rum omne aurum. argentum. aes signatum ad triu
vros mensarios. ex templo deferamus. nullo ante
S. c̄. facto. ut uoluntaria collatio. et certamen adiu
uande reipu. excitet ad emulandum animos pri
mum equestris ordinis. deinde reliquae plebis. hac
unam uiam multa inter nos collocuti cons. inue
nimus. Ingreddimini diis bene uolentib; Respu
blicis et priuatas res facile saluas praestat.
Publica prodendo tua neq; q̄ serues. In hoc rāto
animo consensum ē. ut gratiae ultro cons. ageret.
Senatu inde misso pro se quisq; aurum. argentum &
aes in publicum conferunt tanto certamine inelto
ut prima inter primos nomina sua uellent in pu
blicas tabulis ee. nec triumphum accipiendo. nec scri
ba referendo sufficerent. Hunc consensum sena
tus equester ordo ē secutus. equestris ordinis i
plebs. Ita sine edicto. sine coertione magistratus.
nec remige in supplementum. nec stipendio respu
equit. paratisq; omnib; ad bellum. cons. in p̄uinci
as profecta sunt. neq; aliud magis belli tempus
fuit quo carthaginenses rōq; pariter uanis casib;

Figure 1.1 Humanist manuscript. Livy's *History of Rome*. Italy, 14th century. University of Saskatchewan Special Collections.

disseminating throughout Europe.¹² Purchasing any manuscript book was an expensive proposition, and the sumptuous humanist volumes with their wide, empty margins and rounded letterforms required more material and a more highly trained scribe than the average product of the scriptorium or atelier. Further indicative of the economic status of the patrons of these books is the extensive illumination that many of the copies received in those ample margins.¹³ The economy and traditions associated with the Gothic style kept it the medium of choice for the majority of books. Legal treatises contained marginal commentary that nearly overwhelmed the ‘central’ text. Religious, student and vernacular texts had long been written in the condensed Gothic style, and for good reason, as it kept down the amount of material required and therefore the size and cost of the book. Thus at the time Gutenberg invented the press there were two distinct forms of the book: Gothic for Bibles, religious, legal, student and vernacular texts and humanist for the classics, the writings of the Church Fathers approved by the humanists, and the writings of the humanists themselves.¹⁴

The earliest products of the press, Gutenberg’s Bibles, were produced in Gothic fonts based upon the scribal hand of his region. The next printer of note in many histories of printing is Nicholas Jenson, and he is identified as the founder of Roman printing.¹⁵ This has created a false chronology of printing which posits the first printers as using Gothic types and a subsequent evolution in readability as printers, modeling their works on those of Jenson and Manutius, adopted Italian type faces and the humanist book form. What this story of succession omits is that many of the first printers, including Jenson, started by

¹² Febvre, Lucien and Henri-Jean Martin. *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800*. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and David Wootton, Ed. David Gerard, Transl. London: NLB, 1976. 79

¹³ Grafton, 184.

¹⁴ Goldschmidt, 2.

¹⁵ On importance of Jenson see Note 10.

printing in Roman fonts but then turned to Gothic productions. The practice of printing in Gothic faces certain types of books such as legal, religious and vernacular texts persisted long after Jenson and Aldus ‘perfected’ the Roman face.¹⁶ The supposed advantages in readability attributed to the Roman letter meant little to the printer catering to existing preferences, aesthetic tastes and changes in the marketplace.

As word of Gutenberg’s invention spread, interested parties desired presses of their own. In many cases these were groups of humanists and what they desired were printed versions of the classical manuscripts central to their beliefs. The first Roman fonts were cut both in Rome and in Strasburg in 1467. The printers in Italy, Conrad Sweynheym and Arnold Pannartz, were, like most printers of the time, Germans, and were invited to set up a press in Rome by Giovanni Andrea de'Bussi, a humanist bishop, and placed under the patronage of the humanist Pope Paul II in order to produce editions of the classics. The Strasburg printer was Arnold Rusch, son-in-law to Joseph Mendelin, the first Strasburg printer. Like Sweynheym and Pannartz, Rusch was in contact with the leading humanist scholars in his area and they were the buyers of his books.¹⁷ The first French press was founded under similar circumstances. German printers Ulrich Gering, Michael Friburger, and Martin Crantz were invited to Paris in 1469 or early 1470 by Heynlin de Lapide, a professor and sometime prior and rector at the Sorbonne in order to set up a university press. The press was financed by Guillaume Fichet, a renowned teacher at the University of Paris and a friend of Cardinal Bessarion, who had been to Milan as royal ambassador.¹⁸ Not surprisingly, the men produced books exclusively in Roman types while they worked for

¹⁶ As with any discussion of the end of Gothic printing, it must be pointed out that it remained the dominant letter form in Germany until the Second World War, and still remains an important part of German culture.

¹⁷ Goldschmidt, 4-6.

¹⁸ Hirsch, Rudolf. *The Printed Word: Its Impact and Diffusion*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1978. 114-115.

these humanists.

The founding of the first French press and its reliance solely on Roman types also provides an example of how later scholars have revised history in order to push the doctrine of the superior legibility of Roman fonts as compared to the Gothic. In his *Printing Types*, D.B. Updike narrates his version of the founding of the first French press:

Last, but not least, they [Freiburger, Gering and Kranz] were obliged to cut their type -- a Roman font for which Heynlin furnished a model from the types of an edition of Caesar's *Commentaries*, which was printed at Rome in 1469 by Sweynheym and Pannartz. As the prior (who was to correct the proofs of the book to be printed) was near-sighted, a large Roman character, which did not tire the eye, was preferred to the Gothic manuscript-letter, at that time generally used in France.¹⁹

That the first Italian Roman typeface spread to France in under two years is a fascinating example of how quickly and widely books circulated among the humanists. Yet, Updike's decision to stress the readability of the Roman instead of the humanist demand for the typeface cannot have been accidental given his desire to show the history of type design as an evolution in readability.²⁰ The assertion is especially problematic given one of the earliest references to a printed book, a letter describing Gutenberg's 42-line Bible from Enea Silvio Piccolomini to Cardinal Juan de Carvajal in 1455: "The script is extremely neat and legible, not at all difficult to follow. Your grace would be able to read it without effort, and indeed without glasses."²¹ Piccolomini is, of course, talking about a Gothic typeface and he recommends it specifically for its readability for users with weak eyes. The French press could just as well have been set up with a clearly-cut Gothic type if Heynlin's

¹⁹ Updike, 1.83.

²⁰ For more on Updike see Chapter 4. Updike's source for Heynlin's poor eyesight being the cause for the press using a Roman typeface is Anatole Claudin's *The First Paris Press*. London: The Bibliographical Society, 1898. 3.

²¹ McKitterick, David. *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450-1830*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. 31.

eyesight was the only concern. However, the decision to print solely in Roman was determined by the content of the books, which were all humanist treatises and classics. Tradition, and the buyers of these books, not Heynlin's weak eyes, demanded they be printed in a Roman face.

At about the same time as the Sorbonne press was being established, Nicholas Jenson was setting up his house in Venice. How and why the first non-German master printer learned the trade and relocated to Italy has become the stuff of printing folklore. The most popular tale, written by Jean Grolier and Jean Lhuillier in the mid sixteenth century and recently heavily questioned by Martin Lowry, has King Charles VII sending Jenson, a die-cutter or master at a royal mint, as an industrial spy to Mainz in 1458. When Charles VII dies in 1461, the new king, Louis XI is suspicious of his father's officials, resulting in Jenson relocating to Venice.²² Another story is more easily dismissed as advertising hyperbole; in an introduction to a book printed by Jenson, the editor names him as the inventor of printing with moveable type. Jenson's misdating of one of his first books as being produced in 1461 undoubtedly helped to further this supposition. While it is clear that Jenson was familiar with metalworking and cutting dies before becoming a printer in 1470, little else is certain; the rest of his biography has been re-worked to better meet the demands of business and national pride.

The output of Jenson's press has faced similar historical revision. From 1470 to 1472 he produced a series of humanist books that have become revered as some of the finest printed ever [FIGURE 1.2]. In founding the Kelmscott Press William Morris wanted

²² Lowry, Martin. *Nicholas Jenson: and the Rise of Venetian Publishing in Renaissance Europe*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991. 49ff.

qui omnibus ui aquarum submersis cum filiis suis simul ac nurbus mirabili quodā modo quasi semen huāni generis conseruatus est: quē utinā quasi uiuam quandam imaginem imitari nobis contingat: & hi quidem ante diluuium fuerunt: post diluuium autem alii quorū unus altissimi dei sacerdos iustitiæ ac pietatis miraculo rex iustus lingua hebraorū appellatus est: apud quos nec circuncisionis nec mosaica legis ulla mentio erat. Quare nec iudæos (posteris enī hoc nomen fuit) neq; gentiles: quoniam non ut gentes pluralitatem deorum inducebant sed hebræos proprie noīamus aut ab Hebere ut dictū est: aut qā id nomen transitiuos significat. Soli q̄ppe a creaturis naturali rōne & lege īnata nō scripta ad cognitionē ueri dei trāsire: & uoluptate corporis cōtēpta ad rectam uitam puenisse scribunt: cum quibus omibus præclarus ille rotius generis origo Habraam numerādus est: cui scriptura mirabilem iustitiā quā non a mosaica lege (septima eīm post Habraā generatione Moyses nascitur) sed naturali fuit ratione consecutus sūma cum laude attestatur. Credidit enim Habraam deo & reputatū est ei in iustitiā. Quare multarum quoq; gentium patrem diuina oracula futurū: ac in ipso benedicēdas oēs gentes hoc uidelicet ipsum quod iam nos uideūs aperte prædictum est: cuius ille iustitiæ perfectioēm non mosaica lege sed fide cōsecutus est: qui post multas dei uisiones legitimum genuit filium: quem primum omnium diuino psuasus oraculo circūcidit: & cæteris qui ab eo nascerētur tradidit: uel ad manifestum multitudinis eorum futuræ signum: uel ut hoc quasi paternæ uirtutis īsigne filii retinētes maiores suos imitari conaret: aut q̄buscūq; aliis de causis. Non enim id scrutādum nobis modo est. Post Habraam filius eius Isaac in pietate successit: foelice hac hæreditate a parētibus accēpta: q̄ uni uxori coniunctus quum geminos genuisset castitatis amore ab uxore postea dicitur abstinuisse. Ab isto natus ē Iacob qui p̄pter cumulātū uirtutis prouētum Israel etiam appellatus est duobus noibus p̄pter duplicem uirtutis usū. Iacob eīm athletā & exercētem se latine dicere possumus: quam appellationē primū habuit: quū practiciis operatioibus multos pro pietate labores ferebat. Quum autē iam uictor luctando euāsit: & speculationis fruebat bonis: tūc Israelem ipse deus appellauit æterna premia beatitudinēq; ultimam quæ in uisione dei consistit ei largiens: hominem enim qui deum uideat Israel nomen significat. Ab hoc. xii. iudæorum tribus p̄fectæ sūt. Innumerabilia de uita istorum uirorum fortitudine prudentia pietateq; dici possunt: quorum alia secundum scripturæ uerba historice considerantur: alia tropologice ac allegorice interpretāt: de q̄bus multi cōscripserūt: & nos in libro quē inscripsiūs

Figure 1.2 Nicolas Jenson, Eusebius' *De Praeparatione evangelica*, 1470.

“to go back to that period of printing when type was admittedly the best and at the same time the simplest. Take the Venetian printers of 1470, who in Roman type reached ... the perfection of combining beauty and simplicity.”²³ There is little doubt that Morris had Jenson in mind, as elsewhere he writes that Jenson “carried the development of the Roman type as far as it can go.”²⁴ Updike agreed with Morris: “Jenson's Roman types have been the accepted models for Roman letters ever since he made them, and, repeatedly copied in our own day, have never been equalled.”²⁵ However, this recognition of Jenson as the father of the readable, and thus modern, book is problematized by the fact that humanist books made up a minority of Jenson’s production; the majority of his books were legal and scholastic treatises in Gothic typefaces.

Many of the first printers began their careers printing books in Roman typefaces intended for humanist scholars. The problem was, however, that printing was an expensive proposition, especially when first setting up a shop. The printer relied upon economies of scale to make his business profitable, so he needed to sell significant numbers of still-expensive books. The production capabilities of these first humanist presses soon overwhelmed demand, and by the early 1470s this glut of books forced most humanist printers either to change their business practices or to declare bankruptcy. Jenson went bankrupt in 1472, and soon after entered into a partnership with several German printers. Gothic typefaces were procured, and Jenson commenced production of legal and religious texts while still producing humanist texts for his previous customers.²⁶ As the decade progressed, Jenson’s publishing schedule shifted firmly in favour of the more profitable

²³ Morris, William. *The Ideal Book*. William S. Peterson, Ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. 96.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁵ Updike, *Printing Types*. 1.73.

²⁶ Goldschmidt, 11.

scholastic texts printed in Gothic [FIGURE 1.3]. Through 1476 Jenson and Company produced a roughly equal number of pages in the two styles, but in 1477 they printed nothing in Roman. Of the 1200 different formes they printed in 1478, only 230 of them were in Roman – Jenson’s celebrated edition of Plutarch’s *Lives*. To put the Plutarch in perspective, 678 formes of type were used that same year on the legal commentaries of Bartolus.²⁷ Printers, and buyers, still respected the traditional stylistic distinction between humanist and scholastic texts, and by the time of his death in 1480 Jenson had virtually ceased producing texts for the humanists and his Roman fonts remained in their cases. For all its vaunted superiority in legibility, the Roman, even Jenson’s ‘ideal,’ lost its first skirmish with the Gothic because there was neither a sufficient market for humanist books nor a desire to see scholastic books in the humanist style.

It is not until the end of the fifteenth century that the Roman mounts another challenge to the Gothic. The champion for the humanist style this time is Aldus Manutius, and through his books the style is disseminated throughout Western Europe. Manutius’ story is a familiar one in the annals of printing. A teacher and humanist, Manutius arrives in Venice around 1490 and begins making contact with local printers. In 1493 he has his *Institutiones Grammaticae Latinae* published by Andrea Torresani. Torresani is believed to have trained as a printer under Jenson and to have bought some of Jenson’s fonts from his widow, thereby providing continuity between Italy’s first and second great printing houses.²⁸ Manutius and Torresani partnered with Pierfrancesco Barbarigo, a Venetian aristocrat, and commenced a program of humanist publishing in the mid 1490s; despite the name, Manutius’ share in the Aldine Press is believed to have been less than twenty-five

²⁷ Lowry, *Nicholas Jenson*. 118.

²⁸ Lowry, Martin. *The World of Aldus Manutius*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979. 77.

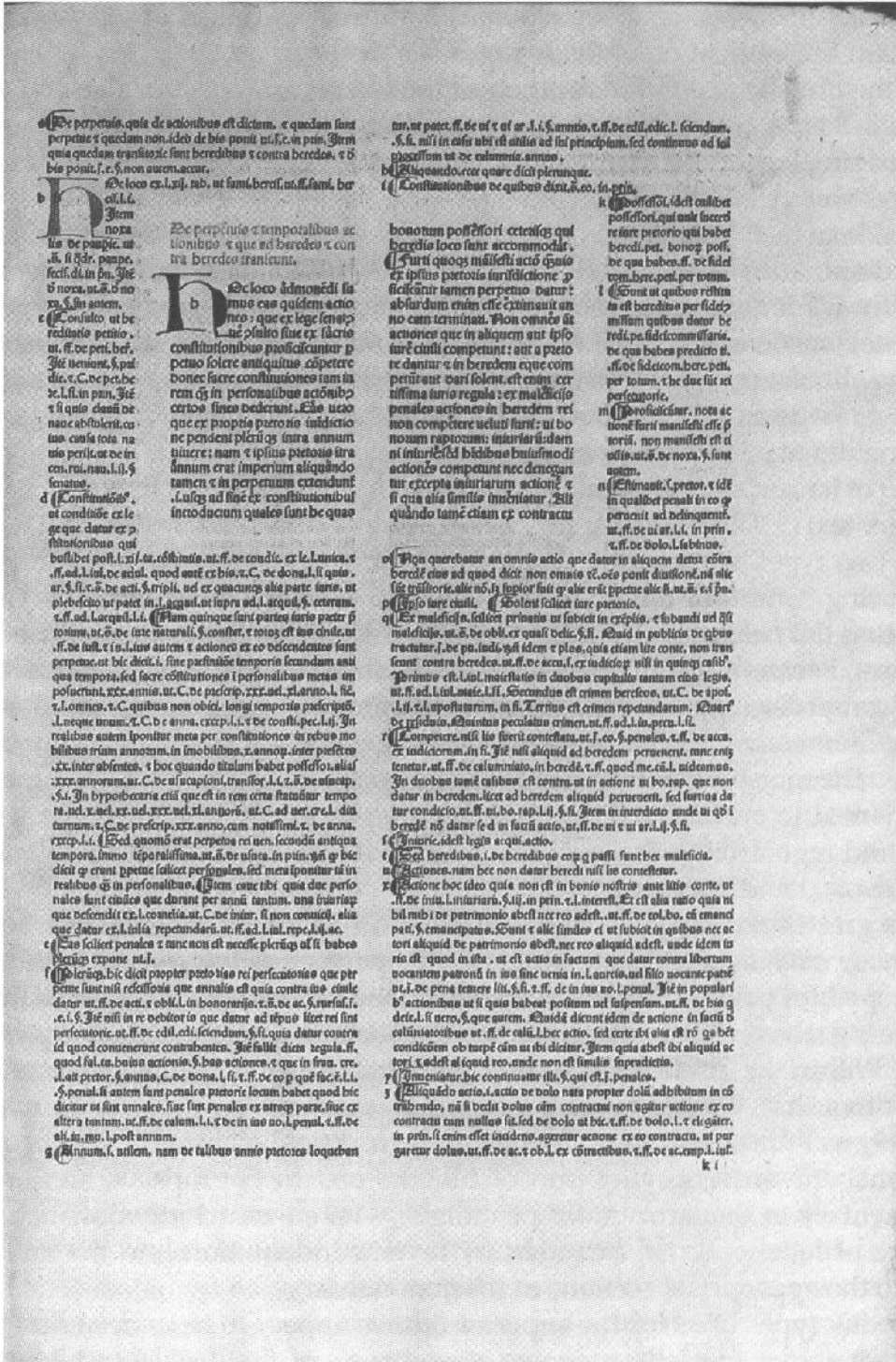


Figure 1.3 Nicolas Jenson, Justinian's *Institutiones*. ca. 1478-80.

percent and more likely ten percent.²⁹ One other person was needed, a type-cutter, and Francesco Griffo cut the types which made the press famous. As is rather fitting for the man who many consider to have cut the perfect crystal goblet, virtually nothing is known about Griffo except that he cut letters and killed his son-in-law with an iron bar. The programme of the press was strictly humanist, with a special focus on Greek. Humanism had sparked a renewed interest in the study of Greek and Manutius convinced his partners that, despite the high cost of cutting a Greek font, there was a demand for books in Greek.³⁰ Over the next twenty years the press introduced a number of typographical innovations and became one of the most respected, and copied, presses in Europe.

History has shown the most important typefaces introduced by the Aldine Press to be its Romans. The press was originally founded on the basis of Greek printing and his Greek fonts were well-received by his contemporaries because they closely approximated the handwritten Greek cursive that was fashionable at the time. However, subsequent readers have not been as accepting; most notably, in his landmark study of the printing of Greek and the development of ‘visual clarity’, Robert Proctor describes Manutius’ Greek fonts as “devoid of beauty” and blames them for the disappearance of “older and purer models.”³¹ In contrast, Manutius’ Romans have come to be considered timeless. In his extensive studies of the origins of typefaces, Stanley Morison identifies the font used first in 1495 for Pietro Bembo’s *De Aetna* as the progenitor of the European printed letter [FIGURE 1.4].³² As will be discussed, this letter spread throughout Europe and, through

²⁹ Ibid., 85-6.

³⁰ Ibid., 82.

³¹ Proctor, Robert. *The Printing of Greek in the Fifteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1900. 93.

³² Morison, Stanley and Kenneth Day. *The Typographic Book 1450-1935*. London: Ernst Benn Limited, 1963. 32.

tanam sustinet imo in pede : cum sole
descendit in insulam , qua Tyrrenum
pelagus est ; et quae Aeoliæ appellantur:
laterorſus , in ſeptentriones uergenti
Pelorus obiicitur , et Italiae anguſtiae
ſunt : contra reliqua inſula ſubiacet, tra-
ctusque ii omnes, qui cum Lilyboeo in
Africam protenduntur. Ipa Aetna ra-
dices ſuas ferè in orbem deducit ; niſi ſi-
cubi orientem, et meridiem uerſus pro-
miſſo cliuo paulisper extenditur : celebs
degit ; et nullius montis dignata coniu-
gium caſte intra ſuos terminos contine-
tur. circumitur non minus , q̄. c. mil.
paſſ. aſcenditur ferè per uiginti , qua bre-
uior uia. Imi colles, ac omnis radicum
ambitus per oppida , et per uicos fre-
quens inhabitatur ; Baccho , Pallade ,
Cerere feraces terrae ; armentorum o-
mnis generis ſupra, q̄ credas, feraciſſimae.
Hic amoeniſſima loca circunquaq; : hic
fluuii perſonantes: hic obſtrepentis riui:

Figure 1.4 Aldine Press, Pietro Bembo's *De Aetna*, 1495.

revivals such as Bembo which Morison convinced the Monotype Corporation to cut, continues to be a popular book face.

Manutius also had Griffo cut one other style of typeface and in his time it proved to be the most successful: the italic [FIGURE 1.5]. Tradition has long held that Manutius designed this typeface in order to compact more text onto a smaller page, as it was first used in his series of octavo editions.³³ Nowhere, however, does Manutius cite economy as the reason for the introduction of italics. The reason given for their invention is that, like his Greek fonts, they closely approximate the cursive writing style that was popular among humanists. In the Senatorial Privilege granting him ten years of exclusive use of italics the typeface is described as “una lettera corsiva et cancelleresca de summa bellezza”, “a cursive chancery-style letter of the highest beauty.”³⁴ Much scholarly research has been devoted to finding the scribal model for Griffo’s italics, but all that can be ascertained for certain is that they are based upon the cursive handwriting style long practised by the same humanist Papal chancery scribes who provided the model for the first Roman fonts. Just as printing a book in Roman font or embarking upon a program of publishing Greek aligned Manutius with the humanist position, printing a book in italics catered to the established traditions of this group of scholars and aristocrats. And they certainly appreciated the product; Erasmus of Rotterdam wrote to Manutius and praised his italics as “those small types, the most beautiful in the world.”³⁵

³³ The argument of economy was first advanced by Firmin Didot in *Alduce Manuce et l’Hellénisme à Venise* (Paris, 1785). For later examples see Johnson, A. F. *Selected Essays on Books and Printing*. Percy H. Muir, Ed. Amsterdam: Van Gendt and Co, 1970. 41 and Grafton, 180. Joseph Loewenstein argues that while Aldus may have not used the typeface for economical reasons, those after him certainly did: Loewenstein, Joseph F. “*Idem*: italics and the genetics of authorship”. *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*. 20:2(Fall 1990): 205-224. 217 n.33.

³⁴ Quoted Fletcher, Harry George. *New Aldine Studies*. San Francisco: Bernard M. Rosenthal, Inc, 1988. 143.

³⁵ Quoted Lowry. *The World of Aldus Manutius*, 130.



Figure 1.5 Aldine Press, Juvenal and Persius, 1507.

Undoubtedly part of the success of Manutius' italics was their introduction coinciding with the release of his octavos. Contemporary praise for these smaller format classics is plentiful. Machiavelli's account of his daily routine includes carrying one of these smaller books and reading it outdoors.³⁶ Shortly after the introduction of the octavos, the diplomat Sigismund Thurzo wrote to Manutius, "For since my various activities leave me no spare time to spend on the poets and orators in my house, your books – which are so

³⁶ See page 11.

handy that I can use them while walking and even so to speak, while playing the courtier, whenever I find a chance – have become a special delight to me.”³⁷ Unlike Machiavelli, the diplomat or courtier could not consult a library of folios to “enter into the ancient courts of ancient men,” but by consulting Manutius’ octavos the same men could acquire the knowledge necessary for admittance to the fashionable courts of their own time.

The condensation of the italic type is generally given credit for the reduced size, and thus portability, of the octavos, but just as important was the humanist insistence on an unmediated text. Or rather, the perception of the unmediated text. It is true that Manutius’ texts do not contain marginal commentary; in most cases he limited the intrusion of the editor, often himself, to brief introductions and end notes. As he writes in the preface to the first octavo, the 1501 Virgil, quoted here in its entirety: “This purified text is offered in the form in which you see it; the minor and obscene poems we have not thought worth putting in this handbook. It is our intention to print all the best authors in this same type.”³⁸ On one level this is simply a marketing statement: if you like this book, you will like our others. But on another level it is a powerful statement on the ways in which the humanists envisioned their relationship with the text. The text of the classical genius is ‘purified’ from the corruption of scholastic authorities and incautious editors and the reader, as Manutius writes in another introduction, “could converse freely with the glorious dead.”³⁹ But, those same empty margins testify to the presence of a powerful shaper of meaning: Manutius. As Evelyn Tribble points out in *Margins and Marginality*, such claims to textual purity are paradoxical in that they rely upon an editor who scrutinizes past texts and constructs a new

³⁷ Quoted Grafton 186.

³⁸ Quoted Davies, Martin. *Aldus Manutius: Printer and Publisher of Renaissance Venice*. London: The British Library, 1995. 42.

³⁹ Quoted Manguel, Alberto. *A History of Reading*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1998. 136.

one. Manutius himself was aware of the interpretive role he played as editor. While he refrained from introducing commentary within the body of the text, he had no objections to including it or variant readings within his prefaces or endnotes. He even acknowledged that he participated in the interpretation of the primary text through editorial decisions about punctuation. In the introduction to his 1509 Horace he notes: "I added, as each place required, main and subordinate punctuation marks which, when well placed, act as commentary."⁴⁰ Part of the reason these texts appear so modern to a present day reader is that Manutius and the other editors at the Aldine Press, such as Pietro Bembo, liberally added not only periods and commas but colons, semi-colons and question marks to 'aid' the reader in comprehension. Beginning with Bembo's 1501 Petrarch, they also introduced the use of apostrophes in Italian to mark where a vowel had been lost due to elision. Like other introduced punctuation, this had the potential to both clarify and/or obfuscate: was it *Laura* or *L'aura*?⁴¹

While Manutius was aware that his editorial work shaped the reading experience, the physical format of his books, like other humanist texts, visually marginalized the editor and printer by relegating them to the front and end material. What the humanists wanted, and what he gave them, was the 'purified' text of a classic, or a modern work in the style of a classic, presented alone on the page in a typeface that represented the reader's ideological position. As a result, the press was a great success, and his readers carried his books throughout Europe in unprecedented numbers. During his lifetime he produced 120 editions with an average print run of 1,000 texts per edition; some editions had print runs of up to

⁴⁰ Quoted Richardson, Brian. *Print Culture in Renaissance Italy: The Editor and the Vernacular Text, 1470 - 1600*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. 204.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

3,000 – virtually unheard of at the time. Thus a very conservative estimate of the number of Aldine texts in circulation at the time of his death in 1515 would be at least 120,000. Based on these facts, Martin Lowry believes Manutius “must be regarded, purely on numerical grounds, as the most important focus for the distribution of literature to contemporary Europe.”⁴²

As Manutius’ books spread throughout Europe, so did his reputation. Erasmus of Rotterdam believed that through his books Manutius was creating a humanist empire; in a passage in *The Adages* he describes Manutius’ printer’s mark of an anchor and dolphin:

Indeed I should not think this symbol [the anchor and the dolphin] was more illustrious when it was stamped on the imperial coinage and passing from hand to hand, than now, when it is sent out beyond the bounds of Christendom, on all books in both languages, recognised, owned and praised by all to whom liberal studies are holy; especially by those who are weary of that old, crass, barbarous doctrine and aspire to true and antique learning ... all his desires are turned to one thing, all his tireless efforts are spent on it, no labour is too great, if only literature in all its glory may be restored pure and unsullied to honest minds.⁴³

Erasmus’ praise for Manutius contains all of the elements which mark humanism and the style of books it encouraged: ‘pure and unsullied’ texts instead of ‘old, crass, barbarous doctrine’ and the creation of an international empire of speakers of ‘both’ languages, Greek and Latin, who can converse freely about the universal literature, the classics. Erasmus came to Venice to live and work with Manutius, and together they produced an expanded version of *The Adages*. Greek expatriates such as Lascaris were valuable associates for Manutius as they both performed editorial duties and were sources of manuscripts for new editions. The English scholar Thomas Linacre appears to have been working with Aldus

⁴² Lowry. *The World of Aldus Manutius*, 257. These circulation numbers also give credence to Benedict Anderson's claim that "the book was the first modern-style mass-produced industrial commodity;" see *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: London, 1991. 34

⁴³ Erasmus. *The Adages of Erasmus*. Margaret Mann. Phillips, Transl. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1964. 179.

from the very beginnings of the press, and he returned to England to spread both humanism and its chosen vessel, the books of the Aldine Press.⁴⁴ One of Linacre's peers, Thomas More, has his Utopians introduced to Greek through the compact Aldine editions that Raphael carried in his luggage.⁴⁵ More's praise is not unwarranted, as records of personal and university library holdings throughout Europe show the prominence of Aldine editions over the products of all other printers of the time.⁴⁶

Twenty-first century marketing agencies are well aware of the power of branding. They attempt to create a logo or other distinctive symbolic construct which their customers will associate with positive experiences with their product. As brands become well-known they gain brand-recognition, and once a brand gains mass positive recognition it is said to have reached brand franchise.⁴⁷ Erasmus' comments on Manutius' anchor and dolphin mark and the widespread distribution of Aldine editions leave little doubt that Manutius enjoyed brand franchise among the humanists of his time (and among bibliophiles ever since). His printer's mark, along with his distinctive typefaces and octavo format, identified his books as the products of a discerning human scholar for the use of others who were, or would like to imagine themselves as, humanists.⁴⁸

Viewing the Aldine format as a brand helps explain one of the aspects of his press that has confused historians of typography. Modern critics have come to regard Manutius' Roman types as the premiere model for that style of type.⁴⁹ Conversely, his Greek and italic

⁴⁴ Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius*, 259ff.

⁴⁵ More, Thomas. *Utopia*. P. Turner, Ed. London: Penguin Books, 1965.

⁴⁶ See Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius*, especially Chapter 7, for discussion of the dissemination of Aldine texts throughout Europe.

⁴⁷ "Brand." *Wikipedia*. Web. 6 Apr. 2006. It might be interesting to explore the Aldine Press as the first successful commercial brand.

⁴⁸ As will be discussed in Chapter 3, the association between the Aldine brand and scholarly quality was still prevalent enough in the nineteenth century that William Pickering adopted the anchor and dolphin in order to connect his series of octavos with the Aldine tradition. See p.138ff.

⁴⁹ Consensus is, as always, not universal. Robert Proctor describes all of Manutius' typefaces, including the

fonts have not stood the test of time well and are generally considered imperfect examples of a regional and historic style. However, Manutius appears to have thought the opposite. He rarely commented upon his Roman-style fonts but went to great lengths to obtain Senatorial and Papal privileges protecting his right to exclusive use of Greek and Latin cursive typefaces. Manutius' actions are completely understandable when one thinks of him not as the altruistic scholar he is generally portrayed as (and which he portrays himself as in numerous introductions) but as a businessman trying to develop and market a brand. Roman typefaces came into existence shortly after the invention of the press and, although his were well-cut, Manutius could make no claim to originality. If he chose to work entirely in Roman faces he could hope to be no more than the best among other printers of that style. On the other hand, the Greek and Latin cursives he developed were the first types of their kind and thus differentiated the products of his press from his humanist printer peers. He was in possession of unique intellectual properties that gave him a competitive advantage and he tried every means in his power to protect this advantage. Whether he thought one typeface better than the other is irrelevant.

Aldus Manutius' attempts to protect his exclusive right to Greek and italic types have a profound impact on the history of the book and how we read it. He sets a precedent for the book being considered the unique intellectual achievement of an individual and thus a possession which can be protected by law. Manutius was not the first printer to apply for copyright; in 1469 the first Venetian printer John of Speyer took advantage of a policy which encouraged skilled immigrants to bring innovative trades to Venice by applying for, and receiving, the exclusive right to operate a printing house in Venice for five years.⁵⁰

Romans, as "devoid of beauty" (93).

⁵⁰ Loewenstein, Joseph F. "*Idem*: italics and the genetics of authorship". *Journal of Medieval and*

Unfortunately, he died shortly after the decree was granted and it was never enforced, opening the Venetian market to printers such as Nicholas Jenson. Numerous other late fifteenth century Venetian printers received privileges to print specific works, and there are even cases of authors being granted limited copyright over their own works; in 1486 Sabellico received what some consider the first authorial copyright.⁵¹ However, in his attempts to protect his market niche Manutius is more aggressive, and more successful, than any of his contemporaries. Shortly after he begins printing in 1496 he receives a twenty year Senatorial Privilege for printing in Greek. Between 1498 and 1500 he adds a number of Greek and Latin authors to his list of privileged works and in 1501 is granted ten years of exclusive use of italics. When counterfeits begin appearing from printers in Lyons less than a year later, he responds with a ten year Senatorial Privilege, a ten year Dogal Decree and a Papal Privilege, all against counterfeiters. The Papal Privilege is renewed by the two succeeding Popes within Manutius' lifetime.

In a cyclical pattern of influence, Manutius' humanist background and printing programme recommend him to the men who have the power to protect his business interests. This protection then allows Manutius to further his humanist program, resulting in Manutius having more influence within the channels of power and being able to seek further protection. The result is that the Aldine Press gains the respect and admiration of humanists Europe-wide and books bearing the Aldine Anchor and Dolphin become synonymous with the intellectual enlightenment preached by these same humanists. The press achieves brand franchise. The first result of this mass-recognition is that the Aldine

Renaissance Studies. 20:2(Fall 1990): 205-224. 207

⁵¹ See Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius*, 218. Joseph Loewenstein challenges this assertion and reads the privilege as protecting Sabellico's chosen printer and not the author himself. See Loewenstein, 208.

Press ceases to be merely a printing-house and Manutius simply an editor and printer; their names become a means of categorization and understanding. In ‘What is an Author?’ Michel Foucault sees the ‘author’ not as a person but as the author-function, “a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction.”⁵² Rather than providing meaning, the author-function limits potential meanings of a work. Of course, Manutius is not the author of ‘his’ books; he is the editor and printer, but the ‘printer-function’ operates in the same manner. Our understanding of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* is determined because we know the book was published by the same Manutius who introduced italics. Preconceived notions of Manutius and the relationships between the various works attributed to his press limit possible readings of his typographical experiments.

The emergence of the printer-function is a crucial step in the eventual development of the author-function. Foucault’s theory of the author-function is directly tied to a study of the means of control exercised over the distribution of texts. The function arose from the need to punish producers of transgressive texts, a movement he associates with censorship and the rise of authorial copyright in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵³ However, the foundations of the author-function can be detected several centuries earlier among the Italian printers. The privileges received by Aldus Manutius clearly show that authoritative structures took an interest in controlling the dissemination of texts by validating certain printers as official and punishing others. Furthermore, it was the printers, and their partners

⁵² Foucault, Michel. “What is an author?” *Modern Criticism and Theory*. David Lodge, Ed. New York: Longman Inc, 1988. 197-210. 209.

⁵³ Foucault, 202.

the booksellers, and not always the authors who were more often punished for the production of texts deemed offensive; an author merely wrote the text but the printer and bookseller disseminated it and were thus perceived as doing the greater harm.⁵⁴

Simultaneous with the rise of the printer-function, the doctrine of humanism and its validation of ‘glorious dead’ authors begins to influence opinions of contemporary authors. Works by Petrarch and Dante are printed in the same format as editions of Cicero, Plutarch and Aristotle, and aspiring humanists dream that their works will be preserved for the ages alongside these men. Sabellico’s privilege is granted in 1486 because the Collegio thought that he wrote “so fine a history, one that deserves to be immortal.”⁵⁵ In 1507 Erasmus wrote to Manutius that an Aldine edition of his translations for Euripides would make him immortal, “especially if printed in those little characters of yours, which are the most elegant in the world.”⁵⁶ Writers who had their names attached to hundreds and thousands of copies of their works become conscious of their individual reputations and begin to sign their works.⁵⁷ This connection between the author and the work becomes even more prominent because of another innovation in textual production: the title page. The earliest experiments in title pages appear around 1470, and the first title page containing the title, place and date of production, and names of the printers was produced in 1476.⁵⁸ The book was a calendar, so there was no author, but the utility of the title page soon caught on and it became a valuable means for both identifying the book and its author and advertising the printer and bookseller.

⁵⁴ Febvre, Lucien and Henri-Jean Martin. *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800*. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and David Wootton, Ed. David Gerard, Transl. London: NLB, 1976. 150

⁵⁵ Quoted Loewenstein, 211.

⁵⁶ Quoted Grafton, 193.

⁵⁷ Febvre and Martin, 261.

⁵⁸ Goldschmidt, 63.

Although the majority of the privileges obtained by Aldus Manutius were binding only within the area controlled by Venice, their impact on subsequent opinions of printers and authors was far-reaching. The humanist scholars who travelled from across Europe to work at and be published by the Aldine Press were exposed to the protectionary measures of the Venetian State and Manutius' use of them, and when they returned to their home countries they brought back more than just books. In his study of the foundations of English copyright, Joseph F. Loewenstein identifies the first case in England to be a two-year exclusive privilege for the printing of Thomas Linacre's *Progymnasmata* of 1517. As previously discussed, Linacre was one of Manutius' first editors and worked closely with him during the period when Manutius applied for his first privileges. When he returned to England and one of his works was plagiarized, he applied for a printing privilege modeled on Manutius', setting the precedent for an English system of royal privileges for printers, and for authorial copyright, based upon Venetian models.⁵⁹

In addition to the royal privilege, this edition of Linacre's work was differentiated from the plagiarism by an introductory poem:

William Lyly on Linacre's Grammatical Exercises
Reclaimed from Plagiarism

The Page which not long since lay hidden
Beneath a false name, caked with muck,
Now printing out the true author's name –
Linacre, is cleansed, washed in fresh water.⁶⁰

Unlike the medieval manuscript which often circulated anonymously, the humanist book relied upon the inclusion of the author's name in order to give the work validity: how could one expect to commune freely with the glorious dead if he was uncertain of the person he

⁵⁹ Loewenstein, 223.

⁶⁰ Quoted Loewenstein, 222.

was communing with or was worried about the author's words being tampered with by a later editor? Like Linacre's privileges, this emphasis on the author's 'pure' text also has its precedent in Manutius, whose reputation as a scholar was based on both his diligence in seeking out the best manuscript editions as copy-texts and for his skill in purifying a text from the corruptions of previous editors.

The best example of the steps Manutius took to vouchsafe the 'purity' of his editions is the 1501 Petrarch. In the colophon, introduction and petition for copyright for this work Aldus claims that his edition is based upon a manuscript written in Petrarch's own handwriting. The validity of this claim has been challenged on many fronts, and while it appears that Manutius did not work closely with the manuscript of Petrarch, it is important to consider the purposes of Manutius' claims.⁶¹ One purpose was undoubtedly to differentiate the Aldine edition from other editions of Petrarch and thus make it preferable to potential buyers. But this assertion raises the further question: why is a text based on an authorial manuscript inherently better? For centuries manuscripts had been copied and circulated without the attribution of an author, let alone an authorial manuscript. But, as noted above, inherent in humanism is a desire for direct communion with the originating intellect. And for the humanists, no one was better at this task of recovering the authorial voice than Manutius. Erasmus writes in praise of him:

A labour indeed worthy of Hercules, fit for the spirit of a king, to give back to the world something so heavenly, when it was in a state of almost complete collapse; to trace out what lies hid, to dig up what is buried, to call back the dead, to repair what is mutilated, to correct what is corrupted in so many ways, especially by the fault of those common printers who reckon one pitiful gold coin in the way of profit worth more than the whole realm of letters.⁶²

⁶¹ For a discussion of the accuracy of Manutius' editorial claims see Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius*, 225ff.

⁶² Quoted McKitterick, 109.

By being, and advertising himself as, a careful editor who cared more for scholarly accuracy (at least by the standards of the day) than profit, Manutius could “call back the dead” for his readers. These readers responded and the fame, and thus marketing power, of the Aldine Press grew.

Long before they achieve brand franchise, modern companies protect their brand through trademark and copyright, and Aldus Manutius’ protectionary measures are an important early forerunner to those current intellectual property rights. And, like so many later iterations of copyright law, they failed miserably at protecting the rights of the copyright holder. To understand Manutius’ case, it is necessary to look first at general practices in early printshops regarding copyright. The first printers continued to use the model of copyright practised during manuscript production: open distribution. Unless they were taking dictation, the scribe’s job entailed creating a copy of a work. Copies circulated freely because it was only through the act of copying that a text could be disseminated *en masse*. In a dedicatory letter to a patron, Boccaccio writes, “I have been turning over in my mind to whom I should first send it, that it might not languish in idleness on my hands ... if you shall think fitting to give it courage to go forth to the public, sent out under your auspices it will go free.”⁶³ Until given to a patron the text exists “in idleness” and afterwards the patron can, and Boccaccio hopes will, make it available to the public for copying: if the patron does not share the text, it would be scarcely less idle than if it had remained in the author’s hands. Seizing upon this model, the first printers freely copied manuscripts and each others’ works. For the humanist printers, the majority of their early

⁶³ Quoted Root, Robert K. “Publication Before Printing.” *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*. 23 (1913): 417-31. 419.

books were copies of well-known classics; even a well-known printer such as Jenson rarely published a 'new' edition, choosing instead to re-issue previously published texts in order to save the expense of editing.⁶⁴

One obvious outcome of a means of replication, whether it be by hand or by press, based on reproducing a previous document is the potential for the introduction of changes during transcription. So inevitable is this change that the principle of 'universal variation' has become a basic tenet of bibliographical studies: every act of copying introduces new errors.⁶⁵ Universal variation is a valuable, even necessary, source of evidence to bibliographers; however, readers, and especially authors, tend to find it counterproductive: the term 'corruption' is most often applied to these introduced changes. The history of the book is rife with complaints against bad copies and copyists, but perhaps most relevant in the context of humanism are Petrarch's. Just as he found fault with the handwriting of scribes, Petrarch found their accuracy in transcription to be less than desirable, writing, "Strange to say, instead of what they have been given, they like to scribble something or other; such is their ignorance, laziness, or scorn."⁶⁶ In order to protect his own works from this corruption he attempted to strictly control the production of his texts, copying them out himself or relying upon trusted scribes such as Giovanni Malpaghini, the scribe previously mentioned in connection with the development of the humanist script. By limiting the introduction of errors, the text could be seen as a direct conduit between the author and the reader; Armando Petrucci writes, "perfect textuality, a direct emanation from the author validated by his autograph writing, was (and forever remained) a guarantee of absolute

⁶⁴ Lowry, *Nicholas Jenson*, 93.

⁶⁵ Greetham, D.C. *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction*. New York: Garland, 1994. 288.

⁶⁶ Petrarch. "Senile 5.1." *Letters of Old Age*. Aldo S. Bernardo, Saul Levin and Reta A. Bernardo, Transl. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992. 152-56. 155.

readability for the reader.”⁶⁷ Given Petrarch’s emphasis on the importance of authorial manuscript, it is easy to see why Manutius went to such lengths to claim that his own edition of Petrarch was based on an original. One can also see here the emergence of another tenet in bibliography, albeit one that is no longer as popular as ‘universal variation:’ the preference for authorial manuscript for copy-text or the attempt in the critical edition to recover this lost original.⁶⁸ To recover the author’s voice, one should try to get as close to the original work as possible; if a manuscript was not available, a careful editor, such as Manutius, must “dig up what is buried, to call back the dead.”

When Manutius’ contemporaries copied his editions they threatened to undo the textual ‘purity’ that he so prided himself on. But because of the current conditions in production, there was little he could do besides attain local privileges for exclusive production of some titles; once his books travelled outside of Venice, the texts could be, and were, freely copied. And more than just the content was copied. Because of the immense fame the Aldine Press brand had attained, printers, especially in Lyons, ceased simply re-issuing Manutius’ texts and started to counterfeit his editions. In yet another example of the printer-function preceding the author-function, it was not simply enough to produce a text by a famous author; the book had greater appeal if it was in the style of a famous press, a style which also allowed for the production of smaller, and thus cheaper books. Lyons was a commercial centre in Europe, and its printers focused on books that had widespread appeal and were thus profitable: law books and vernacular literature, both

⁶⁷ Quoted Chartier, Roger. *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Lydia G. Cochrane, Transl. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994. 54-55.

⁶⁸ See Bowers, Fredson. *Bibliography and Textual Criticism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964; especially pages 7ff. For current opinions of this practice see Greetham and McGann, Jerome. *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992.

printed in Gothic types.⁶⁹ The first humanist-style book was not printed there until 1492, when Jodocus Badius Ascensius, a scholar-printer like Manutius who later became the foremost scholarly printer in Paris, opened his shop.⁷⁰ However, Lyons printers soon began to produce large numbers of humanist texts by counterfeiting Manutius. Within one year of the Aldine Press releasing the first octavo book in italics a Lyons press had released a copy of it. When one considers that the enterprising printer, Balthazar de Gabiano, had to receive the book, cut types and print the book within a year it becomes evident just how efficient book production and distribution were becoming. Soon Lyonese presses began to release counterfeits which included Manutius' own prefaces. The counterfeiting industry grew so rapidly that in 1502 Manutius sought the previously discussed privileges and Papal protection, which proved useless in stemming the flow of illicit copies, and published his *Monitum* in March of 1503. The *Monitum* was much in the spirit of Petrarch; it complained of the poor presswork, paper and editorial skills of the Lyonese printers. It even supplied a list of errors which had been introduced so that judicious readers could detect whether they were reading a true Aldine or a Lyonese copy. However, instead of protecting his reputation, and his market, the *Monitum* provided Lyonese printers with a guide to improving their editions.⁷¹ If Manutius was concerned solely with the accuracy of his texts and thus their worth to scholars this should have placated him, but as he continued to lodge complaints against the counterfeiters and to renew his privileges, one must conclude that he was concerned with more than textual accuracy – the Lyonese printers were a threat to his humanist market.

⁶⁹ Hirsch, *The Printed Word*, 117.

⁷⁰ Goldschmidt, 15.

⁷¹ Johnson, A. F. "Books Printed at Lyons in the Sixteenth Century." *Selected Essays on Books and Printing*. Percy H. Muir, Ed. Amsterdam: Van Gendt and Co, 1970. 126 n.1.

When Manutius died in 1515 his privileges ended, and his Venetian peers rapidly adopted the format that he had tried so hard to protect. At the same time, the role of Italian presses in the history of book design diminishes as another nation rises to prominence: France. Updike sees the first sixty years of the sixteenth century as the ‘Golden Age of French Typography,’ and attributes the rise in French printing to the reign of the humanist Francois I (1515-1547) and the campaigns in Italy, both of which contributed to making things ‘Italian’ fashionable.⁷² These same invasions also weakened the Italian economy and reduced its role as an international trading centre, which undoubtedly had an effect on the local market for fine books and thus the Italian printing industry. French humanist-style printing was concentrated in two cities: Paris, the traditional home of French learning and printing and Lyons, with its close proximity to Italy and printers experienced in producing humanist texts. A number of printers from this period have come to be recognized for their skill: Henri Estienne, his son Robert, and Simon de Colines in Paris and Jean de Tournes and Gryphius in Lyons.⁷³ In the books of these men the italic typeface continues to be used for the writings of humanists and the Roman typeface reappears and eventually replaces the Gothic as the standard typeface for printed works, including religious ones. But, unlike Manutius’ forgotten lettercutter Griffo, the credit for this change is rightly given to the designer and/or typecutter, not the printer. To understand the ascension of the Roman type one must look to Geoffrey Tory, Robert Granjon and Claude Garamond and the tremendous change they brought about in the way letters were designed and how a printer stocked his cases of type.

⁷² Updike, *Printing Types*, 1.189-90. I believe Updike also identifies this era specifically as ‘the’ Golden Age in order to differentiate it from the other era of French design prominence, the rise of the Modern typeface in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, an era he did not find appealing.

⁷³ For examples of French work from this period see Morison, *Four Centuries of Fine Printing*, 97-142.

Geoffrey Tory's role in the rise of the Roman typeface has been much contested over the last four centuries. In one camp are those who see Tory and his book on letter design, *Champfleury*, as the foundation for the adoption of the Roman typeface in France, a claim supported by the belief that Tory taught Garamond letter design.⁷⁴ In the other camp are those who believe *Champfleury*, and Tory's work as a printer, had little direct influence on French printing and were rather indicative of the general spirit of the time. Regardless of the degree of Tory's influence, his work provides much insight into how the Roman of Manutius came to be the French, and then the European, typeface. Around 1518 Tory returned to France from a trip to Italy, bringing with him the humanist's deep respect for the classics: "I see now that, if we wish to acquire some certain kind of knowledge, we must beg and take it, as if by stealth, from the Greeks and Latins."⁷⁵ And while Tory's humanism was much influenced by his stay in Italy, he had no desire to bring Italy to France; rather, he sought to establish France and the French language as the true seat of the Renaissance. He began *Champfleury* in 1523 and published it in 1529, a period when there was a growing desire to separate France from Italian influence and restore French national pride: France had been defeated at Patvia in 1525 and the 1529 Peace of Cambria ended the French presence in Italy.⁷⁶ *Champfleury* was to be part of a publishing program that established rules for the pronunciation, orthography and writing of French so that French authors could use it, and not Latin or Greek, to express themselves: "it would be much better for a Frenchman to write in French than in another language, as well for the

⁷⁴ The Garamond/Tory connection stems from a tribute to Tory written 150 years after his death which claims '*Garamundum calcographum principem edocuerit.*' Quoted Beaujon, Paul. "The 'Garamond' Types." *The Fleuron*. Number 5. Westport: Greenwood Reprint Corporation, 1970: 131-179. 133.

⁷⁵ Tory, Geoffroy. *Champfleury*. George B. Ives, Transl. New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 1967. 12.

⁷⁶ Lowry, *Nicolas Jenson*, 220-1. See also Henry Heller. *Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth Century France*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003.

correctness of his writing, as to give lustre to his nation and enrich his native tongue, which is as fair and fine as any other when it is well set down in writing.”⁷⁷

Not only would the French nation benefit from having its brightest minds write in their native language, but it would also improve ‘correctness’ to have authors write in their vernacular. Since at least the time of Plato critics of writing have complained that it constituted yet another level of obfuscation from the ‘real.’ Tory believed that by writing in a strictly ruled vernacular an author could communicate more clearly with readers: “if our tongue were duly conformed to rule, and polished, . . . we shall find that, little by little, we shall traverse the long road, and shall come to the cast fields of poesy and rhetoric, full of fair and wholesome and sweet-smelling flowers of speech, and can say downrightly and easily whatsoever we wish.”⁷⁸ In order for this idealized language to be communicated most effectively in print, it must be printed in a typeface appropriate for the content. In one of the many allegories that make *Champfleury* so tedious for the modern reader Tory explains the ultimate goal of his project:

Mercury, playing upon his pipe and cutting off the head of Argus, will be interpreted here as the man who is diligent in seeking the purity of all goodly letters and true knowledge, by employing for the better instruction of others both his spoken and his written words, and quelling and putting to shame the inveterate barbarisms of the unlearned, even as we see three noble personages to be doing to-day: Erasmus the Hollander, Jaques Le Fevre of Estaple in Picardy, and Budé, the pearl of noble and studious Parrhisians, who, by night and day, keep watch and ward, and write for the profit of the public weal and the exaltation of perfect knowledge.⁷⁹

Tory believes the best of men should seek to fight barbarism by writing true knowledge in pure letters. By doing this these exalted men will increase the public good. It is easy to see the influence of humanists such as Petrarch and Manutius on Tory, and his opinion of the

⁷⁷ Tory, 32.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, xxii-xxiii.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

ultimate purpose of authors will be echoed repeatedly; in 1937 Stanley Morison would write that the purpose of printing is to reproduce the work of those who write for “the education, information, and recreation of the public”⁸⁰ One also cannot help but notice the conspicuous absence of an Italian author from his list of humanists.

Champfleury provides detailed instructions on how letters must be formed if they are to perform the sacred task of preserving knowledge. And whether one believes that the cross-stroke of a capital ‘A’ should be proportioned to the human body so as cover the genitals and thus signify Modesty and Chastity in learning, Tory’s treatise does speak to a number of contemporary trends in French typography [FIGURE 1.6].⁸¹ As part of his attempt to separate the French Renaissance from the Italian, Tory explains that the Romans took their letters from the Greek, distorting them in the process, and that prior to being invaded by Rome Gaul was heavily influenced by Greek culture and not ‘barbaric.’⁸² That being said, Tory was undoubtedly influenced by Italian work. In particular, Tory brought back a copy of the Aldine Press’ *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* to France and the influence of that book’s typeface on his own designs has been well-documented.⁸³ Another Italian influence came by way of geometrical treatises on the proper proportions for letters. Tory writes that no letter can be properly formed “without Compass or without Rule” and many of his diagrams on the proper formation of letters posit the letter within a 10 × 10 grid.⁸⁴ Similar exercises were performed, beginning in the mid fifteenth century, by Italian

⁸⁰ Morison, Stanley. “The Art of Printing.” *Selected Essays on the History of Letter-Forms in Manuscript and Print*. David McKitterick, Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981. 7-23. p.18.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁸² Martin, Henri-Jean. *The History and Power of Writing*. Lydia G. Cochrane, Transl. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994. 304-5. See Tory, 18.

⁸³ Morison, Stanley. “The Type of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*.” *Gutenberg Festschrift*. A. Ruppel, Ed. Mainz, 1925. 254-8.

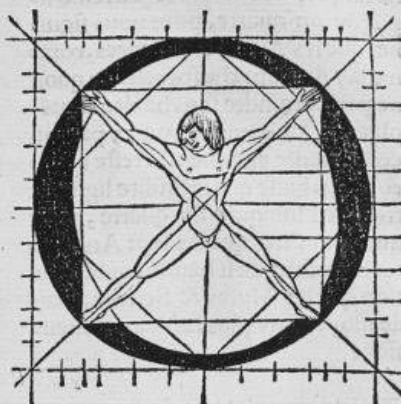
⁸⁴ Tory, 86.

LE SEIGOND LIVRE.

Leste maintenant designer le corps humain en le O. pour bailler clere-
ment entendre ce qu'auons cy dessus dit en son raccourcissement. & pour monstrez
que le centre dicelluy O. se trouuera tout droit au nombryl de L'homme y figure.
La quelle chose est en la forme qui sensuyt.

Ordōnā
ce de le.
O. a lhō
meequi-
distāmet
pieds &
mains
estandu.
Raison
de la figu-
re Rōde,
& de la
Quarree.

LHomme, piedz & mains equidis-
tāmant estandu, & le O. en ceste
figure, accordēt en quadrature, en ron-
deur, & en centre, qui nous signifie la
perfection dudit corps humain, & du-
dit O. entēdu que la figure ronde est la
plus parfaicte de toutes les figures, &
la plus capable. La figure quarree equi-
angulaire en quadrature est la plus sta-
ble & solide, mesimēmēt quāt elle est Cu-
be, cest a dire, iustemēt quarree en six
faces comme est yng det.



Ie ne veulx laisser a mōstrez par figu-
re accordant a nosdites lettres Atti-
ques commāt L'homme estandu sus ses
pieds ioinctz, & ayant son centre non pas au nombryl, comme le dernier na-
guerēs cy pres figure en le O, mais au penyl, nous est demonstration tres eui-
dente a cognoistre le iuste lieu requis a faire le traict de trauers & la briseure es
lettres qui en veulent & requerent auoir en elles. celles sont. A, B, E, F, H, K,
P, R, X, Y. Ie nen baille pas figure ne exēple de toutes lune apres lautre pour
cause de breuete, mais seulement de trois qui seront A, H, & K, que nous fi-
gurerons cy apres.

Du traict
trauerce-
ant en le
A. accor-
de au mē-
bre genis-
tal de
L'homme.

Notable
singulier.

LA ligne basse du trauerceant tra-
ict de la lettre A. cy pres desi-
gnee & figuree, est iustement assize
deffoubz la ligne diametralle de son
quarre, & deffoubz le penyl de L'ho-
me aussi y figure. Toutes les susdi-
tes autres lettres qui ont trauerceant
traict ou briseure, lont dessus la di-
cteligne diametralle. Mais ceste let-
tre cy A, pource quelle est close par
dessus, & faicte en Pyramide, re-
quiert son dit trauerceant traict plus
bas que la ditte ligne diametralle.
Celluy trauerceant traict couure pre-
cisement le membre genital de l'hom-
me, pour denoter q̄ Pudicite & Chastete auāt toutes choses, sont requises en
ceulx qui demandent acces & entree aux bonnes lettres, desquelles le A, est
lentree & la premiere de routes les abecedaires.

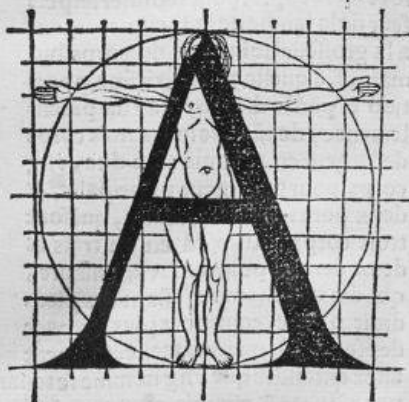


Figure 1.6 Geoffery Tory's *Champfleury*, 1529.

humanists looking for the underlying logic for Roman inscriptions. A number of proportions were debated; Felice Feliciano proposed a ratio for the height to width of descenders of 10:1 while the mathematician Luca Pacioli supported a 9:1 ratio in his work *On the Divine Proportion*.⁸⁵ These treatises spread along with humanism and in 1525 Albrecht Dürer proposed similar letter designs in his *On the Just Shaping of Letters*. Manutius seems to have been aware of these studies and the typeface of the *Poliphili*, and the typeface Tory seems to have based upon it, comply roughly to the 10:1 ratio.⁸⁶ Tory acknowledges these other studies but discounts Pacioli's as a plagiarism of Da Vinci, criticizes several other Italians for not explaining their rationale, and critiques Dürer's alphabet letter-by-letter.⁸⁷ Tory's criticism of the Italians seems especially weak, considering his rationale for a 10:1 ratio is that the number 10 represents Apollo and the Nine Muses, but the geometrical methodology he popularized would become increasingly important in French type design, culminating in the *romain du roi* of the late seventeenth century discussed in the next chapter.

Roman typefaces come to predominate French printing after 1529. Before this time very few books written in French were printed in Roman; they were printed in Gothic, rotunda or bastarda. But in the same year as Tory published his work, Galliot du Pré brought out a series of small format French medieval classics in Roman type.⁸⁸ Even the traditional realm of liturgical books begin to embrace the new types. Tory printed a Book of Hours in Roman in 1525 and Robert Estienne printed the Vulgate in two columns of Roman

⁸⁵ Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius*, 137.

⁸⁶ Meiss, M. *Andrea Mantegna as Illuminator: an Episode in Renaissance Art, Humanism and Diplomacy*. Columbia, 1957. 69.

⁸⁷ Tory, 34-36.

⁸⁸ Goldschmidt, 24-25.

in 1534, establishing the basic design of the printed Bible for the next four centuries.⁸⁹

Legal, scientific and medical texts soon followed suit, a move undoubtedly encouraged by the spread of humanism to these fields.⁹⁰

But one must guard against giving Tory too much credit for the rise of the Roman typeface in France, and subsequently in Europe, for this move was undoubtedly assisted by a monumental change in the operation of a print shop. When the first printers decided to set up shop they either cut, or had someone else cut, the punches from which they could make their fonts. Before becoming printers, Gutenberg was a goldsmith and Jenson was a die-cutter at a mint, and their skill in these trades allowed them to cut their types. A printer like Manutius relied upon a craftsman, Griffo, for his types; the Aldine Press introduced no new type designs after Griffo and Manutius split in 1502, relying instead on casting new types from their existing matrices.⁹¹ Printers who had neither the knowledge nor the resources to have exclusive types cut had to purchase matrices, or completed fonts, from other printing houses. But, as Manutius' privileges show, typefaces were often jealously guarded, and the most common reasons for typefaces being sold were bankruptcy and death; most famously, Aldus Manutius' partner Andrea Torresani purchased fonts from Nicolas Jenson's widow. In mid-fifteenth century France this exclusive relationship between a printer and a designer/typeface is replaced, except in the case of a few privileged presses, by the rise of a typefounding industry independent of the printing houses.⁹² The careers of Claude Garamond (1480-1561) and Robert Granjon (1513-1589) bridge this transition, as both men started by cutting fonts for individual printers but then designed typefaces that would go on

⁸⁹ Lowry, *Nicolas Jenson*, 221.

⁹⁰ Goldschmidt, 26.

⁹¹ Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius*, 89.

⁹² Johnson, A.F. "The Supply of Types in the Sixteenth Century." *Selected Essays on Books and Printing*. Percy H. Muir, Ed. Amsterdam: Van Gendt and Co, 1970. 146-165. p. 146.

to be the dominant European typefaces for several centuries.

Garamond began his career as a letter-cutter in Paris in about 1510 and during his lifetime he, according to his countryman Fournier, “purged letters of all the Gothic they retained, and carried them to such a pitch of perfection that it is impossible to refuse him the glory having surpassed all who went before, and of never having been surpassed by those who came after.”⁹³ Typefounding was not recognized as a distinct trade from printing in France until 1539, and before this time Garamond must have been in the employ of individual printers. Most notably, he is given credit as the typecutter for the revised Roman type, based upon the Aldine letter and Tory’s writings, introduced in the early 1530s by Simon de Colines and Robert Estienne [FIGURE 1.7].⁹⁴ The basis for this supposition is that in 1541 Robert Estienne, as King’s Printer, commissioned Garamond to cut the *grecs du roi* for Francis I. Given the importance of this task it is assumed that Estienne must have worked previously with Garamond. In the years that followed Garamond cut typefaces which were then sold to numerous printers across Europe: A.F. Johnson identifies one of his italic fonts from around 1540 in the books of ten Parisian, three Lyonnais and two Genevan printers.⁹⁵ Despite his success, typefounding was not yet a lucrative business; when Garamond tried his hand at publishing he wrote that those “who merely engrave types and go no further, are only making honey for the publishers.”⁹⁶ His printing venture failed and he died in 1561 a poor man. His widow auctioned off the contents of his foundry; the majority of his punches were sold to Guillaume Le Bé, who established the extremely long-lived Parisian foundry that was bought by Fournier *l’aîné* in 1731, and the matrices went to

⁹³ Fournier, 285.

⁹⁴ Beaujon, 135.

⁹⁵ Johnson, “The Supply of Types in the Sixteenth Century,” 154.

⁹⁶ Quoted and Translated, Morison, Stanley and A.F. Johnson, “The Chancery Types of Italy and France.” *The Fleuron*. Number 3. Westport: Greenwood Reprint Corporation, 1970: 23-52. p.49.

Christopher Plantin, who was soon to establish one of the dominant European printshops and foundries in Antwerp. Through the sales of these men, and their heirs, the Garamond Romans became the dominant Roman typefaces in Europe.

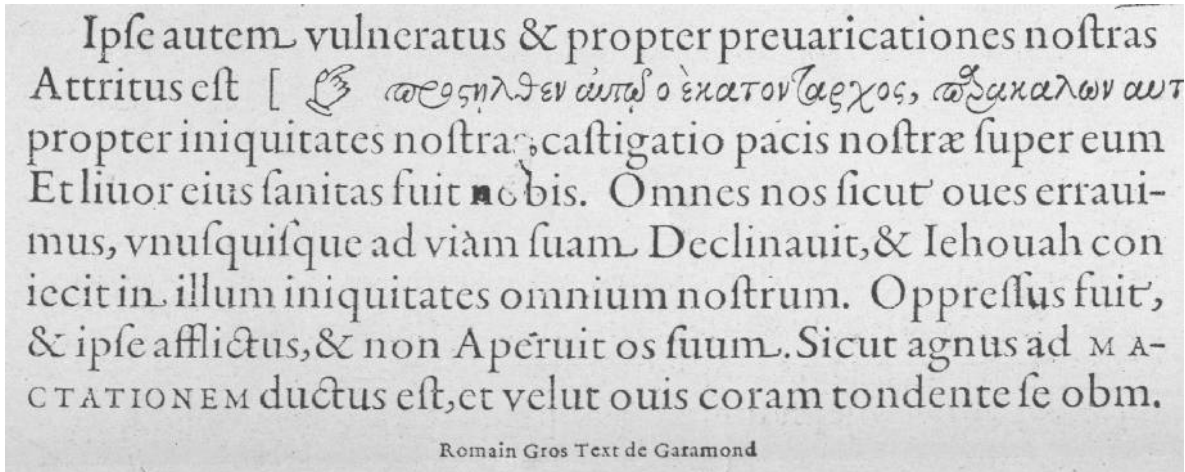


Figure 1.7 Garamond Roman, Egenolff-Berner specimen, 1592.

The Roman typeface, however, was not the only one used for printing books: many humanist texts were still printed in the italics popularized by Manutius and his plagiarists. The source of the italics that were to dominate alongside Garamond’s Romans was his countryman Robert Granjon. Like the first German craftsmen who spread printing, Granjon worked in a number of European centres. He cut types in Paris, Lyons, Antwerp and Florence and ended his career at the Vatican Press in Rome. He kept possession of his punches and sold only matrices, allowing him to sell the same typefaces multiple times.⁹⁷ And he did not sell only to printers in these cities; from 1570-74 he offered fonts for sale at the Frankfurt Book Fair.⁹⁸ How widespread the trade in typefaces had become is evident by

⁹⁷ Johnson, “The Supply of Types in the Sixteenth Century,” 154.

⁹⁸ “Robert Granjon – Font Designer.” <http://www.linotype.com/7-2028-7/robertgranjon.html> . Web. 25 April 2006.

examining the dissemination of just one of his typefaces, a Cicero Italic cut in 1565.⁹⁹ It appears to have been initially cut for Christopher Plantin at Antwerp, but it appears shortly afterwards in books produced in Louvain, Frankfurt, Cologne and Basle [FIGURE 1.8]. Plantin included it in his 1567 specimen, as did the Egenolff-Berner foundry of Frankfurt in 1592; the latter foundry bought Granjon's punches after his death. Johnson has found six other German or Dutch specimens from this period which include it. It appeared in England in 1655 and was obtained by the Oxford University Press in 1690. Oxford still has its original matrices and last used them to produce type in the twentieth century.

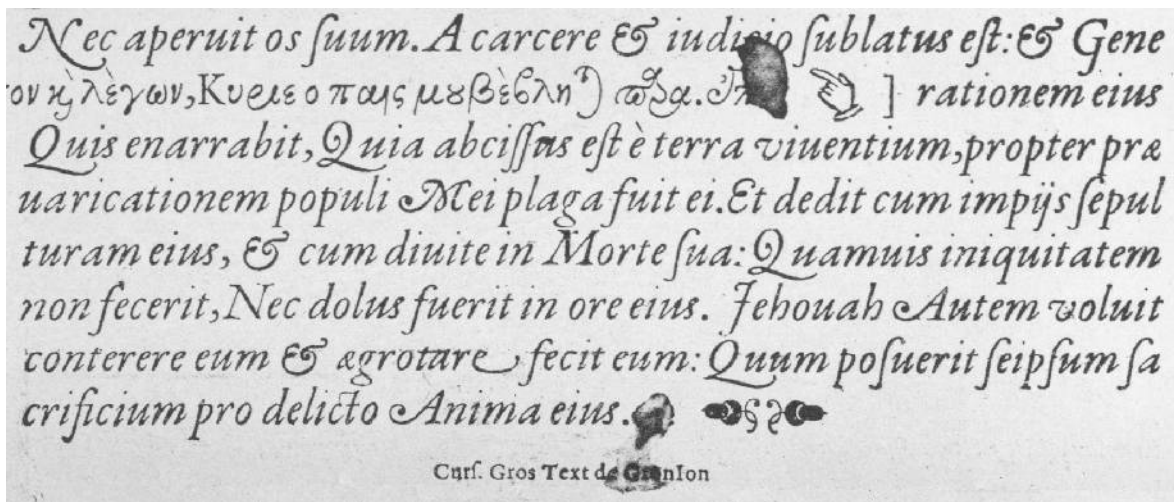


Figure 1.8 Granjon Italic, Egenolff-Berner specimen, 1592.

In his discussion of why the Roman letter replaced the Gothic, D.B. Updike quotes Franz Steffens: “If Humanist writing had not been adopted ... to-day, according to all probability we should have a great number of different national writings, difficult to read, just as in the early mediaeval days before Carolingian miniscule had come to supplant the

⁹⁹ Johnson, “The Supply of Types in the Sixteenth Century,” 155.

national hands.”¹⁰⁰ As with most discussions of the humanist style, readability is seen as its primary advantage over the Gothic. But, as this chapter has shown, concerns about readability seem to have had little direct influence on why books were written, or printed, in the humanist format. Petrarch may have been concerned with legibility, but books in the humanist style were also a proclamation by their writers, and their readers, of their devotion to humanism, or at least an attempt to associate themselves with this movement. When the first printers set up shop they chose to cut Gothic or Roman typefaces not out of concern for legibility but, as numerous examples including the work of Nicholas Jenson show, because they wished to produce books for a certain market. When a printer such as Aldus Manutius embarked upon a programme of strictly humanist texts there was no question of printing them in Gothic, even though it was still very popular among readers of other genres of texts. Similarly, when other printers ‘appropriated’ Manutius’ texts they did not just take his content and print it in their old fonts – they had new fonts cut to mimic the form of the book, and the style of the man, which had become associated with the new learning. As humanistic thinking spread to other fields, the Roman and italic typefaces were applied to new genres of books and by the mid sixteenth century they even began to replace the Gothic in liturgical and devotional texts.

But if the spread of the humanist book style can be attributed to the success of humanism, it must also take some of the credit for that success. Every humanist book was a visual manifesto against scholasticism. The wide, empty margins contrasted with those of the ‘medieval’ book which were often overflowing with commentaries that threatened to overwhelm the primary text, thereby teaching the reader that what was important was to

¹⁰⁰ Quoted Updike, 56.

discover what the author said, not what others had applied to the text. These blank margins were complemented by the rounded Carolingian-style letters which were considerably less economical than the condensed Gothic script, again signifying that the words on the page were important and should not be cramped just to save parchment. Soon after the printers adopted this form they came increasingly to use the title page to identify the author of the work and the printer. These things now mattered, for the humanists needed to know with whom they were communing and, perhaps even more important in the case of Aldine texts, who prepared the text and purified it from the corruptions of the barbarians.

Wherever the humanist book went it proclaimed to its readers, even before they actually read the words on the page, that in order to understand the world one must return to the source of knowledge: the author and the classics. And through its typeface it insinuated one other basic tenet of humanism: that knowledge, and those authors, are universal. Every forward-thinking (and yet backward-looking) person should read Cicero, and Erasmus was at home wherever he went in Europe. The persistence of humanism is obvious in Steffens and Updike's praise of the Renaissance for eliminating local variations of script, but one can only wonder what was lost as printers stopped creating books specific to their region and increasingly relied upon a small number of typefaces produced by centralized foundries. Updike himself seems to hint that something was lost, as his history of typefaces is organized by nation and often draws attention to the assertion of 'national genius' in the fonts of a region. But for those of us with a less discerning eye when it comes to detecting these subtle variations of serif and stroke, the first hundred years of printing saw the end of variety and the introduction of homogeneity in the book. It would take over 150 years for a new style to be introduced.

Chapter 2

Regression and Revolution? The Rise of the Modern Typeface

The books of the seventeenth century introduced the readers of Europe to Racine, Shakespeare and Cervantes, but the printers of these books have come to be despised as the worst practitioners of the "art that preserves all others." At best, the period is glossed over; most discussions of the major figures and movements in typography jump from Granjon's work in the mid sixteenth century to Grandjean and the cutting of the *romain du roi* at the end of the seventeenth century, pausing only to offer a brief condemnation of the work in the interim. At worst the era, especially for printing in England, is singled out as the nadir of typographical progress: "Types were poor, paper was brownish and shoddy, and the work of the printer careless and tasteless. Although in this country [England] printing had never reached the excellence of the best Continental printers, it had also never before fallen so low as it had by the year 1700."¹ But while the typefaces and ornate designs of this period have largely been forgotten, several events within the century are worthy of discussion and cast much light on twentieth century prejudices towards typography and printing. The rise of the Dutch printing industry in the seventeenth century has garnered much less attention than any other national domination of printing, and one can only wonder if the commercial and/or quasi-legal nature of many Dutch books has resulted in them being seen in a less favourable light than the products of other scholar-printers. Also, the first treatise on printing, Moxon's *Mechanick Exercises on Printing*, appeared in 1685 and provides valuable insight into contemporary attitudes towards Dutch and English

¹ Jennett, Sean. *Pioneers in Printing*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1958. 47.

printing; perhaps not surprisingly, the printers of this era did not consider themselves to be producing substandard work or to be using illegible typefaces – it fell to later generations of printing historians to label them as such. By reading these later accounts it becomes clear that the seventeenth century has been treated so poorly not because of some inherent fault of the printers but because the social and ideological conditions within which these printers worked are at odds with those aspired to by later printers.

Eighteenth century printers have faced a different, but perhaps no less damaging, appraisal from future generations of their peers. It is true that no history of printing excludes the names Grandjean, Baskerville, Didot or Bodoni from its list of the great typographers of Europe, but this acknowledgment of their skill is often a veiled, or not-so-veiled, criticism of the typographical movement they introduced: the ‘Modern’ typeface. When these men introduced the first major stylistic changes to the Roman typeface in 150 years they began a debate over the proper form of letters that would last until the twentieth century and whose spectre still appears whenever anyone suggests a revision of bookfaces. As with the discussion of seventeenth century typography in this chapter, the work of these men will first be put within its contemporary context: what were their reasons for suggesting these changes and what outside forces may have influenced these decisions? Only after this has been done can one accurately assess critiques of their designs and determine that what has raised the ire of later printers and historians of the book is not the inherent (il)legibility of the designs but the challenge to the authority of tradition which these faces represent. By appearing to turn their backs on the humanist foundations of the Roman typeface and by embracing rationalism and supplying the typefaces for the industrialized presses of the nineteenth century, these designers seem to challenge the

traditional practice of many printers. At the same time, when one examines the eighteenth century printers through their own writings it becomes clear that they were often just as dedicated to humanistic concerns as those who opposed them.

The press may have been invented in Germany, and the appearance of the printed book refined in Italy and France, but the first comprehensive manual on printing produced in Europe was Englishman Joseph Moxon's *Mechanick Exercises on the Whole Art of Printing* in 1685 [FIGURE 2.1]. The reasons why it took over two hundred years for the first treatise on printing to be produced has generally been attributed to a desire by the trade's practitioners to reduce competition. George Psalmanazar, editor for Samuel Palmer's post-humously published *General History of Printing* (1732), wrote that he believed Palmer focused on history and gave up writing a practical manual of printing because the latter "met with such early and strenuous opposition from the respective bodies of letterfounders, printers, and bookbinders, under an ill-grounded apprehension, that the discovery of the mystery of those arts, especially the two first, would render them cheap and contemptible."² If Palmer still encountered opposition almost a half-century after Moxon published his work, one can only guess that Moxon faced similar opposition to his incredibly detailed exposé of the inner workings of the printing trades. That Moxon completed his project becomes understandable when one examines his reasons for publishing his book and his own tenuous position as a printer operating outside the bounds of current English printing restrictions and the Stationer's Company.

Moxon led a varied life, learning printing from his father and establishing himself as a maker of globes and sometimes printer and letter-cutter in London. He was named

² George Psalmanazar, *Memoirs* (1764), 284-5, quoted McKitterick 169.

MECHANICK EXERCISES:

Or, the Doctrine of

Handy-works.

Applied to the Art of

Printing.

The Second VOLUME.

By *Joseph Moxon*, Member of the Royal
Society, and *Hydrographer* to the King's
Most Excellent Majesty.

LONDON.

Printed for *Joseph Moxon* on the West-
side of *Fleet-ditch*, at the Sign of
Atlas. 1683.

Figure 2.1 Titlepage to Moxon's *Mechanick Exercises*, 1683.

Hydrographer to the King in 1662 and a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1678. He was well acquainted with several prominent members of the Royal Society, including Hooke, Halley and Pepys, and in 1666 he cut the symbols for Bishop Wilkins' *Essay towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language*. These two strands of his life, printer and natural philosopher, came together with the publication of his *Mechanick Exercises*, a series of handbooks detailing the 'Handy-crafts' which he began in 1677. As an advertisement for the *Exercises* explains,

Forasmuch as all Natural Knowledge was Originally produced (and still eminently depends) upon Experiments, and all or most Experiments are couched among the Handy-crafts; and also that Handy-works themselves may be improved: There was begun (by *Joseph Moxon*, Hydrographer to the Kings Most Excellent Majesty), *Jan. I, 1677*, Monthly Exercises upon the Mechanicks...³

Like his natural philosopher peers, Moxon believed experimentation was the basis of knowledge, and he felt that some trades were both sources of this experimentation and stood to benefit from his elucidation of their connection with the sciences. In particular, and not surprisingly for a cartographer, Moxon was interested in geometry; in the introduction to the First Volume of *Mechanick Exercises*, which dealt with blacksmithing, Moxon writes that he hopes to "proceed to those and all other Handy-works whatsoever that work upon Geometrical Principles."⁴

The Preface of Moxon's work on printing leaves little doubt that he sought to provide a rational foundation for the operations of the printer:

Upon consideration of what he [Dee] has said in behalf of *Architecture*, I find that a *Typographer* ought to be equally qualified with all sciences that becomes an *Architect*, and then I think no doubt remains that *Typographie* is not also a Mathematical Science.

For my own part, I weighed it well in my thoughts, and find all the

³ *London Gazette*, Thursday, September 16, 1678. Quoted Moxon, xlvi.

⁴ Reproduced Moxon, 397.

accomplishments, and some more of an *Architect* necessary in a *Typographer*: and though my business be not Argumentation, yet my Reader, by perusing the following discourse, may perhaps satisfie himself, that a *Typographer* ought to be a man of Sciences.

Taking his cue from Dee, whose preface to *Euclid's Elements of Geometrie* (1570) praises the skilled architect as a man well-versed in both science and art, Moxon seeks to establish typography as a scientific art. Moxon believes the chief reason for the typographer to have scientific knowledge is so that he can ensure the letters he prints with have 'a true shape': "... though we can plead no Ancient Authority for the shape of *Letters*, yet doubtless (if we judge rationally) we must conclude that the *Romain Letters* were Originally invented and contrived to be made and consist of Circles, Arches of Circles, and straight Lines."⁵ If the typographer uses a font which complies with the geometrical principles Moxon elucidates, the result will be letters "which easing the Eyes in Reading, renders them more legible."⁶ For the first time the geometrical regularity of letterforms is directly connected with their readability, and thus their suitability for the printer's, and reader's, use.⁷

But while Moxon's book was part of a program of rationalization, it also served other ends. As Herbert Davis and Harry Carter point out in the introduction to their edition of the book, Moxon may have been moved to write the book by a desire to impart rationality to printing, but he seems to have forgotten this aim as the project continued.⁸ Another goal of the book, although never explicitly stated as such, was to advance the status of the Oxford University Press and aid in its struggles against the Stationer's

⁵ Moxon, 21-22.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁷ This is not to say that previous writers did not design letters geometrically. The discussion of Geoffrey Tory and other letter designers in the last chapter outlined early forays into geometrical letter design, but these essays combined geometry with less rational explanations of letterform (see Tory) or were intended to guide the artist or engraver, not the printer of books intended for extended reading.

⁸ Moxon, lii.

Company. At the time the two were embroiled in a bitter debate as to whether or not the Oxford Press had the right to produce books to be sold outside the university. One of the key points of evidence to be raised in favour of Oxford was a history of the introduction of the printing press which posited that the first press in England had been at Oxford, not William Caxton's in London.⁹ In his brief history of the printing press, Moxon relies upon the mathematician John Wallis' account of the introduction of the press; Wallis was the Keeper of the University Archives at Oxford and his history of the press was written in defence of the university.¹⁰ Moxon further favoured the Oxford Press by dedicating his book to Bishop Fell, Leoline Jenkins and Joseph Williamson, the current leaseholders of the Oxford University Press, men he praised for their "ardent affections to promote *Typography*" and their "Candid Zeal for the promulgation of good Learning."¹¹

Moxon's decision to side with Oxford undoubtedly sat well with his Royal Society peers and did much to advance this alternate history of the press in England until it was finally put to rest by pro-Caxton William Blades in the nineteenth century.¹² It may have been an effort to ingratiate himself as a printer and founder within these societies; in 1668 Moxon attempted to sell fonts to Oxford but it bought only one. He was also vying for the position of Printer to the Royal Society, an attempt supported by his lapse in membership during the search for a replacement to John Martyn.¹³ But there may have been an even more personal reason for Moxon to release a pro-Oxford, 'rational' and scientific account of the printing trades – as an attack on the Stationer's Company and its part in the

⁹ See Grafton, 326ff.

¹⁰ Moxon, 5ff.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹² Grafton, 367.

¹³ Jagger, G. "Joseph Moxon, F.R.S., and the Royal Society." *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*. 49 (1995): 193-208. 202.

regulation of these trades. The work of printers and founders in seventeenth century England was severely restricted by governmental controls. Beginning in 1557 no press could be erected outside London except one each at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and the number of presses in London was limited to twenty. From 1640 to 1662 restrictions relaxed somewhat, but were revived in 1662 and lasted until 1693. The work of founders was even more limited, with only four appointed founders allowed to operate in England. Throughout the majority of this period the primary means of enforcement was the Stationer's Company, and Moxon, who was both printer and founder, was legally registered to practice neither profession.

From his very beginnings as a printer Moxon worked on the boundaries of the law. From 1637 to 1643 he lived with his father, James Moxon, who set up printing houses in a number of Dutch cities. The elder Moxon was a Puritan opposed to the current regime in England and among his productions were English Bibles for illegal importation into England and other libellous materials for which he was prosecuted and fined (but never caught).¹⁴ Once the political situation in England changed, James moved his operation to London and father and son produced a number of books together. Joseph then embarked upon his career as a globe and map maker, but continued to print books until 1671 and began working as a lettercutter and founder in 1668. That Moxon managed to operate outside the bounds of the Stationer's Company can be explained by a number of legal exemptions. An Ordinance in 1653 allowed apprentices or those with 'Patrimonial Right' to operate as printers without prohibition.¹⁵ Moxon may have also been protected by a 1614 legal decision which allowed freemen from one guild to practice other trades – Moxon was

¹⁴ Moxon, xx.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

a member of the Weaver's Company.¹⁶ He also may have considered his royal patent as hydrographer as legitimization for his work as a printer and founder.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Stationer's Company twice targeted Moxon for suppression.¹⁸

In addition to his personal reasons for finding fault with the Stationer's Company Moxon may have also begrudged them professionally, for the Company was increasingly coming under the control of publishers and booksellers at the expense of printers. Anthony Grafton believes that the locus of the seventeenth century book trade in England shifted from the printer to the bookseller as sellers and publishers came to control the copies and/or manuscripts which printed books were based upon, and as the wealth of the booksellers increased so did the power they wielded within the Stationer's Company.¹⁹ Robert L'Estrange, the first Licensor of The Licensing Act of 1662, noted, "The *Stationers* ... would Subject the *Printers* to be absolutely *Their Slaves*; which they have Effected in a Large Measure already."²⁰ With this situation in mind, Moxon's book can also be read as a manifesto declaring the superiority of the 'Master Printer' over the publishers. In his introduction to the various tasks to be discussed, Moxon begins with the Master Printer, "who is as the Soul of *Printing*."²¹ The book describes how such a Master should equip his shop and then goes on to detail each of the crafts carried out by those workers who form the 'Body' governed by this soul. Booksellers, those responsible for being the intermediary between the producers and the consumers of books, hardly ever enter into the book, the one

¹⁶ Maruca, Lisa. "Bodies of Type: The Work of Textual Production in English Printers' Manuals." *Eighteenth Century Studies*. 36:3 (2003). 321-43. 340n14.

¹⁷ Grafton, 79n47.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 79.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 105-6.

²⁰ *Considerations and Proposals*, 26-7. Quoted Grafton, 106.

²¹ Moxon, 12.

small reference to them being in the section on warehousing.²² The Stationer's Company is also conspicuously absent, with the one reference to it in the Appendix pertaining to the customs of the printing house. And in this reference, which is a description of the yearly feast for printers at Stationer's Hall, Moxon subtly points out that the heads of the Stationer's Company are not printers and are there only by the grace of the printers: "The Master, Wardens and other Grandees of the Company (although perhaps no Printers) are yet commonly invited."²³ As one final blow against the booksellers Moxon removed them from the distribution of *Mechanick Exercises* by issuing it as a periodical; this form of publication had been pioneered a generation earlier by John Streater who used it to elude censorship and the Stationers.²⁴

Moxon's *Mechanick Exercises* is much more than a guide to the operations of the typographer. By attempting to rationalize the crafts, especially letter design, Moxon begins the process of 'scientifically' creating typefaces, an endeavour which would soon be picked up by the French Royal Academy in their own survey of the crafts. At the same time Moxon's science combined with his narrative of the craft to undercut the position of the Stationer's Company, a move which stood to benefit Oxford, his Royal Society peers and Moxon himself. In short, this first book on printing exemplifies how theories of typography which, while appearing to be neutral essays on the nature of 'good' books, are ideologically-weighted statements and why any discussion of them which neglects their specific historical context can serve to perpetuate these ideologies or unknowingly adopt them into radically different discourses. Yet Moxon's book can also serve another purpose:

²² *Ibid.*, 320.

²³ *Ibid.*, 330.

²⁴ Grafton, 107-8.

to give insight into various contemporary trends in typography, specifically the attitudes towards the author and the Dutch printing industry in his time.

In his 1644 argument against state control of the press, *Areopagitica*, John Milton describes books as “not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them.”²⁵ This image of the book as a ‘pure’ vessel of the intellect is not unique, and the scribal traditions praised by Petrarch and Manutius’ disdain for his plagiarists are but two examples of how the clumsy hands of craftspeople are to be kept from sullyng the books they produce. Moxon undoubtedly considered his book and its advice to Master Printers as part of this tradition of ensuring the accurate transmission of the author’s thoughts. In his section on compositors he informs them that “by the Laws of *Printing*, a *Compositer* is strictly to follow his *Copy*, viz. to observe and do just so much and no more than his *Copy* will bear him out for; so that his *Copy* is to be his Rule and Authority.”²⁶ He goes to great lengths to explain the education, including the many languages, that the compositor should have in order to accurately render the author’s copy. But Moxon’s desire to accurately represent the workings of an actual printshop reveals just how much of an illusion this emphasis on accurate transcription of copy was in seventeenth century printshops.

Just because the compositor was well-educated and careful did not mean that changes to the copy were unavoidable; indeed, much of Moxon’s advice to compositors is to tell them when they should make changes. Immediately after he outlines the ‘Laws of

²⁵ Milton, John. *Areopagitica: A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*. H. B. Cotterill, Ed. Toronto: Macmillan and Co, 1961. 5. See Introduction, note 2.

²⁶ Moxon, 192.

Printing' concerning copy Moxon makes an exception to them: "But the carelessness of some good Authors, and the ignorance of other Authors, has forc'd *Printers* to introduce a Custom, which among them is look'd upon as a task and duty incumbent on the *Compositer*, viz. to discern and amend the bad *Spelling* and *Pointing* of his *Copy*."²⁷ Rather than careless or vulgar workmen being the source for errors in printing, Moxon believes it is the authors who must take blame, for it is they who supply the copy; presumably the same could be said for publishers who supplied bad copy. This disdain for authors is clearly evident throughout Moxon's discussion of composing. He writes that, while the compositor should amend copy in English and the corrector copy in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, the author is responsible for the correctness of other languages. But Moxon has little faith in them: "And how well other Forrain Languages are *Corrected* by the Author, we may perceive by the English that is *Printed* in Forrain Countries."²⁸ In an 'Advertisement to Authors' at the end of the section, Moxon states that if an author is concerned about changes during composition, and history is rife with examples of authors who bristled at them, one need only "deliver his *Copy* perfect: For then he may expect to have his Book perfectly Printed."²⁹ Moxon provides instructions for them so that they can mark up their copy to indicate punctuation and emphasis for the compositor. Yet even this advice comes across as patronizing, as he points out that only "curious" authors will follow his instructions, implying the majority do not care, and reiterates that errors or changes in the book resulting from unclear copy are the author's responsibility and no fault of the printer. Furthermore, the author cannot expect to read proofs or introduce changes after the type is

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 192.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 192.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 250.

set, unless the compositor “be very well paid for it over and above what he agreed for with the *Master-Printer*.”³⁰ As one final slight against authors, and it cannot be but intentional given that this is a book on printing, throughout the book the names of those involved in the printing trade are almost always emphasized by a change in typeface, but ‘Author’ only very rarely is.³¹

If all copy was clearly written or printed, the compositor would need only know “but his Letters and Characters,” but because authors cannot be trusted to write clearly or properly, the compositor must be a “Scholler.”³² Only by employing such a learned compositor can the reputation of the print shop be ensured; by emending the author’s copy the compositor keeps erroneous work from being printed that “may bring Scandal upon himself, and Scandal and prejudice upon the *Master Printer*.”³³ A well-educated compositor has the further advantage of being able to assist in the rhetorical delivery of the author’s argument:

A good *Compositer* is ambitious as well to make the meaning of his *Author* intelligent to the *Reader*, as to make his Work shew graceful to the Eye, and pleasant in Reading: Therefore if his *Copy* be Written in a Language he understands, he reads his *Copy* with consideration; that so he may get himself into the meaning of the *Author*, and consequently considers how to order his Work the better both in the *Title Page*, and in the matter of the *Book*: As how to make his *Indenting*, *Pointing*, *Breaking*, *Italicking*, etc. the better sympathize with the *Authors* Genius, and also with the capacity of the Reader.³⁴

While it might seem obvious that the compositor should read the book before composing, indeed that the act of composition is a ‘reading’ of sorts, Jan Tschichold, in a paragraph remarkably similar to Moxon’s, would still feel the need to write in the early twentieth

³⁰ *Ibid.* 250.

³¹ Need to check an original edition before making this claim conclusively, which is difficult as few exist and, as they cost upwards of \$150,000, nobody has digitized one.

³² *Ibid.*, 191.

³³ *Ibid.*, 219.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 212.

century that

Typography is the arranging of words meant to be read. Before the words can be arranged they must be understood. The typographer must first read through the manuscript and understand it. Until he has done so, he will not know what it is all about. The intelligent arrangement of the words is the first duty of the typographer. Equally important is the job's appearance – a good typographer must know how to make the text easiest for the reader's eyes.³⁵

Only by reading the copy thoroughly can compositors, whether they be a seventeenth century Dutch-style practitioner or a twentieth century modernist, ensure that they are best meeting the needs of the author and the reader. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, Tschichold does not mention the author *per se*, choosing instead to focus on the autonomous 'manuscript,' because of his modernist leanings. Moxon, a printer working within the humanist tradition, has no such qualms about referring to the text containing an author's 'genius,' even though he seems to doubt the actual capabilities of authors throughout his book; this paragraph is itself advice on how the compositor can 'improve' the author's argument. And, while he generally fails to typographically emphasize 'author,' in this paragraph he does not; it is one thing to slight them when discussing their shortcomings, quite another when acknowledging that it is their work which is the reason why printing exists.

The ambiguity of Moxon's, and later printers', attitudes towards authors has caused some writers to draw overly hasty conclusions about the relationship between the two. In "Bodies of Type" Lisa Maruca suggests Moxon's account stresses the role of the workman while a later work, Smith's *A Printer's Grammar* (1755), emphasizes the transcendental authorial genius by suggesting that Smith's hypothetical compositor was no longer allowed

³⁵ Tschichold, Jan. *Asymmetric Typography*. Ruari McLean, Transl. Toronto: Cooper & Beatty, 1967. 54. For more on Tschichold and the Bauhaus see Chapter 4.

to make changes to the copy.³⁶ While this argument would be extremely useful given the focus of the current work, it seems to overlook much of Smith's description of the compositor's function: "By the Laws of Printing, indeed, a Compositor should abide by his Copy ... But this good law is now looked upon as obsolete, and most Authors expect the Printer to spell, point, and digest their Copy, that it may be intelligible and significant to the Reader."³⁷ Smith, admittedly, capitalizes 'Author' more consistently, but he seems just as convinced as Moxon that the role of the compositor is to edit while setting type.

If Moxon's attitude towards authors seems contradictory, praising their genius while condemning their ignorance, his opinion of the importance of the readers' needs seems no less troubled. Like 'Author,' 'Reader' is rarely emphasized typographically, the exception being the quotation in the previous paragraph where 'Reader' is emphasized in the first sentence, but not the last. Indeed, 'Reader' itself is rarely used; when discussing the end consumer of the book Moxon generally uses 'eye' or 'eyes.' This might be partly accounted for by Moxon's desire to lend the scientific credo of his Natural Society peers to printing; discussing the actual act of composition Moxon removes the compositor and discusses only the operations of his ocular organs: "And as his Eyes are very quick in reading his *Copy*, and in shifting its Visual Ray..."³⁸ But the greater reason for Moxon ignoring the needs of readers seems to be that, while he may occasionally refer to making "the Sence of the Author more intelligent to the Reader," these concerns do not seem to figure that highly in the actual operation of the print shop.³⁹ He spends but a few pages, in a work of several hundred, actually detailing how the compositor should best lay out the page, and these are

³⁶ Maruca, 36.

³⁷ Smith, 199.

³⁸ Moxon, 205.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 193.

almost entirely devoted to practical advice for making the compositor's, not the reader's, job easier: "A good *Compositer* takes care not to *Set* too *Close*, or too *Wide*; for if he *Set* too *Close*, and should happen to leave out a *Word* or two, it will give him a great deal of trouble to get those *Words* in ... And if he *Sets* too *Wide*, and he chance to set a *Word* or two twice over, he may be forc'd to make *Pidgeon-holes* e're he comes to a *Break*."⁴⁰ Whether the reader finds it easier if the words are spaced closely or widely is not even an issue, except that removing a word and being forced to leave large spaces ('Pidgeon-holes') is not very attractive. This same passage also acts as a counterpoint to Moxon's advice on careful composition and the rhetorical emphasis of words, and my reading of his own typography, as words seem to be emphasized haphazardly, rendering 'the Sence of the Author' unclear.

In addition to providing contemporary, albeit somewhat contradictory, evidence of printers' opinions towards authors and their readers, Moxon also identifies what typefaces were considered best in the period. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Englishman Moxon does not mention French printing anywhere in the book. However, nationalistic concerns cannot be the only reason for this omission, as the work of Englishmen fares little better; the only English typographers mentioned are in the dedication to Dr. John Fell and the other Oxford printers. Moxon singles them out for praise, and their opinion of English lettercutters must have influenced him; Fell wrote in 1672, "The foundation of all successe must be layd in doing things well; and I am sure that will not be don with English Letter."⁴¹ As mentioned previously, some of the English Letters Fell rejected were Moxon's. For Fell, Moxon and most seventeenth century English printers there was but one contemporary source for superior letters: the Dutch. The 'Fell Types,' the Dutch punches and matrices that Fell

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 208.

⁴¹ Quoted Moxon, 359.

purchased for the Oxford University Press between 1668 and 1672, are still there and occasionally used, and the press employed a number of Dutch founders to cast their types.⁴² In discussing the proper geometrical design for letters Moxon identifies that his opinions are based upon Dutch letters, especially those cut by van Dyck: “Since the late made *Dutch-Letters* are so generally, and indeed most deservedly accounted the best, as for their Shape, consisting so exactly of Mathematical Regular Figures ... I think we may account the Rules they were made by, to be the Rules of true shap’d *Letters*.”⁴³ Moxon’s peers seemed to have agreed, as Dutch letters continued to be the standard until Caslon’s foundry became firmly established in the second quarter of the eighteenth century.

There are a number of hypotheses to explain the pre-eminence of Dutch printing in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The first focuses on the importance of two key printing houses in Holland: Christopher Plantin in the sixteenth century and the Elzevirs in the seventeenth. The career of Plantin, a Frenchman who settled in Antwerp, was touched on in the last chapter in regards to the rise of the typefounder. While his printing has been considered skilful (“The text of this delightful little book ... harmonizes agreeably with the spirited rendering of the designs”⁴⁴), Plantin’s greatest contribution to typography is generally considered to be the products of his foundry. He had cut, or purchased, punches and matrices from the best French typecutters of his day, Granjon, Garamond and Simon de Colines, and he sold their typefaces widely. Undoubtedly it is the products of Plantin’s foundry that A.F. Johnson is referring to when he describes seventeenth century English type specimens: “the trade in types was largely international, and ... type designs were very

⁴² Reed, Talbot Baines. *A History of the Old English Letter Foundries*. A.F. Johnson, Ed. London: Faber & Faber, 1952. 136-37.

⁴³ Moxon, 22-23.

⁴⁴ Updike, 2.10.

long-lived ... English printers of the generation of Moxon bought their foreign types in the Netherlands, but these types were by no means always cut by the founders who supplied them. The original punches may have been engraved in France or even Italy, and, as likely as not, they may date from the middle years of the sixteenth century.”⁴⁵ The success of Plantin and his heirs ensured that the printers of Europe were accustomed to buying their fonts from Holland.

The other printing house in Holland that is often singled out for praise is that of the Elzevirs. This printing dynasty was founded in 1583 by the protestant Louis Elzevir when he, like many French printers, relocated to Holland from France in order to escape religious prosecution. Five of his sons became printers, and they established printing houses in Utrecht, Leyden and Amsterdam and a family business that was to last over 150 years. Most famously, in 1625 Bonaventure and Abraham commenced publication of the extremely small 32mo editions which have since become synonymous with the Elzevir name [FIGURE 2.2]. Like Aldus’ introduction of his *octavos*, the Elzevir 32mos made scholarly books and the classics available in a convenient and more affordable form. And just as Erasmus praised the books of Aldus for giving him immortality, the contemporary authors the Elzevirs chose to print praised them for granting them eternal life alongside their humanist idols. Jean Guez de Balzac wrote to them in 1650, “I have been made a part of the immortal republic. I have been received in the society of demi-gods ... Thanks to you, sometimes I am a neighbour of Pliny.”⁴⁶ Aldus’ popularity resulted in disseminating

⁴⁵ Johnson, A. F. “Notes on Some Seventeenth-Century English Types and Type Specimens.” *Selected Essays on Books and Printing*. Percy H. Muir, Ed. Amsterdam: Van Gendt and Co, 1970. 305-312. 312

⁴⁶ Quoted Davies, David W. *The World of the Elzeviers 1580-1712*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954. 150.

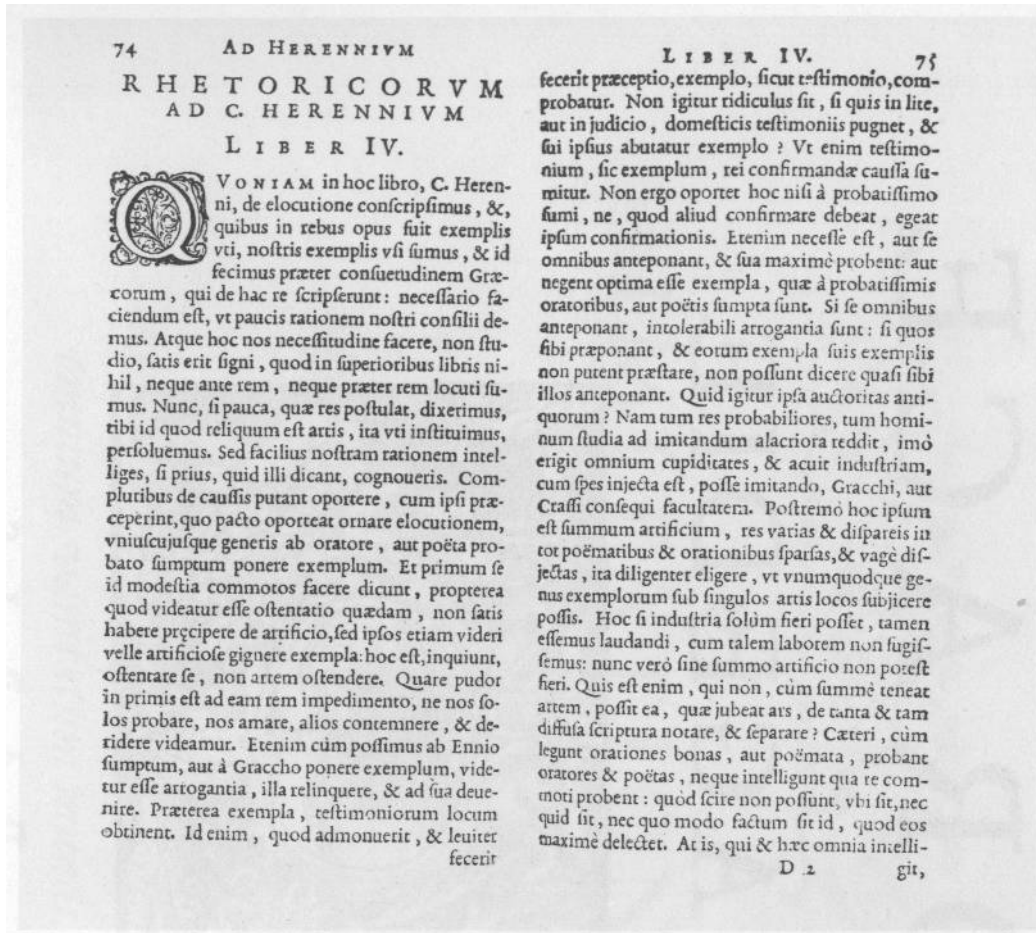


Figure 2.2 Bonaventure and Abraham Elzevir, Cicero's *Opera*, 1642.

the type designs of Griffo, and the success of the Elzevir's spread Dutch typography, especially that of Christoffel van Dyck. By choosing these types as his model of perfection, Moxon was simply following the popular opinion of his day.

But if the Elzevirs have been given credit for the popularity of Dutch typography, they have also borne the brunt of the criticism, for Dutch printing is no longer seen as great, and is often condemned for being among the worst. One can see the underlying causes for this disdain in the praise of their printing by H.G. Aldis: "In the Elzevirs we have parted company with the scholar-printers who themselves edited and revised the texts which they

presented to the learned world. We have instead intelligent printer-publishers, who were primarily men of business, however anxious to produce books that both textually and typographically should sustain their credit for good work.”⁴⁷ While one may question the true prevalence of Aldis’ humanist printers, given that Jenson certainly did not fit that model, that even Manutius hired outside editors and translators, and the success of Aldus’ plagiarists, the Elzevirs are seen as marking the end of the humanist printer era. They might still be considered scholars, and Aldis praises them for their careful work, but they are first and foremost ‘men of business’ and are seen as opening the floodgates for commercial, and thus often flawed, printing. Criticism of the Elzevirs is invariably related to their willingness to sacrifice aesthetics and readability for the profitability of their small books. In 1651 Nicolaas Heinsius wrote to Gronovius, “The Dupuy brothers wish your Livy had been printed in a larger format. They say the small types are a continual subject of complaint by scholars of their city.” Gronovius responded, “I have already received a similar opinion ... but try to make men listen to reason who have nothing in their heads but the love of gain.”⁴⁸ Fournier would write in 1756 that “The descendants of the Elseviers are more shopkeepers than artists. They judge books by the profits they make.”⁴⁹ By choosing to publish in a small format the Elzevirs made the classics accessible, which was to be praised, but it also made them hard to read. They also made money on the books, which allowed their work to be written off as just another Dutch commercial enterprise. Even though it is well-documented that printers before the Elzevirs were successful financially, the assumption has always been that they were more concerned with their texts than with

⁴⁷ Aldis, H.G. *The Printed Book*. John Carter and E.A. Crutchley, Eds. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1941. 31.

⁴⁸ Quoted Davies 147-8.

⁴⁹ Fournier, 272n.1.

making money; again, Aldus Manutius is generally held up as the exemplar of the printer foregoing commercial concerns in order to spread learning (but the realities of Aldus' business practices discussed in Chapter 1 challenge this assumption). The Elzevirs' success, which has so many similarities with Manutius', has been selected as the turning point between the artistic, humanist printer of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the Grub Street printer concerned only with gain.

The financial success of the Dutch in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries undoubtedly has made it easier to portray Dutch printers as profiteers, but the reasons behind this success also serve to explain further why Dutch printers rose to pre-eminence during the seventeenth century. While much of Europe suffered through the Wars of Religion and other calamities, the Dutch Republic provided a home for those fleeing religious or government prosecution and became the dominant commercial centre of Europe. Prominent among these immigrants were printers: Plantin and the eldest Elzevir both emigrated from France, and Moxon's father fled there from England. The severe governmental repression of the press in England has already been touched upon, but French printers were hardly better off. France, which had assumed the mantle as the home of Europe's best printers in the early sixteenth century, began to restrict the printing industry in the seventeenth century in an attempt to repress seditious or pornographic works. The enormous success of the French printers had resulted in a large number of printing houses; in 1644 there were 75 printshops in Paris with a total of 181 presses.⁵⁰ As the economic situation worsened in much of Europe during the mid-seventeenth century, it was feared that these printers would turn to illicit printing in an attempt to keep their presses busy.

⁵⁰ Febvre, Lucien and Henri-Jean Martin. *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800*. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and David Wootton, Ed. David Gerard, Transl. London: NLB, 1976. 196.

Colbert enacted strict copyright legislation to cut down on piracy and until 1686 the appointment of new masters and the setting up of new shops was forbidden.⁵¹ As a result, many of France's printers moved their operations to Holland.

While printers may have moved their operations to Holland, this is not to say that they started publishing Dutch books, which touches on the final subject usually connected with Dutch printing in the seventeenth century: piracy. Efforts to repress illicit printing in England and France had the opposite effect – the printers simply moved their operations to Holland and continued to produce the contraband materials. The extensive trade networks of the Dutch allowed printers in Holland to supply all of Europe with books published in various vernacular tongues. The elder Moxon went to Holland in order to produce English Bibles to be smuggled back into his home country. By the end of the seventeenth century Amsterdam was the next largest producer of French books after Paris; Febvre and Martin write, “from 1690 to 1790, the works of the most famous French writers were read throughout Europe in editions published outside of France.”⁵² Even a famous printing family like the Elzevirs did not refrain from piracy; many of their works were printed without a printer's imprint or with a false one, and when they reprinted works first published by others they sometimes reproduced the original publisher's imprint.⁵³

The best printers in Europe in the seventeenth century were Dutch and their typefaces were used and copied widely, but these printers have not received the laurels accorded their peers in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Instead, Dutch printing in this period, even the best, has come to be regarded as a regression in the development of the

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 197.

⁵³ Davies, 145.

book by those few who do not merely neglect to comment on it. D.B. Updike describes the work of the Elzevirs as “compact pages of a solid, monotonous type which is Dutch and looks so.”⁵⁴ What exactly Updike means by ‘Dutch’ as a national categorization is unclear; he identifies ‘French’ with delicate and airy and ‘English’ with rustic utility. He seems to describe Dutch printing most often as ‘monotonous,’ but also imbues the national adjective with an air of impropriety; he writes, following French writers, that “Van Dyck slavishly copied the design of Garamond’s fonts. Dutch authorities think differently.”⁵⁵ The tradition of plagiarism associated with the success of the Dutch printers is carried over to the typefaces they employed. Stanley Morison echoes Updike’s sentiments, describing the Elzevirs’ books as “dull duodecimos” and their style as derivative of French: “copied well but without yielding the slightest pleasure.”⁵⁶ Theodore Low De Vinne praises Van Dyck’s letters, but in weighted words: “It may not be comely, but it is legible . . . they were not made to show the punch-cutter’s skill in truthful curves and slender lines, but to be read easily and to wear well.”⁵⁷ Dutch fonts were practical for the printer and for the reader, but they lacked the artistic flair of typecutters before and after.

The argument against including Dutch printers in the canon of great printers may simply rest on aesthetics – the thicker-looking Dutch letters did not fare well as fashion shifted towards a more delicate look. And if the Dutch are not included it is easy to exclude seventeenth century printers from the rest of Europe, as they based their work upon Dutch models and used Dutch fonts with varying degrees of skill. But the majority of the criticism of the Elzevirs and their peers seems to focus on their business practices and the resultant

⁵⁴ Updike, 15.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁶ Morison, Stanley. *Four Centuries of Fine Printing*. London: Ernst Benn Limited, 1960. 37 and 31.

⁵⁷ De Vinne, *Historic Printing Types*. New York, 1886. 43. Quoted Updike 2.21-22.

perceived decrease in printing quality. Seventeenth century printers are portrayed as pirates, albeit successful ones in the case of the Dutch, concerned with profit, not conserving and disseminating the works of great minds. By the middle of the eighteenth century Fournier would claim that Dutch printers deliberately use “types of a cramped, starved look, so that they may get more words to the line and more lines to the page. They are not troubled by their ugliness, provided they are profitable.”⁵⁸ To praise seventeenth century typography one would have to praise the changes in the printing industry that are perceived to have brought about the end of the scholar-printer of the Renaissance and replaced him with the mere craftsman who was the agent of a publisher or bookseller; as Updike writes, “printing fell into the hands of a class of masters and men less able, enterprising, and socially important, who looked at it solely from the commercial side.”⁵⁹ No historian of printing who is fashioning him/herself as a scholar-printer and calling for a return to the traditions of the Renaissance would dare praise the era held responsible for turning printing from an art into a business.

There may be one more reason why histories of typography tend to heap insult upon the seventeenth century: no printer wants a repeat of the harsh regulation of the press during this period. If an historian of printing chooses to comment on any aspect of the trade in the seventeenth century (and many choose not to), they invariably discuss government control of the press and censorship. Updike might bemoan the loss of the scholar-printer, but he writes that the primary cause of the downturn in typography was attributable to “the beginning of a burdensome censorship of the press, which became increasingly

⁵⁸ Quoted Kinross, 30.

⁵⁹ Updike, 2.93.

restrictive.”⁶⁰ Talbot Baines Reed believes that founders and printers “were the victims of that system of Star Chamber decrees, monopolies, patents, restraints, and privileges,” but does not comment on it any further, as he is eager to move on to the eighteenth century.⁶¹ French scholars draw similar conclusions about printing in their own country, noting that the religious wars related to the Reformation and Counter-Reformation first resulted in French printers such as Jean de Tournes and Robert Estienne emigrating to Geneva, and later led printers (and authors) to move to Holland in an attempt to escape censorship and prosecution.⁶² By cataloguing the negative effects that this control of the press had on the book trade, printing historians make a powerful argument in favour of freedom of the press – good books are only possible when the press is free from restriction.

The event which marks the beginning of the eighteenth century shift in typographic styles is also an instance of government involvement in printing, but, unlike censorship, it worked towards improving the appearance of the book. Histories of typography may gloss over much of the seventeenth century, but the French *Académie des Sciences*’ design of the *romain du roi*, beginning in 1693, is never omitted. But, while the episode is always included, it has been portrayed very differently by various scholars depending upon whether they approved of this break with previous typographic traditions or bemoaned it. The creation of the *romain du roi* is seen to be the end of the tradition of designing fonts based solely upon the model passed down from Manutius to Garamond to Van Dyck. In its place, two schools of type are established: ‘Old Style,’ the traditional one, and ‘Modern,’ based upon the designs of the *Académie des Sciences*. This distinction, and the competition

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.93.

⁶¹ Reed, 229.

⁶² Febvre and Martin, 150 and 195.

between advocates of the two, dominates typographic discourse for the next two and a half centuries until a new ‘Modern’ arrives, in the form of the sans-serif, and the old one is subsumed by tradition.

Like Moxon’s *Mechanick Exercises* series, the *Description des Arts et Métiers* of the *Académie des Sciences* was an attempt to rationally codify the technical trades. Moxon undertook blacksmithing first and then turned to printing, but when the French project began in 1693 they studied printing first; a 1699 progress report reads, “We have begun with the art which preserves all others – namely printing ... Monsieur Jaugeon, who took it upon himself to describe one aspect [letterforms] ... showed the Academy a new French alphabet that had been chosen to please the eye as far as possible.”⁶³ There is no indication that the French were aware of Moxon’s work;⁶⁴ that the two projects were undertaken at about the same time is merely indicative of the increased interest in rationalization and the fledgling sciences at the time. Four men worked on the book on printing, Gilles Filleau Des Billettes, Jean Truchet, Jacques Jaugeon and Jean-Paul Bignon. Jaugeon was responsible for writing the work, and thus receives most of the credit, but James Mosley has pointed out that it was the connections of Jean-Paul Bignon at the *Imprimerie Royale* that resulted in the *romain du roi* being used publicly for the first time.⁶⁵

The *Description des Arts et Métiers* did not begin publication until 1761 and it did not contain the account of printing written by these men. But despite their absence from the series, by the time of its publication they had already had a profound impact on the future

⁶³ Quoted Andre Jammes, “Académisme et typographie: the making of the romain du roi.” *Journal of the Printing Historical Society*, No.1 (1965), 71-95: 73.

⁶⁴ Kinross, Robin. *Modern Typography: an Essay in Critical History*. 2nd Ed. London: Hyphen Press, 2004. 24.

⁶⁵ Mosley, James. “French Academicians and Modern Typography: Designing New Types in the 1690s.” *Typography Papers* 2 (1997), 5-29: 7.

of European type design. One of the first tasks they undertook upon commencing the project was to study previous treatises on letter-design, such as Tory's, Dürer's and Pacioli's, and the work of contemporary calligraphers in order to produce a new French typeface.⁶⁶ In order to better exemplify that their letters were designed according to rational principles, between 1695 and 1718 they produced copperplate engravings of the letters at a greatly enlarged scale on a variety of grid sizes [FIGURE 2.3]. The result is a series of typefaces that differ greatly, at least in theory, from those of the past. Unlike previous letters, these are not based upon the hand-written letter; instead, they are the product of the engraver. As a result the traditional remnant of the written letter, the angled terminus at the top of the ascenders created when a letter is written with a broad-nibbed pen held obliquely is replaced with a wide, flat serif that extends on both sides. Furthermore, because of the large-scale of the drawings and the precision possible when engraving letters into copper, there is greater contrast between the thicks and the thins. Another move away from hand-written letter designs was the introduction of the 'sloped Roman.' While italics had traditionally been based upon a written cursive, they proposed a slanted typeface created by using the same designs as the upright Romans but with the grid skewed. All of these design traits would come to prominence in the eighteenth century as printing came to be associated more and more with engraving and less with handwriting.

In order to transfer the oversized designs to actual type the men required a type-cutter: Philippe Grandjean. The seventeenth century decline in the French printing industry and the rise of a few dominant typefounders resulted in a dearth of skilled typecutters; Fournier writes in 1766 that after the younger Jacques de Sanlecque died in 1660 there was

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

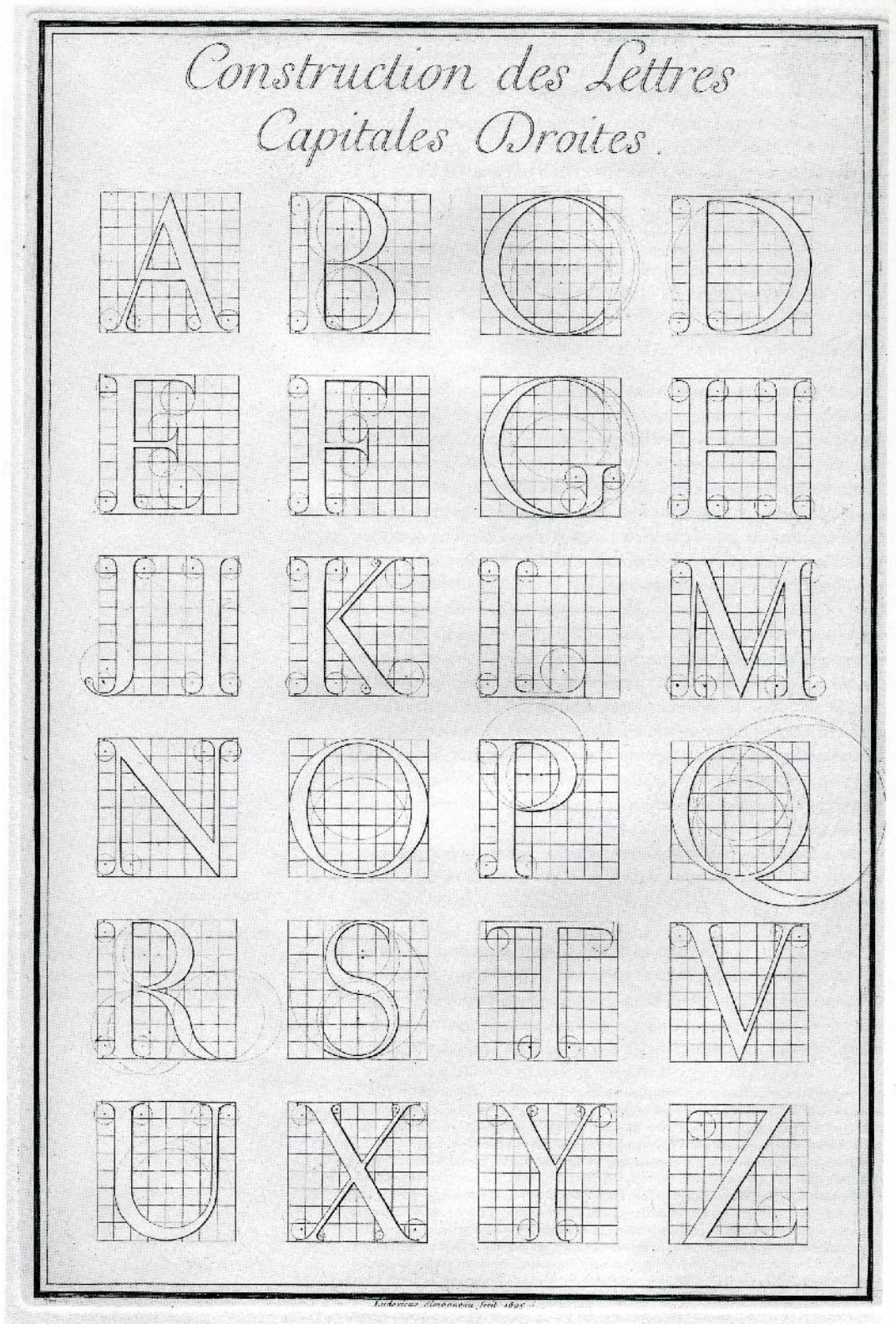


Figure 2.3 Engravings for the *Romain du Roi*, Imprimerie Royale specimen, 1760.

hardly a typecutter to be found for cutting the newly introduced ‘j’ and ‘u’ letters for 60 years.⁶⁷ Grandjean appears to have been taught the trade by Mathieu Malherbe Des Portes, a cutter of dies for coins and medals who occasionally cut letters.⁶⁸ He was furnished with designs for the letters and a long list of rules to be followed in their cutting. Just how well Grandjean followed these rules and who deserves the credit for the success (or failure) of the *romain du roi* has become one of the primary points of contention in typographical history and the episode is most often cited as the paragon example of a skilled craftsman salvaging the erroneous designs of misguided designers unfamiliar with the actual operation of a print shop. That the final product differs from the initial designs is not debated; how could a typecutter, regardless of skill level, reproduce exactly the precise, vastly-oversized designs on a few square millimetres of metal? The designers themselves acknowledged this, as Jaugeon writes in his manuscript on typecutting: “*il est vray quil est difficile dans la construction des poinçons, au moins des petites sortes de letters, d’attraper ces juste precisions; aussy faut il que l’oeil de l’ouvrier en determine.*”⁶⁹ This last phrase has proven to be the most troublesome, as it is generally portrayed as providing justification for the cutter’s judgment to supersede the designer’s. Jaugeon certainly believed Grandjean thought it as such: “When we began to have our punches cut, the man we chose for this job sloped his characters in reverse ... The engraver’s wish to have his share of the credit and to appear more able than his masters must not be allowed to permit him to make changes which spoil the letter.”⁷⁰ He continues on to catalogue the faults that the cutter may introduce into the letter and, as Grandjean was the only cutter on this project,

⁶⁷ Fournier, 288.

⁶⁸ Mosley, 9.

⁶⁹ Jaugeon MS. Bibliothèque de l’Institut de France MS 2741. Reproduced Mosley, 17.

⁷⁰ Quoted Mosley, 9.

there can be little doubt to whom he refers.

But while Jaugeon may have criticized Grandjean's attempts at changing the commission's designs, most subsequent printing historians bestow upon Grandjean credit for the success of the type, while Jaugeon and the commission take the blame for its perceived shortcomings. The most famous of these responses, and perhaps the most damning of the commission because of its longevity, is contained within Simon Pierre Fournier's *Manuel Typographique* (1764-66). From his comments on the *romain du roi* it is plainly evident that he disapproved of those outside the trade, regardless of their other expertise, undertaking the design of letters; he believes they sought "in their imagination for the principles denied to them by their acquaintance with the art. In the result, far from facilitating the practice of the art by laying down simple rules for our guidance, they have, on the contrary, burdened it with worthless and impossible geometrical calculations."⁷¹ Fournier derides their precepts for typecutters, proclaiming, "Are so many squares needed to make an O, which is round, and so many circles to make other letters which are square?"⁷² Yet, despite these reservations about the design of the *romain du roi*, there is no denying that Fournier was influenced by his countrymen; in his introduction to Fournier's work Harry Carter observes that Fournier's own letters contain the contrasting thicks and hairlines introduced by the commission.⁷³ This seeming hypocrisy is allayed by Fournier's emphasis on the role Grandjean played in the final type design. He believes that Grandjean followed only one of the tenets laid down by Jaugeon and the others: "to be guided by the eye, the supreme judge."⁷⁴ In this statement and others, like the one cited in the previous

⁷¹ Fournier, 7.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, xviii.

⁷⁴ Jaugeon. *Mémoires de l'Academie*, 1699, p.118. Quoted Fournier, 9.

paragraph giving the craftsman liberty in the cutting of small letters, Fournier believes Grandjean found the latitude to 'save' his typeface (for the *romain du roi* is henceforth considered the work of Grandjean, not the commission) from the misguided instructions of the academics, as "His work displays none of the constraining effect of the other rules."⁷⁵ In the final section of the *Manuel*, Fournier even changes the reasons why the typeface was developed in order to lessen the role played by the *Académie*; the design of the *romain du roi* is no longer part of the larger project detailing the arts and crafts, becoming instead a separate royal assignment with no mention of the *Description des Arts et Métiers*: "At about 1693 Louis XIV gave the order for new types to be cut which should make his foundry the most splendid imaginable. The Academy of Sciences, consulted to this end, chose certain of its members ... to propose the models for the letters, whose execution in the matter of art and taste is due to Philippe Grandjean."⁷⁶ Jaugeon and the others are no longer the driving force behind the letter, becoming instead little more than sub-contractors to the *Imprimerie Royale* and the providers of raw designs for Grandjean.

Fournier's assessment of the development of the *romain du roi* and Grandjean's part in it went on to influence other historians of printing for several centuries. In his *L'Histoire de l'Imprimerie impériale de France* (1861), F.A. Duprat ignores the *Académie*'s greater project, giving credit for the genesis of the new designs to royal desire for a new type and his account, in turn, influences D.B. Updike.⁷⁷ Updike again gives credit to Louis XIV for the primary instigation of the typeface design and, in a footnote, confuses the chronology of the events by suggesting that Jaugeon and the others were later charged with writing a

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 9n.3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁷⁷ Mosley, 7.

treatise on typography for the *Description* because of their experience working on the *romain du roi*.⁷⁸ Updike also picks up on Fournier’s mockery of the committee’s intricate (and unfeasible) geometric designs, and even improves upon the account of Grandjean’s disapproval of them; Fournier was content to suggest that Grandjean used the dictum “the eye is the sovereign ruler of taste” to introduce changes, but in Updike’s account this is no longer an hypothesis: “Grandjean ... is said to have observed sarcastically, that he should certainly accept Jaugeon's dictum that 'the eye is the sovereign ruler of taste,' and accepting this, should throw the rest of his rules overboard.”⁷⁹ Updike’s influence on printing history in the twentieth century is undoubtable, so it should come as no surprise that his account of the *romain du roi* is reflected in the writings of A.F. Johnson, Stanley Morison and others.⁸⁰

Until the 1960s when Jammes began to publish his research into the *Déscription* and the commission’s role in the design of the *romain du roi*, there was a firmly established tradition of Grandjean being ultimately responsible for the success of the design and of mocking and/or underrepresenting the role of the *Académie des Sciences*. As Mosley has pointed out, one reason for this might be that the *Déscription* did not begin publication until 1761 and the section on printing was never published – thus the public was only aware of Grandjean’s product, which was first used in 1702, and not the scientific justification behind it.⁸¹ However, given that both Fournier and Updike acknowledge reading Jaugeon’s manuscript, the reasons for their exclusion and derision of the commission must lie elsewhere. The *romain du roi* cut by Grandjean is the first instance of ‘type design,’ the

⁷⁸ Updike, 1.241n.1

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.7.

⁸⁰ See Johnson, “The Modern-Face Type in England.” *Selected Essays on Books and Printing*. Percy H. Muir, Ed. Amsterdam: Van Gendt and Co, 1970. 402-408. 405. And Morison, Stanley and Kenneth Day. *The Typographic Book 1450-1935*. London: Ernst Benn Limited, 1963. 42-3.

⁸¹ Mosley, 7.

creation of a typeface by a group of designers distinct from the actual means of production.⁸² Rather than being designed and cut by an artisan in the employ of a printer or founder, the *romain du roi* was designed by outsiders, and we have already seen what Fournier thought of that. But the threat posed by this episode runs deeper than just an encroachment on the territory of printers by non-printers; the *romain du roi* challenges the humanist tradition of beautiful letters being created by an artist and introduces design by committee to the world of typography. The commission acknowledges examining the letterforms of the past but they believed, like Moxon, the true shape of letters was to be found through geometry. But Moxon was an individual and a sometimes printer, and he rationalized through their geometric excellence those letters which were already most popular: Van Dyck's. The Jaugeon Commission was a group of non-printers and they eschewed traditional letter forms and devised new ones. This seemed an insult to those who wished to keep printing an art and printers artists; Fournier writes, "How could anyone thus curb the mind and suppress taste by loading genius with these chains of confused and injudicious rules? ... Genius knows neither rule nor compass, save in mechanical work."⁸³ Updike again perpetuates Fournier's argument, writing that the "lucubrations of the committee" and their "elaborate diagrams" resulted in a type which looks to have "been designed in accordance with rules – many rules."⁸⁴ Stanley Morison describes the work of the commission as "excogitating and codifying," and the result of their work "a report of such bulk that it even now lies unprinted."⁸⁵ All three of these men had their own contemporary reasons for wanting to downplay the role of the commission and emphasize

⁸² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸³ Fournier, 8-9.

⁸⁴ Updike, 1.243.

⁸⁵ Morison, *The Typographic Book*. 42.

individuality, as will be discussed when they are treated individually: Fournier in order to advance his position as an independent typecutter and founder, and Morison and Updike in order to combat the threat they perceived from the Bauhaus and its committee of designers.

If the work of the Jaugeon Commission had been a failure it would be easy to dismiss it as academic folly and either omit them from typographic history or use the episode as an example of why rationalism and non-printers have no place in letter design. But the success of the typeface cannot be denied, as it influenced type designs for over 200 years. Historians of printing have been able to reconcile this conflict through the figure of Grandjean. By stressing the importance the individual artist Grandjean had in translating the complex designs of the commission into type-metal the position of the individual artist is protected and bolstered. Fournier's praise of Grandjean and the longevity of his account of Grandjean's individuality superseding the commission's designs has already been discussed. Updike is less than enthusiastic about the *romain du roi*, for he detested the 'modern' typography it spawned, but he gives its creator his highest praise, readability: "Grandjean's open, clear, wide letters, extravagant of space, almost read themselves. It is, *of its kind*, one of the finest types extant."⁸⁶ Morison goes even further in highlighting the role of individual craftsmen in the entire process. The members of the Jaugeon Commission go unnamed, except for Jaugeon himself, but in discussing the first book published using the *romain du roi* Morison identifies Grandjean, his assistants Jean Alexandre and Louis Luce, Simonneau, the engraver who was also responsible for the original plates of the *romain du roi* designs, and three other engravers: Coypel the younger, Berain and Gerard.⁸⁷ The message is clear: good books are the products of craftspeople, not academics and

⁸⁶ Updike 1.243-4.

⁸⁷ Morison, *The Typographic Book*. 43.

certainly not committees or scientists.

The next craftsman invariably covered in histories of English typography is William Caslon. For although he seems largely ignorant of contemporary trends in French typography, the establishment of his foundry in 1720 is seen as the reclamation of English typography from the depths of the seventeenth century and the first instance of English-made letters being as good as, or better than, their continental models since the earliest days of printing [FIGURE 2.4]. Caslon was originally an engraver of gun barrels who dabbled in making punches for bookbinders, but it is reputed that the neatness of his work drew the attention of two of London's premiere printers, John Watts and William Bowyer, and they financed the establishment of his foundry.⁸⁸ Despite these humble beginnings, he established himself within humanist and scholarly circles by cutting a series of exotic fonts, Arabic, Coptic, Armenian, Etruscan and Ethiopic, before 1734. During this time he also introduced the Roman types which continue to be used today. Thanks to the connections, and the money, made by producing types for the best printers and prominent writers, Caslon's house reportedly became a "resort of literary men of all classes, of whom large parties frequently assembled to discuss interesting matters relating to books and studies."⁸⁹ In descriptions such as this it is easy to see the similarity between portrayals of Caslon and those of the original humanist printers such as Manutius; Elizabeth Eisenstein provides the traditional view of the humanist workshop as "a veritable cultural centre attracting local literati and celebrated foreigners, providing both a meeting place and a message centre for

⁸⁸ Reed, 230-1.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 241.

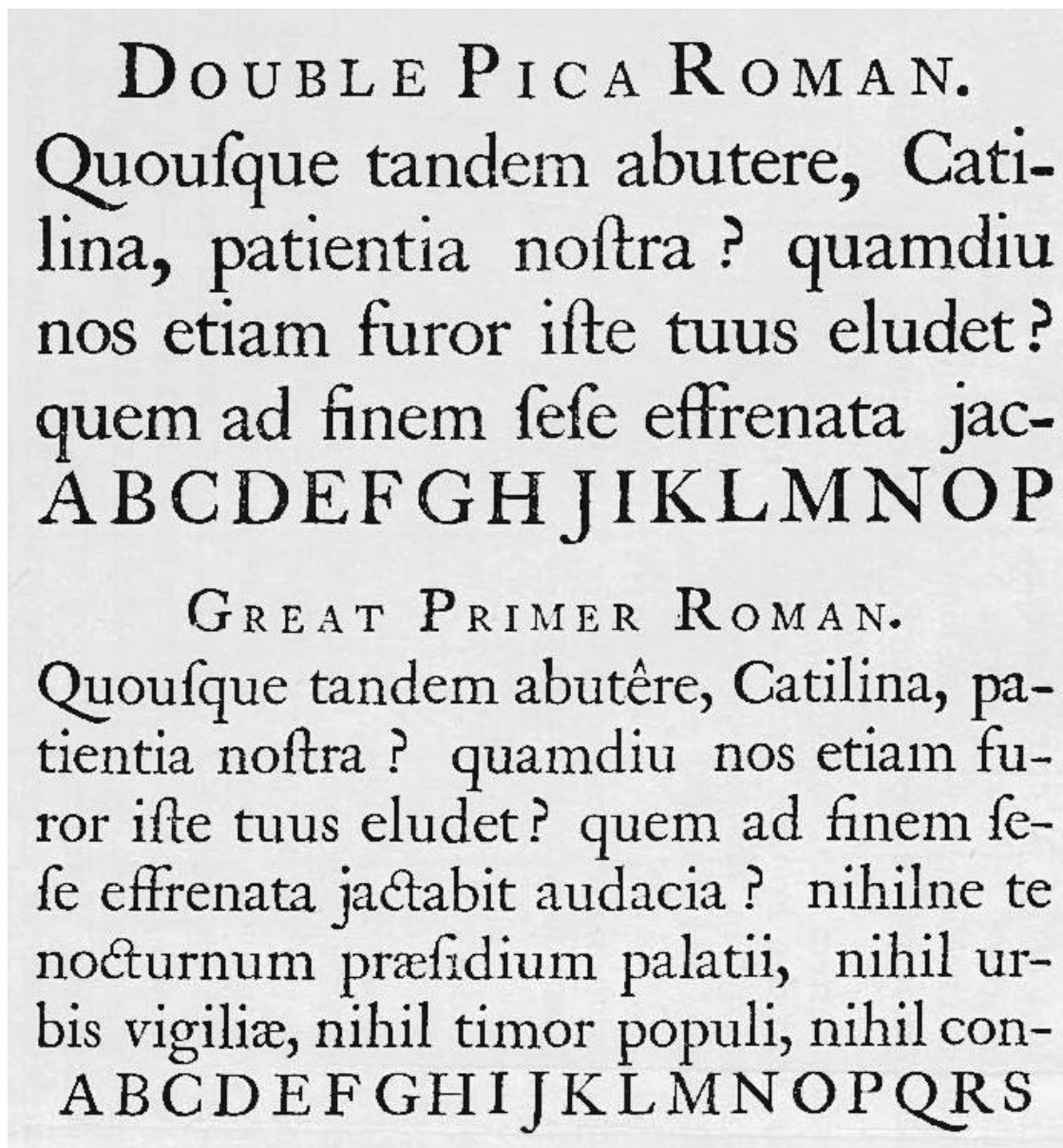


Figure 2.4 Detail from William Caslon's 1728 specimen.

an expanding cosmopolitan Commonwealth of Learning.”⁹⁰ The accuracy of these portrayals has been questioned by many, including me in Chapter One, but regardless of their truth there can be no mistaking the connection of Caslon with this glorious tradition of

⁹⁰ Eisenstein, Elizabeth. *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983. 26.

the humanist printer.

Among the typefaces cut by Caslon are some of the most celebrated in English. It is well acknowledged that he was heavily influenced by those same Dutch fonts that Moxon praised, but while Dutch fonts have largely been dismissed as copies of earlier French models, Caslon's typefaces are seen as surpassing their progenitors. The praise heaped upon these letters over the past 300 years is perhaps best summed up in Updike's lengthy discussion of their merits, even in his own day:

Why are William Caslon's types so excellent and so famous? To explain this and make it really clear, is difficult. While he modelled his letters on Dutch types, they were much better; for he introduced into his fonts a quality of interest, a variety of design, and a delicacy of modelling, which few Dutch types possessed. Dutch fonts were monotonous, but Caslon's fonts were not so. His letters when analyzed, especially in the smaller sizes, are not perfect individually; but in mass their effect is agreeable. That is, I think, their secret – a perfection of the whole, derived from harmonious but not necessarily perfect individual letterforms. To say precisely how Caslon arrived at his effects is not simple; but he did so because he was an artist. He knew how to make types, if ever a man did, that were (to quote once more Bernard's phrase) 'friendly to the eye,' or 'comfortable' – to use Didbin's happy term. ... Caslon's types are, too, so beautiful in mass, and above all so legible and 'common-sense,' that they can never be disregarded, and I doubt if they will ever be displaced.⁹¹

Updike takes another opportunity to stress the 'monotony' of the Dutch types before discussing the superiority of Caslon. The strength of Caslon's cutting, he believes, is its very irregularity, which provides evidence that the type was designed and cut by an artist – true humanity is imperfect. The implicit argument is that types that are too perfect (i.e. the *romain du roi*) are actually more difficult to read as they do not suit the 'humanity' of the author and the reader by being designed in accord with science, not 'common-sense.' Caslon seems to have not been aware of the French types, but henceforth his work would stand in opposition to the 'modern' faces instigated by the *Académie*.

⁹¹ Updike, 2.105-6.

And while the French type fashions spread across the continent, Caslon soon dominated the English market and ended its reliance on foreign types. A survey of eighteenth century English printing manuals shows the Dutch increasingly falling out of favour as printers come to rely on Caslon's, and copies of Caslon's, faces. In the preface to his *History of Printing* (1713), James Watson repeatedly stresses that English printing is indebted to the Dutch, that the best printers are Dutch and that the best solution to the decline of English printing is to import Dutch workmen and presses.⁹² John Smith, whose *Printer's Grammar* of 1755 relies heavily upon Moxon, dismisses Moxon's discussion of the merits of Dutch type and finds the success of the Dutch is due not to the shape of the letters but to the quality of the workmanship. He writes that the Dutch letter would continue to dominate English printing except that "the ingenious Mr. W. Caslon at once destroyed the interest which the Dutch letter-founders have had in England," but concedes that the Dutch should regain the market if the quality of English founders again falls off.⁹³ Philip Luckombe bases much of his *History and Art of Printing* on Smith's version of Moxon, but the Dutch continue to fall out of favour as Luckombe feels the success of Dutch typefaces was due as much to the "stupidity and carelessness" of English founders as to the skill of Dutch, and that any credit that the Dutch letter once had in England has now been lost "by the influence and conspicuous superiority of the laborious productions" of Caslon.⁹⁴ After 1720 English had its own typeface, produced by the 'ingenious' scholar-founder Caslon, and no longer needed those designed by foreigners which had filled the gap until a proper English face was available.

⁹² Watson, James. *James' Watson's Preface to the History of Printing 1713*. James Munro, Ed. Greenock: Signet Press, 1963. 18-20.

⁹³ Smith, John. *The Printer's Grammar*. London: Gregg Press, 1965. 7.

⁹⁴ Luckombe, Philip. *The History and Art of Printing*. London: Gregg Press, 1965. 230.

When Caleb Stower issues in 1808 his version of Luckombe's version of Smith's version of Moxon, there is no mention of the Dutch letter at all, but neither is Caslon mentioned in regard to the best Roman typefaces.⁹⁵ The Caslon foundry is later mentioned in regards to the standardization of type bodies, but its originator is never singled out for praise. The printer who is praised has come to be seen as Caslon's nemesis in the design of the proper English typeface, with Caslon standing for the 'Old Style' and this man for the 'Modern': William Baskerville. Like Caslon, Baskerville was not originally a printer; he initially was a writing-master and then became a successful japanner in Birmingham, where he bought an estate. In about 1750 he grew interested in typography and set about designing types and having them cut and building a press, foundry and paper manufactory. This complete control of the production of his books allowed Baskerville to strive towards 'perfection,' as he outlined in the introduction to his edition of *Paradise Lost* in 1758:

Having been an early admirer of the beauty of Letters, I became insensibly desirous of contributing to the perfection of them. I formed to my self Ideas of greater accuracy than had yet appeared, and have endeavoured to produce a *Sett of Types* according to what I conceive to be their true proportion.⁹⁶

Baskerville never outlines what exactly these 'Ideas' are, but while the same introduction praises Caslon's efforts in English typography, it is clear that Baskerville's main influence was the *romain du roi*, not the Dutch-style fonts of his countryman.⁹⁷

Like the *romain du roi*, Baskerville's typefaces were based on the art of the engraver and the work of fashionable writing masters of the day, and as such they have a much stronger contrast between the thicks and thins of the letters than the letters of Caslon and the Dutch. They are also slightly wider, which is understandable given that Baskerville did

⁹⁵ For the relevant passage see Stower, Caleb. *The Printer's Grammar*. London: Gregg Press, 1965, 44.

⁹⁶ Quoted Pardoe, F.E.. *John Baskerville of Birmingham: Letter-Founder and Printer*. London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1975. 61.

⁹⁷ Pardoe, 159.

not have the commercial concern with fitting the maximum amount of text onto a page. But Baskerville's types were not his only contribution to typography. His wide, empty margins, generous leading and lack of ornament further differentiated his books from his contemporaries and in their sparsity resemble the pages of the earliest humanist printers [FIGURE 2.5]. Baskerville's presses were extremely precise and allowed his type to be used to its fullest advantage without the hairlines being increased by ink bleed. This clean impression was further assisted by the paper he manufactured which was smoother and whiter than that in common use, and his ink, which was blacker.

The result of these innovations in typographic equipment, materials and style was books, beginning with an edition of Virgil in 1757, which were vastly different from the others of the time and which have come to be recognized as a pivotal moment in typography. In *The New Typography*, Jan Tschichold condemns much of the history of printing as mere aesthetics but praises Baskerville's work as a step toward the "clarity of appearance" that would become the focus of Bauhaus typography.⁹⁸ Closer to Baskerville's own time, Fournier praises his books as "veritable masterpieces of clarity."⁹⁹ This 'clarity' consists of removing all visual distractions from the text. Baskerville was concerned with legibility, once noting that the size of type in his prayer books was appropriate "for those

⁹⁸ Tschichold, Jan. *The New Typography*. Ruari McLean, Transl. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. 64.

⁹⁹ Fournier, 276.

P. VIRGILII MARONIS

AE NE I D O S

LIBER SEXTUS.

Sic fatur lacrymans: clasſique immittit habenas,
Et tandem Euboicis Cumarum allabitur oris.
Obvertunt pelago proras: tum dente tenaci
Ancora fundabat naves, et litora curvæ
5 Prætexunt puppes. juvenum manus emicat ardens
Litus in Hesperium: quærit pars femina flammæ
Abſtruſa in venis ſilicis: pars denſa ferarum
Teſta rapit, ſilvas; inventaque flumina monſtrat.
At pius Aeneas arces, quibus altus Apollo
10 Præſidet, horrendæque procul ſecreta Sibyllæ (que
Antrum immane, petit: magnam cui mentem animum-
Delius inſpirat vates, aperitque futura.
Jam ſubeunt Triviæ lucos, atque aurea teſta.
Dædalus, ut fama eſt, fugiens Minoia regna,
15 Præpetibus pennis auſus ſe credere cœlo,
Infuctum per iter gelidas enavit ad Arctos;
Chalcidicaque levis tandem ſuperæſtitit arce.
Redditus his primum terris, tibi, Phœbe, ſacravit
Remigium alarum; poſuitque immania templa.
20 In foribus lethum Androgeo: tum pendere pœnas
Cecropidæ

Figure 2.5 William Baskerville, Virgil, 1757.

who begin to want spectacles, but are ashamed to use them in church.”¹⁰⁰ He was also concerned with the content of his books, outlining in his introduction to Milton that “It is not my desire to print many books; but such only, as are *books of Consequence, of intrinsic merit, or established Reputation.*”¹⁰¹ In order to ensure readers received the most accurate editions of these works Baskerville was the first printer to include detailed records of where corrections had been made during the printing process and how many copies of the books contained the errors and needed to be corrected by the reader.¹⁰² Baskerville’s books announced themselves as ‘clear’ vessels for the best works and it is little wonder that Stanley Morison could state that British printers had accepted Baskerville’s typeface (or at least the Monotype revival of it) as the standard not on “any artistic, stylistic, or archaistic association, but [because of] its broad legibility.”¹⁰³

Although there has been much research into how Baskerville made his books and how they look, there has been little into why his books turned their back on the more ornate fashions of the day and became objects of such clarity. The standard response to this question is to give credit for the appearance of the works to Baskerville’s genius.¹⁰⁴ And certainly when one considers the number of technological advancements Baskerville’s books required, not to mention their aesthetic appeal, the man deserves credit. But he could have used this same genius to produce fine books more in the style of the day; instead, he turned his back on it. And while this move has been seen as a decisive step in the

¹⁰⁰ Quoted Jennett, Sean. *Pioneers in Printing*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1958. 71.

¹⁰¹ Quoted Pardoe, 61.

¹⁰² McKitterick, David. *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450-1830*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. 190.

¹⁰³ Morison, Stanley. “Memorandum on a proposal to revise the typography of ‘The Times.’” *Selected Essays on the History of Letter-Forms in Manuscript and Print*. David McKitterick, Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981.295-317. 307.

¹⁰⁴ Pardoe, 50.

development of the Modern style, it might just as easily be seen as a step back in time. For if one disregards slight idiosyncrasies in letter design, Baskerville's books with their wide margins and broad letters are far closer in appearance to a humanist manuscript or incunabula than to contemporary productions. Even in their paper quality they resemble the Italian humanist manuscripts, which were produced on a parchment much whiter and smoother than that commonly used. Baskerville's choice of texts and treatment of those texts also firmly places him within the humanist tradition; as mentioned in the previous paragraph, he only desired to print "*books of Consequence, of intrinsic merit, or established Reputation.*" He also strove to produce accurate texts based on the works of good scholars; he points out in the introduction to Milton that the text "followed with exactness the Text of *Dr. Newton.*"¹⁰⁵ Indeed in every respect Baskerville resembles the intentions of the original humanist printers, and one can only wonder at the coincidence that the text which introduced his innovations to the world of printing in 1757 was the same one that Manutius used in 1501 to introduce his: Virgil.

Baskerville has yet another resemblance to these early printers in that he was perfectly willing, and even desired, to change typographic style depending upon the content of a book. Much has been made of Baskerville's elimination of ornamentation and the resultant 'clarity' in his works, but this is not the only style he wished to print. Despite his well-known anti-religious sentiments, Baskerville repeatedly advertised his desire to print the Bible.¹⁰⁶ As part of his campaign to this end, he wrote a letter to an unnamed recipient

¹⁰⁵ Quoted Pardoe, 61.

¹⁰⁶ In order to gain permission to print the Bible Baskerville had to feign to be religious, but his epitaph leaves little doubt as to his true convictions: "Stranger/Beneath this Cone in unconsecrated ground/A friend to the liberties of mankind directed his body to be inhum'd./May the example contribute to emancipate thy mind/From the idle fears of superstition/And the wicked arts of Priesthood." Quoted Pardoe, 126.

connected with Cambridge University describing his intentions: “my highest Ambition is to print a folio Bible, with the same letter as the inclosed Specimen, which would allow a handsome margin, besides Notes and which I would decorate with a neat black Ornament, between and round the Columns and marginal Notes.”¹⁰⁷ This was not to be done in the style of the Virgil, but in a more traditional format with marginal annotation and ornamentation. However, this change in style did not sit well with his potential customers and by 1759 he had emended his plans so that subscribers to the Bible could choose either the ornamented version, or one with “plain lines” and footnotes instead of marginal ones. By 1761 his readers had spoken, and he was forced to admit that “As many gentlemen have objected to every Kind of Ornament round the Page, the Work will be printed quite plain, with the marginal Notes all at the Bottom.”¹⁰⁸ He needed no encouragement to print literature in his humanist style, but it took much convincing for him to adopt this same style to religious works. Whether for puritanical reasons, or simply because the buyers of this book by Baskerville wanted it to look like ‘a Baskerville,’ the final product with its vaunted ‘clarity’ bares little resemblance to Baskerville’s original intentions.

But while some have seen Baskerville’s work as a movement towards clarity, and none doubt his later influence, many others see Baskerville’s work as a retrograde step in readability. The buyers of his Bible may have criticized his ornamentation, but his plain designs were victims of even greater scorn from his contemporaries, for although his types went on to have lasting impact, they were hardly immediately successful in England. The combination of Baskerville’s type, ink and paper was accused by many of being tiring, or even damaging, to the eyes of the reader. John Nichols writes, "His glossy paper and too-

¹⁰⁷ Quoted Pardoe, 44.

¹⁰⁸ Quoted Pardoe, 67.

sharp type offend the patience of a reader,” and an anonymous writer shares this belief: "When Baskerville came to Cambridge, we told him that the exceeding sharpness of his letter, and the glossy whiteness of his paper, both beyond anything we had been used to, would certainly offend."¹⁰⁹ While praising Baskerville's 'clarity' even Fournier notes that the books are "somewhat tiring to the eyes."¹¹⁰ But the best example of this perceived failure of Baskerville comes from a letter written to him from Benjamin Franklin, which also serves to illuminate why these critics thought so poorly of him:

Let me give you a pleasant Instance of the Prejudice some have entertained against your Work. Soon after I returned, discoursing with a Gentleman concerning the Artists of Birmingham, he said you would be a Means of blinding all the Readers in the Nation; for the Strokes of your Letters, being too thin and narrow, hurt the Eye, and he could never read a Line of them without Pain. I thought, said I, you were going to complain of the Gloss on the Paper, some object to. No, no, says he, I have heard that mentioned; but it is not that – it is in the Form and the Cut of the Letters themselves; They have not that natural and easy Proportion between the Height and Thickness of the Stroke which makes the common Printing so much more comfortable to the Eye ... Yesterday he called to visit me, when, mischievously bent to try his Judgement, I stept into my Closet, tore off the top of Mr. Caslon's Specimen, and produced it to him as yours brought with me from Birmingham, saying, I had been examining it since he spoke to me, and could not for my Life perceive the Disproportion he mentioned, desiring him to point it out to me. He readily undertook it. and went over the several Founts, showing me every where what he thought Instances of Disproportion; and declared, that he could not then read the Specimen without feeling very strongly the Pain he had mentioned to me. I spared him that Time and Confusion of being told, that these were the Types he had been reading all his life with so much Ease to his Eyes ... nay, the very Types his own Book is printed with, for he is himself an Author, and yet never discovered this painful Disproportion in them, till he thought they were yours.¹¹¹

Baskerville later printed this letter as part of an advertisement for his Bible as an answer to his critics. And while it might be tempting to view Franklin's anecdote as a condemnation of all studies of typography being merely debates about minutiae that are actually

¹⁰⁹ Quoted Pardoe, 38.

¹¹⁰ Fournier, 276.

¹¹¹ Quoted Pardoe, 68.

undetectable, even to the trained eye, it is rather more valuable as a source of information about the beginnings of the debate between ‘Old-Style’ and ‘Modern’ typefaces. Caslon was the champion of Old-Style, for his letters were based upon a long tradition going back through the Dutch and French to the original Roman typefaces popularized during the Renaissance. They were ‘common’ letters not in a derogatory sense, but because of their prevalence, and this commonness resulted in their being the most readable because they were the most often read; as Stanley Morison would phrase it several centuries later, “Familiarity is the first law of legibility.”¹¹² In contrast, Baskerville’s letters were decidedly uncommon, both in their disregard for long tradition in favour of the new style of the *romain du roi* and in their scarcity. Updike writes that Baskerville’s types “try the eye” because, unlike the “homely” Caslon letters, in Baskerville’s designs “the hand of the writing-master betrayed itself, in making them too even, too perfect, too ‘genteel,’ and so they charmed too apparently and artfully.”¹¹³ Caslon’s letter is better suited to books because it is ‘natural,’ if a little coarse, but Baskerville’s is only suitable for aristocratic exercises because it makes its presence felt. Baskerville himself seems to have been in agreement with Updike, as he wrote that his books were “in elegant dress” and available “at such a price, as will repay the extraordinary care and expense that must necessarily be bestowed upon them” and thus were out of reach for the common reader.¹¹⁴

Regardless of the exact reasons why Baskerville’s English contemporaries, and later critics, found fault with his books, the fact remains that his designs were not immediately influential in his home country. The clearest evidence of this lack of success is the difficulty

¹¹² Morison, “Memorandum,” 310.

¹¹³ *Printing Types*, 2.115.

¹¹⁴ Quoted Pardoe, 61.

Baskerville had in selling them. From the outset Baskerville's experiment at printing was a money-losing proposition and even being awarded the right to print Bibles and Prayer Books did not result in profit. As a result Baskerville began looking as early as 1762 for buyers for his equipment and types. Given his lack of success domestically, he turned to the Continent and between 1762 and his death in 1775 he unsuccessfully approached some of the most prestigious printing houses in Europe, including the French *Imprimerie Royale* (with Benjamin Franklin as his representative) and *Académie des Sciences* and the royal courts of Russia and Denmark, about their purchasing his presses and foundry.¹¹⁵ Other English founders even had difficulty selling copies of Baskerville's types, with the most successful copier, Edmund Fry, noting that the types did not "meet with the approbation of the Printers," who chose instead his copies of Caslon's types.¹¹⁶ Baskerville's printing materials did not sell until after his death, when Beaumarchais purchased them and took them back to France to produce a complete edition of Voltaire; the punches remain there still.¹¹⁷

That Baskerville's types found a home in France is not surprising, for he was admired far more on the Continent than in his home country, and through the influence he exerted on French and Italian typographers his letters would eventually come to be accepted in England. Franklin's correspondence with and praise of Baskerville has already been noted, and Franklin was also in contact with the other leading European printers of the time, including Bodoni and Ibarra, and he had his grandson apprentice with Francis Ambroise Didot.¹¹⁸ Whether through the connection of Franklin or some others, such as the

¹¹⁵ Updike, 2.114.

¹¹⁶ Quoted, 30. Dreyfus, John. "The Baskerville Punches 1750-1950." *The Library*. Series 5. 5:1(1950): 26-48

¹¹⁷ For a complete history of Baskerville's types in France see Dreyfus.

¹¹⁸ Blumenthal, Joseph. *The Printed Book in America*. Boston: David R. Godine, 1977. 8

famous booksellers the Molini brothers, Baskerville became known to and admired by Continental printers. Bodoni was to visit England largely for the purpose of meeting Baskerville, but the trip was cancelled due to illness; Bodoni was afterwards quoted as saying that Baskerville's was one of the finest printing houses in Europe.¹¹⁹ In France his work was praised both by Simon Pierre Fournier and Pierre Didot, and Voltaire corresponded with Baskerville about having him print his works. And it was through these printers that the combined influences of the *romain du roi* and Baskerville's typography would result in the 'Modern' typography of the nineteenth century.

Simon Pierre Fournier's treatise on printing, *Manuel Typographique* (1764-66), has already been cited as an influential text in the history of printing. Fournier (1712-1768) came from a long line of printers and typefounders; most notably his father worked at, and his elder brother Jean Pierre purchased, the Le Bé foundry which contained the fonts of many famous typesetters including Garamond. He trained at this foundry and then went into business on his own and in competition with his brother, officially registering as a typefounder in 1739. From this time until his death he was an extremely prolific type cutter and caster; between 1736 and 1742 Harry Carter estimates he cut five punches every two days, in addition to tending to the business of his foundry, while the average punchcutter averages fewer than one a day.¹²⁰ He also became interested in writing about the history of printing, with his first attempt being his specimen book of 1742, and he wrote the section on 'Caractère' in the *Encyclopédie* in 1751. The *Manuel* was originally conceived as a four-volume work, but he died shortly after completing the second. Moxon may have made forays into both printing and printing history, but Fournier's success as a letter-cutter and

¹¹⁹ Dreyfus, 28.

¹²⁰ Fournier, xviii.

the longevity of his opinions on the development of printing types makes him the first of a line of printer/historians which would later include De Vinne, Updike and Morison.

As a typecutter Fournier has long been respected, but because of his position as a transition point between “Old Style’ and “Modern’ his designs have largely been lost by the wayside. His countryman Ambroise Firmin-Didot would write in 1852 of his types that “Though Fournier's cutting was far from perfect as regards finish, it is fair to say his Roman letters are very legible.”¹²¹ Fournier’s Romans are a combination of Old-Style with some of the design influences of the *romain du roi* evident in their thinner hair-lines and flat serifs.¹²² And despite their legibility, they were soon replaced by the fully Modern fonts of the Didots. His italics were developed in accord with the sloped Roman designed by the *Académie*, and opinions of them depend upon the writer’s opinion of those designs; Carter feels that they “harmonize with the rest of the page” and that they are “the most legible of all italics” but, proving that legibility is a subjective trait, Updike hated them.¹²³ He suggests that Fournier cut his new style of italics out of jealousy for his brother’s foundry’s extensive stock of the best Old-Style italics and that the only positive feature of Fournier’s italics is that they are not as bad as Didot’s.¹²⁴ Indeed, the only fonts cut by Fournier which have been the subject of unmitigated praise are his musical and ornamental ones. His desire to enter into the business of printing music and his innovations in that field will be discussed shortly. As to the fate of his printer’s ornaments, they were soon made obsolete as the un-ornamented designs of Baskerville, the Didots and Bodoni came into fashion.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Firmin-Didot, Ambroise. *Traité de la Typographie*. 1852, 848. Quoted Fournier, xviii.

¹²² Fournier, xviii-xix.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, xix-xx.

¹²⁴ Updike, 1.263-4.

¹²⁵ Johnson, A.F. “Title-Pages: Their Forms and Development.” *Selected Essays on Books and Printing*. Percy H. Muir, Ed. Amsterdam: Van Gendt and Co, 1970. 288-97. 292

The two most lasting achievements of Fournier's career are the development of the point system for type sizes and his work on printing history. Previous to this time, type was categorized by size according to its relation to other types; in English the sizes were, from smallest to largest, Pearl, Nonpareil, Minion, Brevier, Bourgeois, Long Primer, Small Pica, Pica, English, Two-line Brevier, Great Primer, Paragon, Double Pica, Two-line Pica, Two-line English, Two-line Great Primer, Three-line Pica, Two-line Double Pica and French Canon. Because there was no common unit of measure and the sizes were relative to one another and not standardized, it was extremely difficult to mix types from different foundries. In 1737 Fournier published a table of proportions to govern type sizes and he continued to refine it throughout his life. There were 72 'points' to the inch and the body of each letter was a defined size and thus proportional to the others; i.e. Parisienne was 5 points and 2 letters of Parisienne equalled one letter of Petit-Roman, which was 10 point. The advantages of a standardized system to both the Master Printer stocking cases of type and the compositor laying out a page are easy to see and, indeed, Fournier was not the first to propose one. Most notably, the Jaugeon Commission who designed the *romain du roi* proposed, but never published, a similar system. There is some debate as to whether or not Fournier was aware of this earlier work, and his mockery of the Commission makes it clear he had read their other work, but regardless of questions of intellectual property it was Fournier's system which came to form the basis of the measurement of type bodies in the English-speaking world.¹²⁶

The other achievement of Fournier's which solidified his reputation as one of the greats in printing history is his writings on printing. Beginning with his first specimen, he

¹²⁶ For the role the Jaugeon Commission made, or may not, have played in Fournier's plan see Mosley, 14 and Kinross, 27.

wrote on the history of printing and especially those arts most familiar to him, letter-cutting and founding. Like Moxon, Fournier's work influenced generations of printing historians. As was the case with Moxon, these writings were not just histories but attempts to advance the writer's situation by giving his work historical significance. But compared to Fournier's blatant self-promotion, Moxon's attempts at advancing Oxford's cause (and in turn his status with their printers) seem either tremendously subtle and devious or enormously understated. Regardless of his interest in printing history and the value of the information he gathered about the earliest type founders, it is impossible to read Fournier's writings on printing without coming across countless references to the strengths of his own foundry and the weaknesses of his competitors. It is rather fitting that his first venture into printing history was in his type specimen, the founder's advertisement of available types. The article 'Caractère' in the *Encyclopédie* of 1751 is full of positive references to Fournier's foundry, and the type specimen it contains is made up largely of his fonts.¹²⁷ In the *Manuel* Fournier points out that this article, the only decent examination of letter-founding to date in his opinion, was written by him.¹²⁸ His letters in the *Journal des Sçavans* in 1756 survey contemporary printing and condemn the work of his contemporaries (save Foulis in Glasgow): "Only one things hinders the advance of printing in England – the bad taste of the types [Caslon's] ... which are absolutely absurd."¹²⁹ In these articles he also paid special attention to the printing of music, and the Ballard family's monopoly on it, a topic he returned to in the *Manuel*.

The introduction to the *Manuel Typographique* makes it clear that the book is going

¹²⁷ Fournier, xxii.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²⁹ Quoted Fournier, 275n.2.

to advance the cause of the typographer and, in particular, one typographer, Fournier himself. It begins:

After the prime necessities of life nothing is more precious to us than books. The art of TYPOGRAPHY, their creator, renders a signal service to society and lends it invaluable support, serving, as it does, to educate the citizen, to widen the field for the progress of sciences and arts, to nourish and cultivate the mind, to elevate the soul, and, generally, taking upon itself to be the messenger and interpreter of wisdom and truth, It is, in fine, the portrayer of mind.¹³⁰

At first glance this statement seems little different from the many portrayals of books as the vessels which contain and preserve knowledge and printing as the means for reproducing and disseminating this knowledge. Yet, here the focus has shifted for it is not the knowledge, the ‘wisdom and truth,’ being praised, nor is it the invention of printing or the books themselves. Authors are entirely absent and seem to have no responsibility for the production of knowledge. The focus of praise is Typography, the means by which information is both passively transmitted (‘messenger’) and actively modified (‘interpreter’). Fournier’s ‘Typography’ reconciles these two seemingly contradictory roles, just as Manutius and Moxon both claimed to be recovering the voice of the author or clarifying the meaning through editorial intervention, and becomes the ‘creator’ that educates, nourishes and elevates.

Fournier believes this supreme typography is both an art and a science, and his book is dedicated to proving himself the ultimate typographer. References abound throughout the work that because there was not a sufficient master of the trade to teach Fournier when he wanted to learn it, he was forced to invent his own rules, strategies and equipment, and the book is his attempt at sharing these innovations.¹³¹ What his brother who taught him the

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹³¹ See for example p.3-4

trade thought of this is not known. Sentences written in the first-person are common as he explains how he, personally, creates a font, furthering the impression that Fournier is personally responsible for the excellence of typography. In discussing his point system he writes: “The invention of such points was the first homage which I rendered to typography in 1737 ... I could find no established rule to guide me in fixing the body-sizes of the types which I proposed to make. I was therefore under a necessity of laying down a system for myself. This I did, and I published it.”¹³²

Fournier had good reason to resort to such self-promotion, for it had served him well in the past. In Fournier’s France, under the Bookselling and Printing Code of 1723 only members of the *Communauté des Imprimeurs* were allowed to own a press. To become a member one had to either be the son of a Master Printer or serve an apprenticeship, the qualifications for which included being unmarried, fluent in Latin and able to read Greek; Fournier met none of these yet desired greatly to own a press because he wished to, in his words, advance the art and research a treatise on typography.¹³³ In 1757 he petitioned the government to be a specially appointed Master Printer based upon his work as a cutter and founder and his contributions to typographic history, writings that were rich with compliments to his own work. He was successful in his application, despite the opposition of the *Communauté*, and was declared supernumerary printer for Paris (the number of Parisian printers being fixed at 36 in 1704).¹³⁴ Among the privileges granted to him was the right to print music using the musical types he had long been developing, but this infringed upon the Ballard family who had the French monopoly of music printing and Fournier and

¹³² *Ibid.*, 137.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, xxvi-xxvii.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, xxix.

the Ballards became embroiled in legal action.

In 1764, the same year this matter came before the French courts, Fournier published the first volume of the *Manuel*. He wastes no time in using the book as a pulpit from which he condemns those doing similar work and praises his own. His first target is previous treatises on letter-design, especially the work of the Jaugeon Commission. His vehemence against the ‘Academicians’ has already been discussed as it pertains to lasting opinions of the *romain du roi*, but one can only wonder if his criticism of Jaugeon has anything to do with his neglecting to mention that the Commission proposed a system of type sizes very similar to his. He then advances on his next target: the Ballards. In a section which reads very much as a late addition, for he has just summarized his conception of the *Manuel*, a logical conclusion for an introduction, Fournier inserts several pages on the printing of music: “At this point I will add a few words as to my new music-characters.”¹³⁵ Logically this addition makes no sense in the introduction, but it serves to make the reader who might not read the very specialized chapters on cutting musical notation aware of both Fournier’s qualifications and contributions to the field and the poor state of French printed music at the time. In pages filled with first person pronouns Fournier outlines his great contributions to this field, and even includes an extract from the minutes of the Royal Society which praises his work. He then goes on to discuss that the reason why “lovers of music” have been bereft of his invention is a hereditary monopoly on music printing that has “become the grave of this branch of printing.”¹³⁶ Because no one else “has been public-spirited enough” to challenge this monopoly, Fournier writes that he took it upon himself,

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

and the *Manuel* is, in part, an effort to improve the state of music-printing in France.¹³⁷ Fournier fell ill this same year and was unable to pursue his actions against the Ballards, but a former employee of his, Loiseau, launched a similar suit and was successful in having the Ballard's monopoly reduced to them only being the sole printer of music for the King. One of the key pieces of evidence in this trial, in a seemingly blatant conflict of interest, was a history of musical types and the Ballard monopoly written by Fournier that painted the monopoly and the skill of the Ballards in a very poor light.¹³⁸ Fournier died shortly after this and never got to complete the *Manuel*, but the book and his other writings had already done much to secure the success of his foundry and his reputation as one of the great typographers in history.

There is one item of note left to discuss in regards to eighteenth century typography: the development of the 'Modern' typeface and neo-classic book design. The foundations for this shift in design have already been seen in the *romain du roi* and the work of Baskerville, but the definitive Modern-style is attributed to Giambattista Bodoni of Italy and the Didot family of France. Bodoni was born in 1740, the son of a printer, and he quickly became known as one of the foremost printers in Europe.¹³⁹ In 1768 at the invitation on the behalf of Ferdinand, Duke of Parma, he became master of the *Stamperia Reale* and stocked the press with Fournier's types, but within 20 years had replaced these types with ones of his own design. In 1790 he was invited to start a press at the Papal Court expressly for printing the classics, but Ferdinand matched this offer and Bodoni expanded his existing facilities. Among the many laurels he received were royal appointment by Carlos III of Spain, a

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, xxx.

¹³⁹ Biographical material from Updike, 2.163-65.

pension from Carlos IV, further pensions from the Viceroy of Italy and Napoleon, and medals from the cities of Parma and Paris. His work was known throughout Europe and was praised in America by Franklin.

Bodoni's work as a printer and letter designer can be broken up into two periods that, respectively, mark the end of the fashion for Old-Style printing and represent the first (some would say best) truly Modern typographic works. His first period when he worked with Fournier's types and ornaments, or ones similar to them, lasts until the 1780s and he occasionally produces books of this style into the 1790s. Because Bodoni's fame rests largely on his later books, this period is generally considered a developmental phase, but for proponents of the Old-Style these books are considered his best; Updike writes: "His first manner, in one way less characteristic of him, is, as I have said, much the more agreeable and sympathetic. He was then under the influence of French styles ... but there was about the books of this period ... real charm. The distinction of old style type was retained, but it was slightly refined."¹⁴⁰ Yet despite his success with these books, Bodoni begins to experiment in the late 1780s with much more austere typography and designs types which develop further the design principles of the *romain du roi* and Baskerville. Bodoni's respect for Baskerville is well-documented, and Stanley Morison writes that the impetus for Bodoni's metamorphosis was likely Baskerville's Italian edition of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1773).¹⁴¹ Bodoni emulated Baskerville's smooth paper and widely-spaced types and pages, and he removed all ornament from his books. His types also furthered the trend of emphasizing the thicks and reducing the thins to hairlines that had begun at the end of the seventeenth century [FIGURE 2.6]. In 1788 Bodoni released a type specimen which

¹⁴⁰ Updike, 2.173.

¹⁴¹ Morison and Day, *The Typographic Book*, 47.

dono puro di Dio e felicità di natura, benchè spesso provenga da lunga esercitazione e abitudine, che le più difficili cose agevola a segno che in fine senza più pur pensarvi riescono ottimamente fatte. Che però la grazia della scrittura forse più che in altro sta in certa disinvoltura di tratti franchi, risoluti, spediti, e nondimeno così nelle forme esatti, così degradati ne' pieni, *che non trova l'invidia ove gli emende*. Ma forse più sicuro è restringerci a dire che han grazia le lettere, quando sembrano scritte non già con isvogliatezza o con fretta, ma piuttosto, che con impegno e pena, con felicità ed amore.

Tanto più bello sarà dunque un carattere, quanto avrà più regolari-

Figure 2.6 G.B. Bodoni, *Manuale Tipografico*, 1818.

was entirely without ornament, and from this point until his death in 1813 he increasingly worked without them; it was these books that cemented his place as one of the great printers of all time.

There are several theories for why Bodoni turned his back on the more ornate styles of his day and embraced, and refined, Baskerville's 'classical' typography. Unlike Fournier, Bodoni did not comment at length upon his own work; his specimen books, while massive because of his immense number of fonts, contain little more than examples of the letters. In a rare comment on letter designs in the preface to his posthumously published *Manuale Tipografico* (1818), he outlines four principles which define a beautiful type: regularity, smartness, good taste and charm.¹⁴² Regular types are ones in which the common elements shared between different letters are identical. 'Smart' types are simply those made from well-cut and polished punches. 'Good taste' means maintaining "neat simplicity" and basing one's letters on the best manuscript hands of the day. In many cases in Bodoni's time this would not mean letters written by pen but engraved in copperplate, an influence shared by Baskerville and the *romain du roi*. Finally and most ambiguously is 'charm', "the impression of being written not unwillingly or hastily, but painstakingly, as a labor of love." This 'charm' no doubt contributed to the high cost of Bodoni's work, for he, like Baskerville, made only books that were priced according to the time and effort that went into them and without regard for commercial success. And while twentieth century 'Modern' printers such as Jan Tschichold might praise Bodoni's work for its willingness to forego ornament in favour of clarity of information, others have seen the elitism of his press as being counter-productive: "Many of Bodoni's books lacked intimacy and charm, too,

¹⁴² "Giambattista Bodoni, *Manuale Tipografico*." <http://www.octavo.com/editions/bodtip/#>. 1 June 2009.

because of his conception of the function of the press. He cared nothing about printing as a means to popular instruction. He did not despise the masses – he forgot all about them!”¹⁴³ The degree to which ‘usability’ actually contributed to Bodoni’s typographic style is debatable, especially given the generally poor scholastic quality of his texts, and the ‘clarity’ of his books is perhaps best explained by A.F. Johnson when he writes that Bodoni simply was proud of his types and felt they needed no other ornamentation to be beautiful.¹⁴⁴

But beyond mere aesthetic preference, two other influences have been suggested to explain Bodoni’s removal of ornamentation. The first, and most puzzling, is Stanley Morison’s association of Bodoni’s plain style with the Jansenist religious movement. Morison makes no reference to this religious influence in all the editions of *Four Centuries of Fine Printing* (up to the 1960), but in the enlarged and revised version of this work *The Typographic Book (1450-1935)*, published in 1963, he insinuates on pages 11 and 47 that Jansenism was a significant cause of Bodoni’s reforms. Jansenism was a religious movement within the Catholic Church instigated by Cornelis Janssens, Bishop of Ypres, in the early seventeenth century.¹⁴⁵ He advocated a return to the more ascetic Catholicism of St. Augustine and the movement developed an emphasis on original sin and pre-destination that caused it to be associated with Calvinism. As such, it was opposed by the Church, especially by the Jesuits, and declared heretical. Leaving religious debate aside, there are some intriguing similarities between the way the Jansenists and Bodoni are described; Wrex writes, “To the Jansenists, the kind of virtue demanded by St. Augustine seemed not only

¹⁴³ For praise of Bodoni’s clarity see Tschichold, *The New Typography*, 20 and 64. The condemnation of Bodoni is from Updike, 2.174.

¹⁴⁴ Johnson, “Title Pages”, 297.

¹⁴⁵ Rex, Walter E. *Pascal’s Provincial Letters: An Introduction*. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1977. 9.

clear but even simple in its uncompromising purity.”¹⁴⁶ The Jansenists were skilled writers in favour of their cause and their “prose style at its best was not only elegant, but had a certain spare quality ... ‘masculine eloquence’ ... Jesuit prose style, on the other hand, was typically more ornamental, sometimes even flowery; and, like the architecture of their churches, we associate it more readily with the idea of ‘baroque’.”¹⁴⁷ It is easy to imagine these descriptions being applied to Bodoni’s work and that of his ornamental contemporaries. Furthermore, part of the reason for the Jansenist prose-style was, despite a distrust of the ‘humanism’ of the Jesuits, a strong emphasis on reading the classics as a source for the roots of Christianity, and Bodoni published a large number of classical works.¹⁴⁸ Similarities such as these undoubtedly convinced Morison, whose other great research interest outside of typography was religion, that Bodoni was a Jansenist, or at least under the influence. However, there are also several things that suggest he was not. The most obvious is that Jansenism was an ascetic order, and the aristocracy, to whom Bodoni was, if not a member, closely allied, tended to be more supportive of the Jesuits and their more permissive religious beliefs.¹⁴⁹ Also, Jansenius had opposed the interests of the Bourbon family, of whom Bodoni’s patron Ferdinand was a member, during the Counter-Reformation.¹⁵⁰ A complete examination of the role Jansenism may, or may not, have played in Bodoni’s typography is outside the scope of this thesis, but barring any conclusive evidence, it is safer to assume that this is more a suggestive case of Stanley Morison’s desire to connect religion and typography than a definitive statement of Bodoni’s

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

¹⁴⁸ Sedgwick, Alexander. *Jansenism in Seventeenth-Century France*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977. 200.

¹⁴⁹ Rex, 22.

¹⁵⁰ Van Kley, Dale. *The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France 1757-1765*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1975.

intentions.¹⁵¹ Considering the Catholic Morison only brings up Bodoni's connection to the heretical Jansenists in the context of attacking his 'heretics' of typography, the Bauhaus, his motives may not have been entirely scholarly.

The other occurrence that resulted in Modern typography becoming dominant in the early nineteenth century was the confluence of the French Revolution and the Neo-Classical movement in the arts. Given the centrality of French politics, it makes sense to discuss this as it relates to the other pioneers of Modern typefaces, the Didot family. In the early eighteenth century the prominent style of the arts and decoration in France (and indeed in much of Europe) was the Rococo, an ornate style which juxtaposed sensual and fantasy elements. Thus it comes as no surprise that the work of typographers such as Fournier made much use of ornamentation including decorative borders and printer's flowers. However, as the century progressed this style was increasingly criticized. In 1733 Voltaire wrote *Le Temple du Goût* attacking the current fashion; describing the construction of a house with its back towards the Temple he writes, "A *Mason*, now another *Vitruvius*, drew the *Plan*, which was overcharged with *Ornaments* ... the whole, in short, wainscotted, varnished, carved, and gilt. — the admiration of fools!"¹⁵² What he thought of the intellect of proponents of the Rococo is clear several pages later when he has the library outfitted by a Bookseller who sells books by the yard. The term 'Rococo' was actually first used as a pejorative; in 1755 the engraver Cochin coined it by combining *coquillage* (rubble) and *rocaille* (shell) into a word reminiscent of the Italian word for the Baroque, *barocco*, in order to criticize the style.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ For further examination of the role religion and animosity towards the Bauhaus played in Morison's work, see Chapter 4.

¹⁵² Voltaire. *The Temple of Taste*. Glasgow: Robert Urie, 1751. 25. Accessed via EEBO 12 July 2006.

¹⁵³ Brady, Patrick. *Rococo Style Versus Enlightenment Novel*. Genève: Editions Slatkine, 1984. 234n41.

Janson, H.W. and Anthony F. Janson. *History of Art: The Western Tradition*. Upper Saddle River: Pearson

That Rococo was first used as a pejorative brings to mind another term that came into usage as a means of defining the opposite of the preferred style, Gothic. The two terms, Gothic and Rococo, even came to be somewhat interchangeable, as the proponents of the Classical style wrote that the new decadence, if unchecked, might result in another Dark Age. In 1753 as the influence of Rococo was diminishing in architecture, the French architect Laugier writes, “Our artists had for some time been leaning towards an extravagance which had been the great fashion . . . At first this eccentricity did not fail to have success in a nation as fickle and inconsistent as ours. Had this fashion reigned much longer we would have outdone the mad fancies of Gothic.”¹⁵⁴ And as in the case of Gothic, the mode of thought that was placed in opposition to the Rococo was Classical. Rococo, like the humanist’s Gothic, became synonymous with modern decadence and thus was opposed by the formalism of the ‘Ancients,’ the Greeks and Romans. A revival of Classical art and architecture was underway in Rome in the early to mid eighteenth century and artists and diplomats from all over Europe flocked there to study. This interest in all things ‘Ancient’ was further heightened by the excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum in the middle of the century and the many visits by dignitaries who took their new attitudes towards the Modern and the Ancient home with them, the most notable being the Marquis de Marigny’s, the future French Minister of the Arts, Italian tour of 1749-51.¹⁵⁵

Yet for all its similarities to the Italian Renaissance which first replaced the ornate Gothic book with the simple Humanist one, the Classical Revival of the eighteenth century is distinct in its combination of respect for the ‘Ancients’ and Enlightenment Rationalism.

Prentice Hall, 2004. 624.

¹⁵⁴ Quoted Herrmann, Wolfgang. *Laugier and Eighteenth Century French Theory*. London: A. Zwemmer, 1985. 66.

¹⁵⁵ Eriksen, Svend. *Early Neo-Classicism in France*. Peter Thornton, Transl. London: Faber and Faber, 1974. 34.

Classical designs appealed to Rationalism because they were seen as logical, formal and geometrical, as opposed to the apparent chaos of the Rococo.¹⁵⁶ And, as is well-documented, many Enlightenment thinkers became involved in the events leading up to the French Revolution of 1789. Renewed interest in the classics also played a part in this political struggle, as art modelled on classical models from the Roman Republic came to represent the new republic, and the ornamentation of the previous period was seen as visual evidence of the decadence of the *ancien regime*.¹⁵⁷ Given the political, intellectual and artistic environment of the time, it is not surprising that book design also turned away from the ornamental designs of Fournier and returned to Classical models, albeit designs tempered by the Rationalism of the *romain du roi*.

When Baskerville's widow Sarah was unable to find an English buyer for her husband's press, one was found in France in the person of Beaumarchais. In his hands Baskerville's types were to become integral to the visual identity of the new republic. In 1789 Panckoucke founded the *Gazette Nationale ou Le Moniteur Universel*, the first folio-sized newspaper in France to document the daily events of the new republic.¹⁵⁸ In November of 1790 the paper began to be printed in Baskerville's types because, as the editors explained, they wished to increase the reader's pleasure and perfect the newspaper to the highest degree. The importance of the typeface continued to be stressed every day, as the imprint identified that the paper was printed "avec les caractères de Baskerville."¹⁵⁹ And if use in this paper did not firmly align Baskerville's types with the new republic, when Beaumarchais issued a specimen of the types in 1793 the text he used for the specimen was

¹⁵⁶ Brady, 63.

¹⁵⁷ Morison, *Four Centuries*, 39.

¹⁵⁸ This account of Baskerville's types in France is largely drawn from Dreyfus, 39-46.

¹⁵⁹ Quoted Dreyfus, 39.

not the standard classical quotation (usually Cicero) but was drawn from the Constitutional Act preceded by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. With the freeing of the trades from government restriction under the republic, the number of presses increased rapidly and Beaumarchais' foundry supplied many of these new shops with type, and many others were supplied with copies of them.

Beaumarchais' fortunes took a turn for the worse in the mid 1790s, after which time Baskerville's punches sat unused until his daughter sold them in 1818 to Pierre Didot *l'aîné*, whose family owned them until 1898. But in the Didots' hands the punches saw little use, as this family had already established itself as one of the great printing dynasties of France and as the foremost suppliers of the new style of types. Like the other great French printing family, the Fourniers, the accomplishments of the Didots were many and the family's genealogy confusing. The first of the Didot printers was Denis Didot, but it is one of his 13 children, François (1689-1757) who has become known as the founder of the family.¹⁶⁰ Two of his sons, François Ambroise (1730-1804) and Pierre François (1732-1793), established separate lines of the family that each contributed greatly to the progress of typography. The elder son François Ambroise was the first to begin to have types cut on the model of the *romain du roi* and he finalized the other goal of this project by refining Fournier's system of type measurement into the typographical 'point' that became standard for non-English printers and he made the very rational suggestion that types should have numerical designations and not their traditional names (ie Cicero or Gros-Canon).¹⁶¹ As a printer he issued a famous collection of classic French authors at the bequest of Louis XVI

¹⁶⁰ Updike deserves both the credit and blame for this pun, as well as the majority of this account of the Didot genealogy; *Printing Types*, 1.216ff.

¹⁶¹ Kinross, 30-1.

and in 1780 he introduced woven paper modelled on Baskerville's to France. He was also the printer to whom Benjamin Franklin sent his grandson to apprentice with in 1785. François Ambroise's sons Pierre *l'ainé* (1761-1853) and Firmin (1764-1836) are the two responsible for the typographical style, Modern or Neo-Classical, most associated with the family name in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth centuries. Pierre was the printer of the *éditions du Louvre* of Latin and French classics and he used his brother's types. Firmin is given the credit (or the blame) for exaggerating the thicks and thins of the *romain du roi* into the typefaces which became known as 'Modern' and dominated much of the nineteenth century. Beginning in 1794 Firmin also issued a series of low-priced, popular books that he made through the process of stereotyping. The process of creating casts of entire pages of type and then using these to reprint editions had first been proposed by William Ged in Edinburgh in 1727, but Firmin was the first to use it to issue large numbers of books and he is responsible for its name; the Didots were scholar-printers in the old tradition as they often printed works they had translated themselves and Firmin used the Greek word *stereós* (tough or durable) that Homer had used to describe Telemakhos' mother in the *Odyssey*.¹⁶² His many accomplishments resulted in Napoleon naming him director of the *Imprimerie Impériale* in 1830. Returning to Pierre François's line of the family, the most notable contributions were made by Henri Didot (1765-1852), who cut some of the smallest types yet made and did the engravings for the ill-fated *assignats*, bills of exchange issued during the revolution, which were then produced in their great numbers through his cousin's stereotyping process, and Léger (1767-1829), who invented a paper making machine that produced 'endless' rolls instead of just sheets.

¹⁶² Chappell, Warren and Robert Bringhurst. *A Short History of the Printed Word*. 2nd Ed. Vancouver: Hartley and Marks, 1999. 197.

From this brief outline of the Didots' many accomplishments it is very easy to see the confluence of rationalism, classicism and republicanism that contributed to the popularity of the Neo-Classical movement at the end of the eighteenth century. Like Bodoni, they initially worked with transitional typefaces between Old Style and Modern but then cut and used some of the first truly Modern typefaces [FIGURE 2.7]. Scholars as well as printers, they issued well-edited and finely printed books (Bodoni can only claim the latter) for kings and later emperors. And when the new republic wanted to separate itself typographically from the *ancien regime*, Baskerville's types were not the only ones it used; the *Constitution de la République* was printed using Firmin Didot's newly designed Modern typefaces.¹⁶³ Their classicism appealed to those like Napoleon who sought to make Paris the new Rome, and their rationalism to the philosophers who were some of the most vocal proponents of the revolution. Given all this, it comes as no surprise that the family came to set the style for French, and later European, typography in the nineteenth century.

¹⁶³ Updike, 2.177.

ESSAI
DE
FABLES NOUVELLES.

A U R O I.

F A B L E P R E M I E R E.

LE COQ.

LE lion, plein de courage,
L'aigle, au vol audacieux,
D'un roi ne m'offrent point l'image:
Tous deux ils vivent de carnage,
Et leur regne m'est odieux.

Des sujets innocents, soumis et sans reproche,
Comme des criminels, tremblent à leur approche:

Je ne vois pour eux nul recours;
Vainement de la fuite ils cherchent le secours:
Ces cruels ont bientôt immolé leurs victimes;
Par le meurtre et le sang ils soutiennent leurs droits,
Droits affreux, droits illégitimes:
Ce sont des tyrans, non des rois.

Figure 2.7 F.A. Didot, Pierre Didot's *Essai de Fables Nouvelles*, 1786

Yet for all its success, the Modern typography which the Didots helped define came to be seen in the later nineteenth century and after as one of the low points in the history of typography. Like the original humanist printers, the Didots cut new types which they thought reflected classical origins and used them to issue editions of the classics which were differentiated typographically from previous, more ornate, productions. But while Manutius and Jenson's interpretation of the humanist's interpretation of the Carolingian interpretation of the Roman script has become accepted as still 'Classical,' the so-called 'classical' types of Didot and Bodoni were quickly labelled by English printers as 'Modern,' at first positively; Robin Kinross identifies the first instances of the word to describe the new types as Caleb Stower's "modern-cut printing types" in 1808 and Richard Austin's "modern or new fashioned faced printing type" in 1819.¹⁶⁴ But, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the term 'Modern' to describe typography became pejorative as the nineteenth century progressed, thanks largely to the Arts and Crafts movement's preference for older typefaces. One can already see the eventual genesis of this opposition in the resistance to the work of the Didots.

The first known experiment in legibility was performed in France by the last of the line of Anissons at the *Imprimerie Nationale* and it compared the legibility of Didot's types and Garamond's.¹⁶⁵ Anisson had readers attempt to read pages set in the two types at various distances and discovered that the 'old' types remain legible several stages after the 'new' had become illegible, seemingly proving through this crude experiment the superiority of Old-Style. Yet, accuracy of results aside, this experiment and the report

¹⁶⁴ Kinross, 29.

¹⁶⁵ For a translation of this experiment see Updike, D.B. "A Translation of the Reports of Berlier and Sobry on Types of Gillé Fils." *The Fleuron*. No. 6 (1928): 167-83. For discussion see Kinross 32-33.

which contains it are perhaps more valuable evidence of the role personal interest plays in many discussions of legibility and the debate between the two styles than proof of one's superiority. For Anisson was hardly a neutral investigator; in his work at the *Imprimerie Nationale* he had refused to adopt Didot's new style, preferring instead to use that printing house's extensive stock of Old-Style types.¹⁶⁶ Thus the purpose of his experiment was not to examine the legibility of the two types but to justify his position. The report even points out that he did not print the specimen in Didot's types, only the one in Garamond; who printed the one in the 'Didot manner' is not identified, but one wonders if they knew they were printing one for an experiment against a specially prepared sheet printed at one of the finest presses in Europe. Experimental methodology aside, Anisson's experiment became political fodder for later opponents of the Modern style. His results were first published in a report by Citizen Sobry in 1800, who at various points describes the Didot style as "the vagaries of taste," "superficial prettiness" and "obvious degeneration."¹⁶⁷ That this report was made available in translation in the twentieth century is thanks to D.B. Updike who, as a one-time disciple of Morris's, was firmly opposed to the Modern. The first experiment in legibility may have claimed to prove the superiority of Old-Style typefaces, but the only thing it proves conclusively is that studies of legibility have their roots in stylistic and aesthetic arguments.

The Didots did not only change the way books looked – they changed the way they are made. Their contributions to industrial printing through stereotyping and the paper-making machine made possible the vast increases in book production in the nineteenth century and, as the next chapter will discuss, this may be their true sin in the eyes of the

¹⁶⁶ Updike, "A Translation," 181.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 178 and 183.

Arts and Crafts movement which came to dominate discussions of printing at the end of the century. For without machine-made paper the industrialized press could never have attained the volume it did, and stereotyping reduced both the cost and time it took to issue editions and the quality of the printing. Baskerville and Bodoni have been recognized as great book ‘artists,’ and the Didot family made great contributions to typography and the industry of printing, all in the spirit of returning to the classics and freeing the printed word from the detritus of modern ornamentation, but their achievements have been overshadowed in the eyes of many subsequent writers on typography by the subsequent spread of their designs through the industrialized press. So, rather than being recognized as new Manutiuses and Garamonds, they are lumped in with the printers of the seventeenth century as part of the era which contributed to the downfall of the Old Style. But as was seen earlier in this chapter, the seventeenth century’s reputation for bad printing may be at least partially dependent, especially in the case of Dutch printers such as the Elzevirs and Plantin, on these same late nineteenth and early twentieth century critics’ disdain for commercial printing. Furthermore, subsequent to the work of Moxon and the Jaugeon Commission’s design of the *romain du roi*, the role of the rational sciences came to prominence in the design of typefaces, a move which, as evident in the criticism of the *romain du roi*, threatened the humanistic ideal of an individual artist being responsible for the appearance of the book and of the typeface of the book being based upon the truly classical designs of humanist handwriting and Manutius’ fonts. But again, one wonders if this criticism has been overblown for, the Jaugeon Commission excepted, the era is still known for the contributions of individuals: Grandjean, Caslon, Baskerville, Fournier, Bodoni and the Didots. Or perhaps this emphasis on the individual artist is an attempt, conscious or not, to

reintroduce the artist into the age of rationalism. One thing is for certain, the Neo-Classical typographers who were ultimately responsible for the Modern typeface, Baskerville, Bodoni and the Didots, saw themselves as part of the classical tradition when they turned away from current Rococo fashions and once again emphasized the text on the page. It was up to others to declare their work as against that tradition and, beginning with Baskerville's critics, as a negative trend in 'readability.' But, as will be seen in the next two chapters, this response against the Modern may have more to do with the subsequent developments of industrialized printing and the 'industrial design' of the Bauhaus than any fault inherent in the typefaces or the ideologies of their makers.

Chapter 3 Of Machines and Men: Nineteenth Century Printing and its Discontents

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the average book was printed using methods, materials and tools hardly different from those used by Gutenberg 450 years earlier: hand-made type was composed into a forme, which was then placed in a wooden press to imprint the manually-inked type onto hand-made paper. By the end of the century no part of this process remained untouched. Composition was done by typing on the keyboard of a composing machine that then cast the required type as needed from matrices made via a punch-cutting machine. This type was then used to produce a plate which could be mounted in one, or many, machine-driven rotary presses capable of thousands of impressions an hour on machine-made paper. As a result, the nineteenth century saw unprecedented increases in the amount of printed material produced.

One might think that this tremendous rise in production would be greeted as enthusiastically by printing practitioners and historians as that initial increase made possible by the invention of the press. Furthermore, as the century marks the ascendancy of English-speaking printers to the position of the 'best' Western printers, one would think that historians of the book in English and English printers would look favourably upon the period. However, this has not been the case. The printing of much of the nineteenth century has come to be seen, like that of the seventeenth century, as a degradation of the printer's art, and, like the seventeenth century, the nineteenth is largely glossed over in histories of typography. The general chronology of great printers jumps from Bodoni at the very end of the eighteenth century to William Morris at the end of the nineteenth. The interim has been

seen as a wasteland of books printed by men who were concerned solely about increasing the volume of printing in order to reap the profits and who, thus, had neither the “capacity nor inclination for the niceties, finesse, and attention to detail required for fine book-making.”¹ In particular, most printers in the nineteenth century are chastised for their use of the ‘Modern’ typeface discussed in the last chapter: a typeface which continued to develop throughout the early part of the century with the contrast between the thick and thin parts of the letter becoming ever greater. This period also saw the introduction of a wide variety of types intended strictly as display or advertising types, including the first sans-serif types. This move away from traditional, ‘Old-Style’ book-faces was criticized from the start; in 1825 Hansard writes, “Caslon’s fonts rarely occur in modern use, but they have too frequently been superseded by others which can claim no excellence over them. In fact, the book-printing of the present day is disgraced by a mixture of fat, lean, and heterogeneous types, which to the eye of taste is truly disgusting.”² Yet, despite this criticism, the majority of printers embraced the new typestyles, and they fed the increasing appetite of English readers with books, newspapers and periodicals printed in Modern typefaces. Paradoxically, the period which saw tremendous increases in literacy has become known as one of the worst eras in printing.

This is not to say that all nineteenth century English printing and printers have been universally castigated. Thomas Bensley and William Bulmer are generally considered to be among the best printers working in the transitional period between Old-Style and Modern in the early part of the century. William Pickering’s decision in the middle of the century to revive the original Caslon fonts for use by the Chiswick Press is heralded as the beginnings

¹ Blumenthal, Joseph. *The Printed Book in America*. Boston: David R. Godine, 1977. 27

² Hansard, T.C. *Typographia*. London: Gregg Press, 1966. 355.

of the revival of good printing. A number of Scottish presses, most notably R. & R. Clark, are recognised for their good use of both Modern and revived Old-Style characters. The period also sees the first American printer since Benjamin Franklin (whose fame was not based on his printing) rise to prominence, Theodore Low De Vinne, and his typographical research marks the beginning of a revived interest in the history and use of type. And, of course, William Morris' decision at the end of the century to open the Kelmscott Press is generally seen as one of the most significant moments in the history of typography.

It is not difficult to see the commonality between these men. All of the printers generally considered by typographical scholars to be the best of the nineteenth century are, at worst, working with transitional typefaces; at best, they are actively involved in the revival of the Old-Style letter. Furthermore, two of these printers, William Morris and T.L. De Vinne, were among the most outspoken critics of contemporary typography and foremost advocates for a return to past practices, and they, in turn, influenced the next generation of typographers and printing historians. Thus, most condemnations of nineteenth century printing are either written by men attempting to separate their practices from those of the 'common' printers around them or twentieth century scholars influenced by, or still in the midst of, the Old-Style revival. The nineteenth century sees both the culmination of the challenge to traditional letter design first instigated with the design of the *romain du roi* and the beginnings of the revolt against this new style in favour of the old. As the old eventually wins out, it should come as no surprise that much of the century's printing is now looked upon with disdain.

Changes to the actual process and equipment of a printing office had been introduced very gradually between the mid-fifteenth century and the end of the eighteenth.

Presses were reinforced with steel bands and built to more exacting tolerances, but they were still made of wood. Typographical pioneers such as the Jaugeon Commission, Fournier and the Didots introduced standardization to the production of type, but type was still cast and set by hand. The single greatest change to the printing process had been the invention of stereotyping, or printing from a cast of an entire page of type, in 1727 by William Ged of Edinburgh, but the process saw limited use in the eighteenth century; Ged himself was put out of business, or so the story goes, by a conspiracy among his compositors and pressmen who intentionally introduced errors into his works and printed his stereotypes poorly so that they would not be put out of work by the new process.³ Stereotyping was used successfully later in the eighteenth century in France by the Didots and in Edinburgh by Foulis, but it still remained a rarity at the end of that century.

The technological conservatism of the printing trade ends in the opening moments of the nineteenth century. A paper-making machine is patented in France in 1799 and in 1801 in England. Lord Stanhope introduces the first press made entirely of cast iron in 1800, and others, such as the Albion and Columbian, follow soon after. Koenig's first steam-powered press is installed at the London *Times* in 1814, and throughout the century that publication pushes the development of increased printing speed by funding, and installing, numerous new presses. These new presses require the 'type' to be held onto rollers, and this difficulty is overcome with curved stereotype plates, resulting in stereotyping, and later electrotyping, becoming crucial parts of the industry. The first typesetting machine comes into common usage in 1838, and it is put on the road to obsolescence in the 1880s by the introduction of the Linotype and Monotype machines

³ Stower, 479.

which could compose type and simultaneously cast type as needed. The new machines needed typefaces, and a machine for cutting punches was developed in 1884. Merely mechanical inventions aside, the nineteenth century also saw great advancements in the use of photographs, through lithographs and half-tone blocks, and colour in printing. The sheer number of innovations has caused Ruari Mclean to pronounce, “More exciting things happened in book design between 1837 and 1890 than in any other comparable period in the history of the world's printing; and most of them happened in London.”⁴

Typography was not left unchanged in the wake of this technical revolution. The Modern typeface introduced in the eighteenth century continued to be the primary bookface, but it became modified through the combined influences of technology and taste. In particular, the contrast between the thick and thin parts of the letters continued to increase. Cast iron and steam-powered presses applied significantly more force than wooden presses, and therefore type had to be cast from harder metal. This harder metal, in turn, allowed typecutters to design letters with finer hairlines and serifs. These finely detailed Modern typefaces had the further advantage of using less ink than Old-Style letters, which was not as much an economic as it was technical concern, for the less ink used the more quickly and smoothly a steam press could run. The appearance of these letters was refined further by the introduction of smoother, wood-pulp papers which were less subject to ink bleed and thus captured a sharper impression. The result is a page which meets the aesthetic challenge first tackled by the Jaugeon Commission: making the printed letter appear as fine as the engraved one.

Having attained this level of detail, most Victorian printers felt that their pages of

⁴ McLean, Ruari. *Victorian Book Design and Colour Printing*. London: Faber and Faber, 1963. vii

Modern type were “graceful, sensitive, and exquisite [and] evidence of technological refinement, an emblem of the Victorian marriage of intricate form and industry.”⁵ An article in an 1882 printers' trade journal captures this spirit of enthusiasm:

An art which is so eminently dependent upon mechanical perfection must inevitably progress toward excellence by the successive labours of succeeding generations; and the best letterpress of the nineteenth century is not only vastly superior to the greatest efforts of Aldus and Plantin, but far superior to even the most loudly-vaunted triumphs of Baskerville and Bodoni at a much later period; and a type-founder's specimen book of the present day can safely challenge comparison with any work performed by any of the great masters of early printing.⁶

While it is tempting to distrust such a hyperbolic statement of self-praise, its author does speak to one facet of nineteenth century printing: mechanical perfection. Those critics of typography who have not been summarily blinded to the merits of the period's typography by its discontents are unflagging in their praise of the technical skill of Victorian printers. Ruari McLean believes that while the designers of these books may not have yet come to terms with the possibilities of the new technologies, the pressmen certainly exhibited a level of skill never before, and rarely since, seen.⁷ Robin Kinross agrees that average levels of presswork only improved with mechanized printing.⁸ Of course, both of these men are also sympathetic to the Modernist typography that arose out of the Bauhaus' marriage of art and industry, so perhaps it is not surprising that they view the rise of industrial printing in a more positive light than many of their peers. But, personal prejudices aside, a survey of the products of many of the best industrial presses does show that, in McLean's words,

⁵ Benton, Megan L. "Typography and Gender: Remasculating the Modern Book." *Illuminating Letters: Typography and Literary Interpretation*. Megan L. Benton and Paul C. Gutjahr, Ed. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001. 71-93. 72-3

⁶ Quoted Morris, William. *The Ideal Book*. William S. Peterson, Ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. xx

⁷ *Victorian Printing*, 5.

⁸ Kinross, 36.

“Victorian technique was superb when it wanted to be.”⁹

But this statement is just as poignant for critics of nineteenth-century printing as it is for supporters, for it raises the question: how often did they want to be? For while there are exemplary specimens of printing skill from the period, there are many more examples of poorly printed books. There are several causes for this perceived lack, and they all involve the combined concerns of economics and industrialization. Throughout the century there is a steady increase in the number of English readers and a corresponding increase in the demand for inexpensive books.¹⁰ English printers met this demand by combining the mass-production possible through stereotyping and the steam-powered press with the cheapest materials available. But, even before the steam-press attained common usage, printers were finding ways to speed up production and increase press runs. One of the most common methods was to have different printers supply sections of a single book, a process Hansard decries in 1825: “The system of hurrying works through the press, lately adopted by some booksellers, by giving them among a variety of houses, is destructive of . . . that uniformity which constitutes the beauty of the typographic art.”¹¹ In a time when there was still considerable variance between presses, fonts, papers and even stereotype plates, not to mention differences between the human operators of the presses, having different printing operations produce sections of a book obviously results in books where not all the pages look the same. Uniformity was furthered hampered by the development of the serial publication, where the books were printed in instalments over a span of time.

A lack of uniformity is one of the first consequences of the nineteenth century

⁹ *Victorian Printing*, 5.

¹⁰ The best discussion of the relationship between the rise in literacy and the decrease in book prices in England remains Richard Altick’s *The English Common Reader*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

¹¹ Hansard, 394.

increase in book production; far more damning to most critics of the period is the design phase which followed: standardised industrial production. If one wants to print as many books as possible as cheaply as possible, it is best to vary the design of individual books as little as possible. P.M. Handover explains the situation faced by most printers of the period as akin to that of a newspaper: “When an unceasing flow of copy must be set and printed at the highest possible speed all casual experiment and even the mildest variation must be eschewed; the more rigid the standardisation of typography, so that every piece of copy is interchangeable, the higher the efficiency of composing and press rooms.”¹² Thus the nineteenth century sees the rise of the ‘libraries,’ publishers’ series of best-sellers all printed in a common format. Most famous among these are the ‘yellow-backs,’ books with characteristic yellow bindings produced largely for reading on the rapidly expanding railway system and sold at railway stations beginning in the 1850s. At a time when the average first-edition cost 31s. and the ‘good’ reprint 6s., these railway novels sold for between 1s. and 1s.6d.¹³ For obvious reasons, they were tremendously successful; Routledge’s shilling “Railway Library” had published over 1,300 titles by 1898.¹⁴ In order to remain profitable at these prices they were made of the cheapest materials available and composed according to a common formula, regardless of the individual book’s content, resulting in typography that “conspicuously lacks any style at all.”¹⁵

¹² Handover, P. M. "British Book Typography." *Book Typography 1815-1965 in Europe and the United States*. Kenneth Day, Ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966. pp 137-174. 151

¹³ Altick, 298-99.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 299.

¹⁵ McLean, *Victorian Printing*, 163. Of course, not all typographers view standardisation as a bad thing; see Kinross, *Modern Typography*, 52.



Figure 3.1 John Parry, “London Street Scene,” 1835.

The ‘monotony’ of nineteenth century book design is also an outcome of trends in type design. The period saw a tremendous increase in the number and variety of typefaces, but few of these were ever used for printing books; they were designed for advertising. Printed advertising materials had existed since the earliest days of the press, and had grown in importance since the introduction of newspapers in the seventeenth century, but with the Industrial Revolution in England there arose both the supply of manufactured goods and the market for them which resulted in a vibrant advertising industry.¹⁶ In order for their message to stand out from the masses of handbills, posters and placards, advertisers and their printers created a vast number of permutations of the Roman letter [FIGURE 3.1].

¹⁶ Morison, *Politics and Script*, 327.

Here again the expanding railway system was a strong influence, as advertisers needed signage that was readable for potential customers hurrying through crowded stations or riding on the trains. To help the letters stand out, fonts based on the Modern letter were first designed with ever-increasing thick sections while retaining the hairline thins: so-called Fat-Face. The next step was to create Roman-style letters with uniformly thick lines and no distinction between the traditional thick and thin: monoline serif, which was more frequently referred to as ‘Egyptian,’ perhaps because of its dark appearance. At the same time and for the same reasons, the first sans-serif fonts, or ‘Grotesques,’ were cut, first as capital letters in 1816 by William Caslon IV and then as lower-case, starting in America, in 1835.¹⁷ The creation of sans-serif and its use by advertising and industry will be discussed in detail in the next chapter in relation to opinions of Bauhaus typography, but it is worthwhile to point out here that its perceived effectiveness resulted in it being the lettering adopted for both the English and German railway systems in the nineteenth century.¹⁸

That this incredible profusion of display typefaces was one of the consequences of the Industrial Revolution is incontestable, and historians of printing have made their opinions of the aesthetic results of the influence that the social and economic changes brought about by industrialisation had on type design very clear. Stanley Morison writes bluntly, “Although the types distinctive of the period 1810-50 represent the ugliest ever cut, the designs suited the Industrial Revolution as no face could.”¹⁹ Chappell and Bringhurst write more poetically, but equally condemningly, “Some of the types cut in England in the nineteenth century are as black as Newcastle coal. Some also have the hard mechanical

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 327-9 and Morison, *On Type Designs Past and Present*, 62-3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 330.

¹⁹ *Type Designs Past and Present*, 63.

rhythm of the English railroad rather than the gait of a thoughtful mind and hand.”²⁰ The diminishment of human individuality through the Industrial Revolution is reflected in the proliferation of types designed for industry and advertising, not protracted reading.

This de-humanization is further compounded by stagnation in the design of types for books; all effort went to the new display types. Until 1850 there was only one new book face introduced in England, and it was designed not for literature but for catalogues and time tables.²¹ Thus most books were printed in the Modern typeface, and printing historians have not been shy when it comes to identifying the faults of this face: “The available types were nondescript ‘moderns’ or transitional faces, stemming from Bodoni and Didot but debased in the transition.”²² The generally negative attitudes towards the work of Bodoni and Didot were discussed in the last chapter, so to say later nineteenth century types were debased versions of their already inferior types is damning criticism. Yet perhaps the negative attitudes towards these late eighteenth, early nineteenth century printers is at least partially dependent upon their being the genesis for these detested later nineteenth century typefaces, for the later typefaces are generally discussed in relation to their earlier models; William Peterson writes, “The modern-face types for books that evolved in the nineteenth century from the Didot-Bodoni models were bland, undistinguished and boring, and they changed very little as the century went on, except to become progressively lighter.”²³ Similarly, Updike writes that, despite their many contributions to printing, the Didots are now remembered as the “chief exponents of that dubious pseudo-classical taste that brought in, with the nineteenth century, the rigid Didot letter, which ... was, with its still worse

²⁰ *A Short History of the Printed Word*, 201.

²¹ Handover, “British Book Typography,” 145.

²² Blumenthal, *The Printed Book in America*, 27.

²³ *The Kelmscott Press: a History of William Morris's Typographical Adventure*. New York: Oxford UP, 1991. 16.

derivations, a curse to French typography for more than half a century.”²⁴ As discussed previously, Bodoni and the Didots used the model of the *romain du roi* to create typefaces which turned their back on the tradition of letters written with a pen and embraced the letterforms of the engraver. The Modern typefaces of the nineteenth century continued this break with the past, for as they were adopted and then adapted to mechanical production they have come to be seen as the epitome of the divorce between the human writing and the machine printing. As Theodore Low De Vinne would write later in the nineteenth century, “Each letter lost some of its individuality.”²⁵

An examination of the average nineteenth century book does seem to confirm many of these criticisms. The type is both small and somewhat wiry, giving the impression that the type is even smaller. Word spacing is irregular, leading to occasional ‘rivers of white’ down the page, and the margins are narrow. The paper, at best, feels thin and ‘cheap’ compared to older books; at worst, the pulp-based paper crumbles at the touch. Yet all of these traits are understandable when one considers that the publishers were trying to produce books, often long Victorian novels, for the lowest possible price to meet the demands of a rapidly-growing reading public – a public which, as sales records attest too, had no problem reading them. At the same time one must consider that the majority of the criticism of Modern typefaces and Victorian typography was initiated by typographical reformers calling for a return to Old-Style typefaces, and, at least in the case of William Morris and the other ‘fine press’ operators, Old-Style prices. These reformers eventually won the day, and typographical history largely reflects their opinions.

²⁴ *Printing Types*, 1.219.

²⁵ “The *Century’s* Printer on the *Century’s* Type.” *Century Magazine*, 1896. Quoted in Carl P. Rollins, *Theodore Low De Vinne*. New York, 1968. 68.

The Old-Style revival truly begins in 1844, but it would be many years before it challenges the dominance of Modern typefaces. The instigators are publisher William Pickering and Charles Whittingham junior of the Chiswick Press. Pickering, the illegitimate offspring of an earl (presumed to be Earl Spencer) and a ‘lady of title,’ was apprenticed to a publisher at 14, and started his own publishing business in 1820 at the age of 24 with the help of funds from his father.²⁶ His business largely consisted of re-issuing editions of books no longer under copyright, and to this end he used the services of a number of London printers. Although not a printer himself, Pickering is credited with the design of his books as they retain common elements of design despite being produced by various printers. One of his first typographical ventures was the production of his ‘Diamond Classics,’ tiny books produced in the diamond size of typeface: approximately 4.5 point by modern sizing and readable only with a magnifying glass. By 1830 he came to rely increasingly upon the Chiswick Press and Charles Whittingham junior for the production of his books. The Chiswick Press under Whittingham senior had developed a reputation for printing fine small octavo books instead of the current standard, the larger and more expensive quarto.²⁷ Together Pickering and the younger Whittingham produced from 1830-1844 Pickering’s ‘Aldine Poets,’ a series of 53 classic reprints.

As I discussed in Chapter One, the press of Italian Renaissance printer Aldus Manutius has long been acclaimed for making scholarly editions of the classics affordable by printing them in octavo. Pickering successfully aligns himself with this tradition when launching his own series of affordable, well-edited octavos. The cost of these volumes was kept down both by their smaller size and Pickering’s decision to bind them in cloth-

²⁶ Meynell, Francis. *English Printed Books*. London: Collins, 1948. 26.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

wrapped boards, a process he had pioneered in 1821.²⁸ If the title and the general aims of the series did not align Pickering sufficiently with the tradition of Manutius, Pickering also adopts the Aldine Press's Dolphin and Anchor mark for his title pages and labels himself '*Aldi Discip. Anglus*'; hereafter he uses this printer's mark for his device [FIGURE 3.2].²⁹ Visually these books participated in the humanist tradition through Pickering's decision to eschew most ornament and to use extremely simple typography. In an era when titles alone often stretched to hundreds of words, Pickering reduced the number of words on the title page to the bare minimum and set them in letter-spaced capitals the same size as the text within the book.³⁰ This humanistic style had the further advantage of being easily adaptable to all titles in the series and therefore reduced the time, and thus the expense, necessary for composing the type – something the earliest printers must also have realized.

Both in style and in purpose Pickering's books stood within the tradition of the best humanist printer-scholar. But there was one aspect of the books that was thoroughly modern: their typeface. Pickering had at his disposal the types of the Chiswick Press, and they were all of Modern cut. Beginning in 1840 he begins a program of reprinting classical, sixteenth and seventeenth century authors and for this he desires a period-appropriate typeface. The first work proposed, rather fittingly for Pickering's humanist aspirations, is a Latin edition of Juvenal.³¹ Whittingham contacts the Caslons, who still operate the foundry started by their forefather in the eighteenth century, and the Chiswick Press begins to acquire type from the original William Caslon's matrices (proving, once again, the longevity of these materials). At first there is insufficient type to print an entire book in the

²⁸ Handover, 146.

²⁹ McLean, *Victorian Book Design*, 10.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

³¹ Updike, *Printing Types*, 2.198.

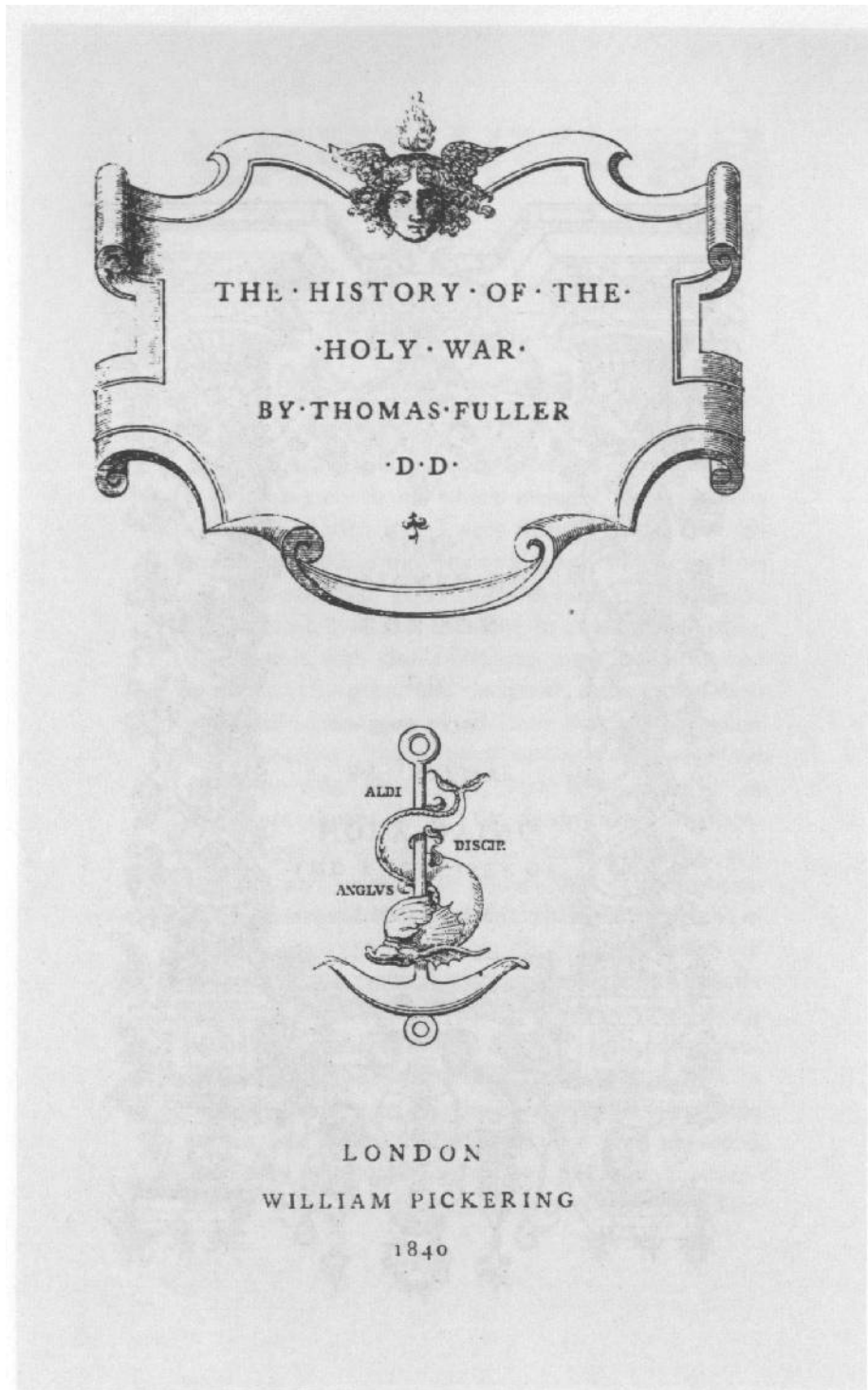


Figure 3.2 William Pickering and Charles Whittingham, Thomas Fuller's *The History of the Holy War*, 1840.

old types; their use is limited to title pages which also make use of period appropriate engraving. In 1844 this restriction has been sufficiently overcome for the Chiswick Press to produce two books set entirely in Caslon: the novel *The Diary of Lady Willoughby* and Herbert's *The Temple*. The originally proposed edition of Juvenal appeared the next year. Herbert's text is set in Caslon because it is more period appropriate than Modern-face and, as Whittingham would explain in the sequel to *Lady Willoughby* in 1848, the author of *Lady Willoughby* "personates a lady of the seventeenth century" and the book is thus set in an old-style typeface.³² P.M. Handover points out that the very fact that Whittingham felt it necessary to justify the use of Caslon indicates that contemporary opinions of the typeface deemed it suitable only for period imitation and not for standard reading material.³³

Period work aside, the majority of books printed in Caslon by Pickering and Whittingham were devotional texts, and these books also witnessed the revival of two other typefaces. At the same time that they were re-introducing Caslon and using it to produce a folio Book of Common Prayer, the two men produced folio versions of the English Prayer Book using black and red blackletter types as part of the revival of Gothic-style typography for ecclesiastical texts. In 1854, the year Pickering died, Whittingham printed a volume of religious poems in Basle Roman, a typeface he had cut based upon the early sixteenth century types used in Basle and Lyons before Garamond's types rose to dominance.³⁴ But, without a doubt, the standard face of printing remained the Modern. Like the earliest printers who based their work upon scribal traditions, Pickering and Whittingham adopt different typographical styles to different genres of work, with blackletter and Old-Style

³² Quoted Handover, 146.

³³ *Ibid.*, 146.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 147.

being suitable for religious and pre-eighteenth century works, and the Modern for more contemporary books.

Because Old-Style typefaces were considered appropriate only for ‘special’ circumstances, Pickering and Whittingham’s revival of Caslon had little influence on the general typography of the vast number of nineteenth century books, which continued to be printed in Modern faces. But it does cause several founders to consider cutting new types which combine the elements of both. The result is the rather confusingly named ‘revived Old Style,’ also referred to oxymoronically by Updike as ‘modernized Old Style.’³⁵ The heightened contrast between thicks and thins of Modern types was combined with the bracketed serifs of Old Style, and the width was a compromise between the rounded Old and the condensed Modern. It was first cut by Miller and Richard in 1858, and began to figure prominently in the work of the foremost Scottish printers such as R & R Clark. Its most significant early use was in the *Pall Mall Gazette* after 1865, and it slowly gained market share on the Modern as the nineteenth century drew to a close.³⁶ But for most of the century the dominant typeface remained the Modern because of its suitability for the demands of industrial printing.

The next major development in the revival of past styles of book typography would not appear until the final decade of the century, and the printer responsible has since “been written about more extensively than any other printer except Gutenberg.”³⁷ William Morris’s decision to apply Arts and Crafts ideals to the printing of books is a familiar story, making him one of the few printers known by name outside the trade. But it also bears re-

³⁵ *Printing Types*, 2.201

³⁶ *Handover*, 149 and Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press*, 25-6.

³⁷ Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press*, 7.

telling, as the various myths surrounding the Kelmscott Press have been seized upon by those both in favour of and against what Morris produced and what he stood for. He has been heralded as one of the pioneers of modern design. His books, especially his Chaucer, are considered some of the most beautiful examples of printing ever produced and they influenced innumerable printers and typographers. The Kelmscott Press also inspired the 'fine' press movement at the start of the twentieth century by showing that people were willing to pay for books produced carefully from the finest materials. However, Morris's work is seen by others as hypocritical and a retrograde influence on 'good' book design. His critics take great pleasure in pointing out that while claiming to be motivated by socialist ideals he produced luxury editions solely for the rich. Even worse, there is no denying his types are difficult to read or that his ornamentation dominates the text – points that weigh heavily against him in the minds of those who think the primary, or even the sole, purpose of the book is to communicate as efficiently as possible the ideas of the author to the mind of the reader. The subsequent history of typography seems to back up their claims, as the Kelmscott-style soon faded and was replaced by more utilitarian designs. But when one examines closely his own prolific statements on the printing of books it becomes clear that his motivations were far more complex than either his supporters or detractors generally give him credit for. Yes, Morris turned to the past for inspiration and sought to lessen the impact of industrialization, but he tried to do this through books he considered both beautiful and usable.

The standard narrative of the founding of the Kelmscott Press begins in 1888: William Morris, inspired by fellow Arts and Crafts practitioner Emery Walker's talk on the printing of books and especially his enlarged photographic slides of incunabula, approaches

Walker with the idea that they should cut a font and start a press. But in reality Morris begins experimenting with book design much earlier. Morris's first book of verse, *The Defence of Guenevere*, was printed at the Chiswick Press in 1858 but he had little to do with the actual production of the book. In the 1860s he and Edward Burne-Jones, who would later design many of the Kelmscott woodcuts, began work on *The Earthly Paradise*, a collection of his poetic tales to be illustrated in the style of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* printed by Aldus Manutius.³⁸ The project proved to be too grand in scope (the unillustrated first edition was over 1200 pages), but the ten known proof pages display both the style which was to become the hallmark of the Kelmscott Press and Morris's continued relationship with the Chiswick Press: eight of the pages are set in Caslon, which the Chiswick had only recently reintroduced, and two in Basle Roman, a proprietary Old Style font of the Chiswick.³⁹ The two men tried again, collaborating on an illustrated edition of *Love is Enough* in the early 1870s, but it also went unfinished. Surviving proofs show, in William Peterson's words, "the same weakness that beset the *Earthly Paradise* trials, perhaps even more acutely in this instance: the pages are set in a conventional modern-face type that seems weak and enervated compared with Morris's vigorous ornaments."⁴⁰ During this same period Morris also produced a number of fine illuminated manuscripts and acquired several early sixteenth century writing manuals.

As the date of that fateful discussion with Emery Walker drew closer Morris was also to be found gaining a practical understanding of the printing trade; from 1885 to 1890 he served as the editor of the *Commonweal*, the journal of the Socialist League. In 1893 he

³⁸ Allingham, William. *William Allingham: The Diaries*. H. Allingham and D. Radford, Eds. London: Folio Society, 1990. 130. Allingham's description of Burne-Jones and Morris's work as a "New Renaissance" may not have sat well with Morris, given his preference for pre-Renaissance, Gothic forms.

³⁹ Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press*, 52.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

told a reporter inquiring about his previous experiences with printing that he “was much among type when I was editor of the *Commonweal*.”⁴¹ While working on the *Commonweal* he also designed and closely supervised the production of three of his books which were printed by the Chiswick Press. Morris, along with Emery Walker and Charles T. Jacobi, the current manager of the Chiswick Press, produced *The House of the Wolfings* in 1888. Although it was printed in the Chiswick’s Basle Roman typeface, the most ‘historic’ of Roman typefaces available at the time, its typography did not entirely please Morris. In particular he disliked the contemporary fashion for wide letter-spacing and leading; in a letter to his publisher F.S. Ellis he writes:

I quite agree with you about the type; they have managed to knock the guts out of it somehow. Also I am beginning to learn something about the art of type-setting; and now I see what a lot of difference there is between the work of the conceited numskulls of to-day and that of the fifteenth and sixteenth century printers merely in the arrangement of the words, I mean the spacing out: it makes all the difference in the beauty of a page of print. If I ever print another book I shall enter into the conflict on this side also.⁴²

Here the influence of Emery Walker is clearly evident; both the lecture notes for his Arts and Crafts Society talk in 1888 and Oscar Wilde’s report of that talk clearly outline that he was in favour of ‘solid’ (unleaded) typography. Wilde writes, “The wide-spacing between lines occasioned by the use of lead, he pointed out, left the page in stripes, and made the blanks as important as the lines.”⁴³ In the same lecture Walker advocated the use of sidenotes instead of headlines for running titles, and Morris’s next book from the Chiswick Press, *The Roots of the Mountains*, features both tighter spacing and running titles in the margins.⁴⁴ Morris’s last work printed by Chiswick was also his most experimental: *The*

⁴¹ Morris, William. *The Ideal Book*. William S. Peterson, Ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982. 96.

⁴² Quoted Mackail, J.W. *The Life of William Morris*. London: Longmans, 1922. 226.

⁴³ *Pall Mall Gazette*. 16 November 1888: 5. Quoted Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press*, 330.

⁴⁴ Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press*, 69.

Story of Gunnlaug the Worm-Tongue (printed 1890-91 but never sold publicly). While the previous two books resembled humanist models, *Gunnlaug* copies the form of the earliest Gothic incunabulum. Spaces are left for initials and the typeface is a replica of Caxton's, the first printer in England. But as the sheets for *Gunnlaug* were never even bound during Morris's lifetime, he must have been disappointed with the final result and was, on any account, already planning the founding of his own press.

In a letter to Ellis, dated November 21, 1889, Morris writes of his plans to start a press in order to produce books that fully meet his aesthetic criteria: "As to the printing, the difficulty of getting it really well done shows us the old story again. It seems it is no easy matter to get good hand-press men, so little work is being done by the hand-press."⁴⁵ As with his previous forays into tapestry weaving, furniture making and manuscript production, and in full accord with his Arts and Crafts principles, from the outset the Kelmscott Press is to operate without employing modern machines, relying instead upon traditions of craftsmanship and the skill of individual craftspersons. Like many of his Arts and Crafts peers, this decision was not motivated solely by an appreciation of the style of previous periods; by choosing to eschew mechanical production Morris and his followers were making a political statement against what they saw as the dehumanization of the worker under the conditions of industrial production. Following Ruskin's lead, Morris suggests that ornamentation is the means by which the craftsman can express both pleasure and individuality in his work. Ruskin writes, "Go forth again to gaze upon the old cathedral front, where you have smiled so often at the fantastic ignorance of the old sculptors ... but do not mock at them for they are signs of the life and liberty of every workman who struck

⁴⁵ Quoted Mackail, 239.

the stone."⁴⁶ Morris re-phrases this sentiment in his preface to the Kelmscott edition of Ruskin's *The Nature of Gothic* as, "art is the expression of man's pleasure in labour."⁴⁷ Thus it should come as no surprise that when Morris and Walker give a lecture on printing to the Arts and Crafts Society in 1893 that they stress the importance of the individuality of the craftsman against the uniformity of the machine:

A well-bound beautiful book is neither of one type, nor finished so that its highest praise is that 'had it been made by a machine it could not have been made better.' It is individual; it is instinct with the hand of him who made it; it is pleasant to feel, to handle, and to see; it is the original work of an original mind working in freedom simultaneously with hand and heart and brain to produce a thing of use, which all time should agree ever more and more also to call 'a thing of beauty.'⁴⁸

By vigorously asserting the joy of the craftsperson against the inhumanity of the machine (and those made mindless by the operation of such equipment), Morris transforms the Arts and Crafts object from being merely a utilitarian item, or conversely an *objet d'art*, to something which is both and thus liberates the user and individual creator.

But while this approach towards the making of books does have its appeal, it is not without its problems. The products of the Kelmscott Press, and Morris's writings on printing, contain several dichotomies that have been seized upon by his detractors as evidence that his aims with the press were misguided. The most common of these is the accusation that Morris's socialism was not legitimate because the high price of the books put them out of the reach of the masses. Holbrook Jackson, a member of the first generation of printers post-Morris, writes: "Ruskin was the first English author to offer working men good printing -- at a price beyond their reach ... Then his greatest disciple Morris had

⁴⁶ Quoted Kaplan, Wendy. *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Europe and America: Design for the Modern World*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2004. 22.

⁴⁷ Quoted Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press*, 43.

⁴⁸ Morris, William and Emery Walker. "Printing." *Arts and Crafts Essays*. William Morris, Ed. London: Longmans and Green Co, 1899. 111-133. 147-8.

another shot and produced the Kelmscott masterpieces for millionaires."⁴⁹ Morris himself was aware of this seeming hypocrisy, but in *The Ideal Book* points out that in attempting to create the highest form of "book art" he did not want to be limited by "commercial exigencies of price."⁵⁰ By using the best materials and paying his 'craftsmen' a decent salary, Morris spent more on producing his books than most of his contemporaries and thus needed to charge more.⁵¹ In a lecture written a mere two months after Morris's death, Frank Colebrook discusses this decision and the impact it had; rather than decrying Morris's apparent lack of concern for the common man, Colebrook sees the primary outcome of this production and pricing strategy as "demonstrating that people will lavish money to buy books on which master printers and workmen have lavished care."⁵² Morris's books may have been bought by the rich, but his example led others to produce books that cost more to produce than the average mass-produced book by showing that a market existed for such goods; the fine press movement, which will be discussed shortly, was the primary result of this realization, and it continues to provide satisfaction to the few printers who embrace it, and to their patrons who are quite willing to 'foot the bill.'

For the real reasons why Morris's typography became such a point of contention in the early twentieth century one must look more closely at how his political and aesthetic beliefs (if the two can be separated) were at odds with the traditions of book making that preceded him, and whose primacy was re-established shortly after his death. One of these points of dissension was the tension between Morris's desire to return to the

Gothic/Medieval and the post-Renaissance custom of printing books using Roman

⁴⁹ *The Printing of Books*. London: Cassell, 1947. 38.

⁵⁰ *The Ideal Book*, 67.S

⁵¹ It must also not be forgotten that Morris was a businessman in addition to being an artist, and a successful one at that. For a discussion of his business practices see Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press*, esp. p. 200ff.

⁵² *William Morris: Master Printer*. William S. Peterson, Ed. Council Bluffs: Yellow Barn Press, 1989. 9

typefaces. His first experiments with printing at the Chiswick Press used the oldest Roman typefaces then available, Caslon and Basle Roman, but even they did not satisfy his desire for a type. Thus when he set about founding his own press he modeled his own types on the first Roman typefaces, especially those of Nicholas Jenson, which he thought, at least in Roman type, represented the paragon of "combining beauty and simplicity."⁵³ One of the key qualifications for Jenson's types, and others of the early Renaissance, was they showed the least possible degradation of the Gothic tradition, while types that came after strayed further from the Medieval model. Mackail writes in his life of Morris, "With the noble Italian art of the earlier Renaissance he had but little sympathy: for that of the later Renaissance and the academic traditions he had nothing but unmixed detestation."⁵⁴ He felt the Renaissance was largely responsible for the divorce between art and everyday life which the Arts and Crafts movement was so vehemently against. In his lectures between 1877 and 1894 he argued that nineteenth century art "no longer had any root," largely because modern artists "wrap themselves up in dreams of Greece and Italy."⁵⁵ Thus it should come as no surprise that even though Morris designed his Roman type by studying enlarged photographs of Jenson's (which also suggests Morris was not so much against new technologies as he was against their current usage), there are fundamental differences with the exemplar; Morris writes in an 1891 letter to Ellis, "Crane when he saw it beside Jenson thought it more Gothic-looking: this is a fact, and a cheerful one to me."⁵⁶ The two other fonts Morris designed are even more backward-looking in a further attempt to capture the spirit of art before it was corrupted by the Renaissance.

⁵³ Morris, *The Ideal Book*, 96.

⁵⁴ *The Life of William Morris*, 301-2.

⁵⁵ Pevsner, Nikolaus. *Pioneers of Modern Design: from William Morris to Walter Gropius*. 4th Ed. New Haven: Yale UP, 2005. 15.

⁵⁶ Quoted Mackail, 268.

In their essay, "Printing," from the 1893 collection *Arts and Crafts Essays*, Morris and Walker discuss the various typefaces used in *incunabula*:

The first books were printed in black letter, i.e. the letter which was a Gothic development of the ancient Roman character, and which developed more completely and satisfactorily on the side of the 'lower-case' than the capital letters; the 'lower-case' being in fact invented in the *early* Middle Ages. The earliest book printed with movable type, the aforesaid Gutenberg Bible, is printed in letters which are an exact imitation of the more formal ecclesiastical writing which obtained at that time ... But the first Bible actually dated ... imitates a much freer hand, simple, rounder, and less *spiky*, and therefore far pleasanter and easier to read.⁵⁷

This 'history' explains why Morris modelled his Troy and Chaucer typefaces on those that directly followed Gutenberg, such as the Mainz printer Peter Schoeffer, and not the originator himself, and provides insight into their other typographical opinions. Unlike the common assumptions that the Gothic script was a debasement of the Roman and that Roman typeface developed from the Gothic in a movement toward legibility, this history has the Gothic being a further development of the "ancient" Roman. In particular, the Roman script was deficient because it lacked a lower-case, a situation which was not rectified until the Middle Ages (one assumes they are referring to the Carolingian Renaissance). The first type was good in that it was a facsimile of handwriting, but flawed because the handwriting it was modelled after was a strict, "ecclesiastical" form. It is not difficult to detect the Morris and Walker's socialist opinions of organized religion when they state they prefer Schoeffer's less formal type because it was based on a "freer hand" than Gutenberg's "ecclesiastical" model (note the continued emphasis on the original, "hand" production). Freed from the constraints of the Church, these later printers were able to print a Gothic typeface that was "simpler," less offensive ("*spiky*"), and therefore easier, and even pleasant to read.

⁵⁷ 113-14; emphasis theirs.

This final assertion points to the ultimate contradiction (or at least it seems a contradiction in the face of the 'crystal goblet' argument) which must be faced when one examines Morris's typographical works and writings -- his assertion that his desire to print in Gothic typefaces, make use of extensive illustrations and draw attention to the craft of the printer was not at odds with the reader's ease of reading. Throughout his writings Morris continually stresses the importance of using an easy-to-read typeface: "it is obvious that legibility is the first thing to be aimed at in the forms of the letters; this is best furthered by the avoidance of irrational swellings and spiky projections, and by the using of careful purity of line."⁵⁸ Morris leaves no doubt as to the source of these retrograde influences on legibility: "The sweltering hideousness of the Bodoni letter, the most illegible type that was ever cut, with its preposterous thicks and thins."⁵⁹ As was seen in the last chapter's discussion of the development of the Modern typeface, Morris was not alone in his opinion that Modern typefaces were harder to read. But what is difficult to understand is how Morris could talk of eliminating "spiky projections" and "irrational swellings," terms which in the next century would be applied to Roman typefaces by those advocating sans serif fonts, and then print in Gothic typefaces. But while Gothic typefaces and readability may be at odds for most critics of letterforms since Plutarch, they were not for Morris. In one of his narratives on the founding of the Kelmscott Press he describes the rationale behind his Troy type:

the task I set myself was to redeem the Gothic character from the charge of unreadableness which is commonly brought against it. And I felt that this charge could not be reasonably brought against the types of the first two decades of printing: that of Schoeffer at Mainz, Mentelin at Strassburg, and Günther Zainer at Augsburg, avoided the spiky ends and undue compression which lay some of the

⁵⁸ *The Ideal Book*, 63.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 69.

later type open to the above charge ... Keeping my end steadily in view, I designed a black-letter type which I think I may claim to be as readable as a Roman one, and to say the truth I prefer it to the Roman.⁶⁰

Morris identifies a golden period for printing in those few years after it lost its 'ecclesiastical' rigidity and before the economic concerns resulting from the commercialization of the printing press in the Renaissance began to override the aesthetics of printing, and models his type on books from that period. Despite their later fate as museum pieces, he firmly believed that his books were to be read and should "not dazzle the eye or trouble the intellect of the reader by eccentricity of form in the letters."⁶¹ Thus he designed types which were, at least to him, more readable than those Modern fonts currently in fashion.

If one were to judge Morris's work solely from the statements in the preceding paragraph it would seem that he was as interested in crafting the 'crystal goblets' later privileged by Beatrice Warde and her contemporaries. But, of course, even a cursory look at a Kelmscott Book reveals that readability was not his only concern. As he defined it, all 'true' art, as opposed to the merely 'academic,' contains two elements: the epical and the ornamental.⁶² Readability is related to the telling of stories, the epical, but although Morris might say that "a book quite unornamented can look actually and positively un-ugly," he was equally interested in the ornamental.⁶³ Indeed, at other points in his writings on typography he seems to have quite forgotten about the actual content of his books: "it was the essence of my undertaking to produce books it would be a pleasure to look upon as pieces of printing and arrangement of type."⁶⁴ The greatest evidence of this sacrifice of

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 76.

⁶¹ *The Ideal Book*, 75.

⁶² *ibid.*, 26.

⁶³ quoted *Modern Book Design: From William Morris to the Present Day*. London: Faber & Faber, 1958. 11.

⁶⁴ *The Ideal Book*, 75.

content for form was in the Kelmscott editions of poetry. As William Peterson points out, Morris's desire to print solid masses of unleaded, black text was possible when working with prose, but became extremely difficult when working with poetry.⁶⁵ One solution was to print the first page of the text, which was often the most ornamented, as prose with the line breaks indicated by small leaf ornaments. First in an edition of Tennyson's *Maud*, and later in several other volumes, he printed the first page of the poem simply as prose [FIGURE 3.3].⁶⁶ In his desire to express his joy through his work, the craftsman seems to have forgotten about the original creator.

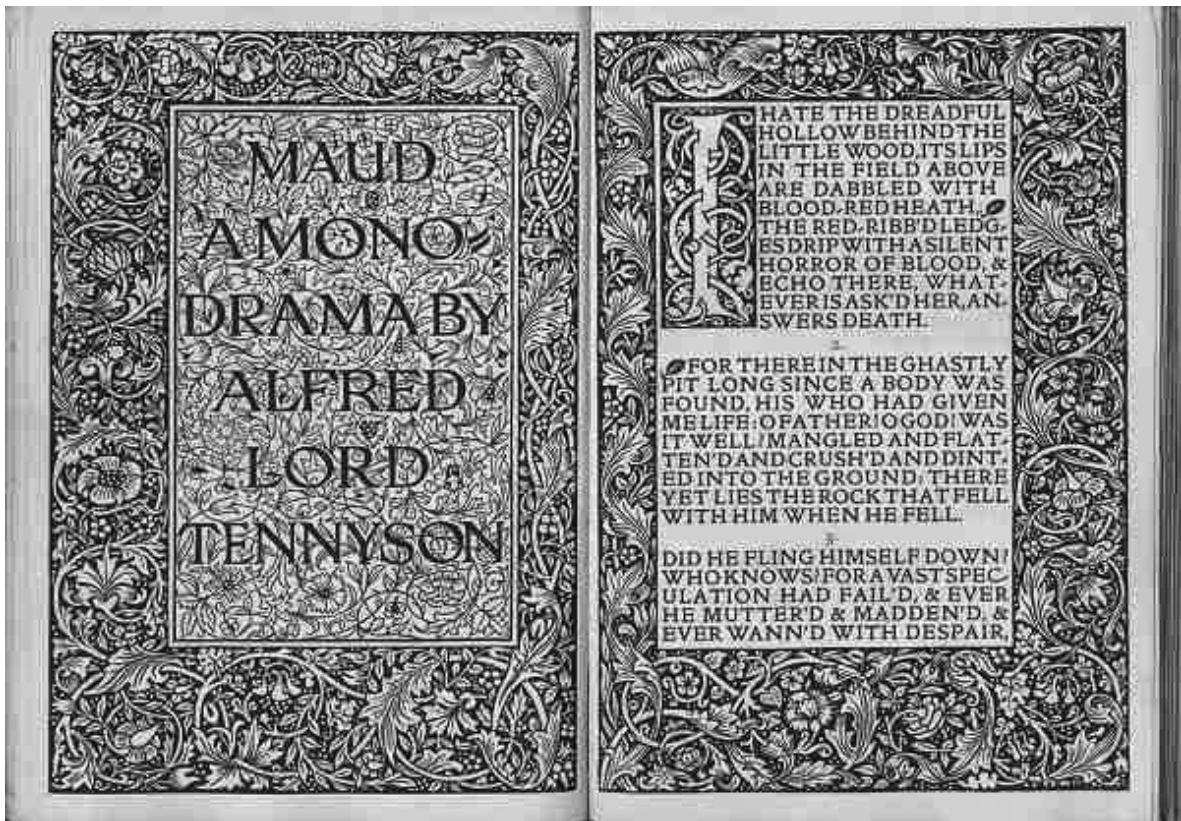


Figure 3.3 Kelmscott Press, Tennyson's *Maud*, 1893.

⁶⁵ *The Kelmscott Press*, 128.

⁶⁶ This lack of concern for the poet's intention may have had something to do with Morris's opinion of Tennyson; Mackail recounts that he thought *Maud* was the last work of Tennyson's "that mattered" (1.46). This willingness to eschew the poem for the form also severely problematizes Jerome McGann's assertion in *Black Riders: The Visible Language of Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993) that Morris was a precursor to Modernist poets' uses of typography to effect meaning (see esp. p.49-75).

It is clear from this cursory examination of Morris's typographical writings that his opinions as to what makes a book 'readable' do not agree with those authorities which preceded, or followed, him and appear to be contradictory. As a result, it was easy at the beginning of the twentieth century, as will be seen in the next chapter, for a new generation of typographers to deride his work as mere ornamentation and not 'serious' bookmaking. But these charges, and the seeming contradictions of Morris's work, are substantially lessened when one considers that Morris was trying to make literature available in the form he personally preferred and which he, somewhat erroneously, thought other people wanted: "I felt that for the books one loved and cared for there might be attempted a presentation, both as to print and paper, which should be worthy of one's feelings. That is all. The ideas we cherish are worth preserving, and I fail to see why a beautiful form should not be given to them, as well as an ugly one."⁶⁷ Morris personally chose which books the Kelmscott would print, books which he most enjoyed reading and wanted to preserve.⁶⁸ He printed them in the typography he thought was the most readable and selected the paper and inks which were most suitable for the printing technologies he employed, regardless of the cost or trouble. His goblets may have been gold and bejewelled, but this did not mean that he valued the wine any less.

Even though Morris's death in 1896 was a mere five years after the founding of the Kelmscott Press, he had a profound impact on the making of books in England.⁶⁹ The most immediately visible was the 'Fine Press Movement,' the rise of other short-run, non-

⁶⁷ *The Ideal Book*, 105.

⁶⁸ There was another class of books which he enjoyed reading but did not in his eyes merit preservation in glorious form; he was an avid reader of both cheap 'yellow-backs' and Dickens but neither is to be found among the list of Kelmscott editions (see Mackail, 1.225-27).

⁶⁹ Morris's influence was, of course, not limited to England. The next chapter discusses some of his work's impact in the United States and Germany.

industrial printing presses. Morris and the sales of his Kelmscott editions proved, in A.W. Pollard's words, "the existence of a public willing to pay for the cost of print and paper, even when print and paper were the best which money could buy."⁷⁰ In the years immediately following Morris' death a number of presses opened which both stylistically and ideologically borrowed from his books. Such presses as Charles Ricketts' Vale Press (1896-1908), C.R. Ashbee's Essex House Press (1898-1910) and the Ashendene Press (1896-1935) hand-produced books in limited numbers for those who were interested in paying for such work.⁷¹ In doing so some, such as Ashbee, saw themselves as continuing the socialist enterprise of Morris and the Arts and Crafts Society, while others, like Ricketts, wished to carry on the salvation of the classics from shoddy, machine-produced books:

The aim of the revival of fine printing is, I repeat, merely due to a wish to give a permanent and beautiful form to that portion of our literature which is secure of permanence. By a permanent form I do not mean merely sound as to paper and ink, etc; I mean permanent in the sense that the work reflects that conscious aim towards beauty and order which are ever interesting elements in themselves.⁷²

These sentiments mirror exactly those of Morris examined in the last paragraph: literature that 'matters' deserves proper embodiment and it is the role of the fine printer to ensure that it receives such. In their devotion to Morris's ideals these presses have also come to be seen as perpetuating his faults, whether it be the contradiction between socialists producing goods solely for the wealthy, the mistake of producing ornately illustrated texts in difficult-to-read archaic typefaces or the related error of placing the printer's work ahead of the author's.

⁷⁰ "Private Presses and their Influence on the Art of Printing," *Ars typographica* 1 (Autumn 1934): 41.

⁷¹ For an excellent history and bibliography of these and other early twentieth century fine presses and Morris's influence on them see Colin Franklin's *The Private Presses*, 2nd Ed. Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991.

⁷² Charles Ricketts, *A Bibliography of Books Printed by Hacon and Ricketts between 1896 and 1903*. Vale Press, 1904. Quoted Franklin, 13-14.

There is, however, one press that arose out of the ashes of Kelmscott that has since become regarded as the bridge between the craftsmanship of the hand press and the 'crystal goblets' which were soon to become the focus of fine bookmaking: the Doves Press. The circumstances surrounding the origins of the Doves Press suggest it was to be another Kelmscott clone. It was founded in 1900 by Morris's neighbors: book-binder and Arts and Crafts Society founder T.J. Cobden Sanderson and Kelmscott partner-in-all-but-name Emery Walker.⁷³ Like Morris, they based their type on photographs of Jenson's types, they used similar paper and bindings, and they produced books in very limited numbers. But, there is one fundamental difference between Kelmscott editions and Doves', and it is this difference that has led to the Doves Press being called "the most devastating criticism ever made of Morris's work at the Kelmscott Press."⁷⁴ Cobden-Sanderson writes in his journals: "I do not believe in the doctrine of William Morris. I do not believe that pleasure in one's work produces ornament. Nor do I believe that ornament has any special privilege in the production of happiness."⁷⁵ In accordance with this sentiment, the books of the Doves Press are entirely without ornament [FIGURE 3.4].

When Cobden-Sanderson was a book-binder he created ornately tooled and gilded bindings which are still considered some of the finest ever done. However, the books he printed with Emery Walker have become renowned because of their spartanness. The reason for this fundamental change in approach was how he perceived his role as a

⁷³ Like in his "partnership" with Morris, Emery Walker was largely silent about his role at the Doves Press and thus the following discussion concentrates, as do most histories of the Doves Press, on Cobden-Sanderson, who left significant evidence of his typographical beliefs. This absence of Walker is no doubt compounded by the famous falling-out between the two, when Cobden-Sanderson threw the Doves Type materials into the Thames rather than let Walker make them available for machine composition, which may have led to the curious omission of any reference to Emery Walker in Cobden-Sanderson's published journals, post-humously edited by his son Richard.

⁷⁴ Ruari MacLean. Quoted Cave, Roderick. *The Private Press*. 2nd Ed. New York: R.R. Bowker, 1983. 121-2.

⁷⁵ *The Journals of Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson 1879-1922*. New York: Burt Franklin, 1969. 2.38.

Deuteronomy 31 the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: and that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it. ¶ And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, & present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, & presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation. And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle. And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers: & this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be amongst them, and will forsake me, & break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, & I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, & many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us? And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods. Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swore unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten & filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, & serve them, & provoke me, and break my covenant. And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness: for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear. Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel. And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swear unto them: & I will be with thee. ¶ And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death? Gather unto me all the

Figure 3.4 Dove's Press, Bible, 1903-5.

craftsman. When he gave up being a barrister in 1893 and began binding, at the encouragement of June Morris who noted that the fledgling Arts and Crafts movement lacked a book-binder, his purpose was to explore his own spirituality through the act of craftsmanship and, like his Arts and Crafts peers, to dignify and popularize the work of the craftsman: "Success in bookbinding is but a means to an end; it is not the end itself; and if I go aiming at such success only, I should not succeed in the higher aim I had, or should have, in view. That higher aim is to dignify labour in all the lower crafts."⁷⁶ As the Doves Bindery gained renown he became increasingly uneasy with the attention being paid to him individually, remarking in his journals, "O me, I am getting nervous, now that my poor work is admired! Heaven help me and keep me upon the narrow, steep path, upright, with the aim only to steady me, the aim only to aim at and to win."⁷⁷ Fulfilling his idealistic goals and furthering the social mission of the Arts and Crafts was far more important than gaining recognition for personal achievement, or even, as evident from the long passages in his journals where he complains of the physical pain caused by working as a craftsman or of "work gone badly," taking pleasure in the craft.⁷⁸

As Cobden-Sanderson's fame as a binder spread, demand for his books grew, regardless of their actual content. In a rare moment of self-satisfaction he notes after a visit to his agent Bains, "He told me with great joy that he had only one of my books left -- the Gospels! He showed me letters and telegrams. One letter from Lady de Grey saying he was to let Mr. Sanderson know that the Keats had been bought by one who knew how to appreciate the binding. Keats, the poet, Bain told me, she did not care for."⁷⁹ Given that she

⁷⁶ Cobden-Sanderson, *The Journals*, 1.268-9.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 1.208-9.

⁷⁸ See, for example, 1.228 and 231.

⁷⁹ *ibid.*, 1.252.

did not even like Keats, one must assume that Lady de Grey bought the book solely to "appreciate the binding." She also bought a Doves Bindery Shelley, but Bains did not pass on her opinion of him. At the same time Cobden-Sanderson was also binding books on commission and had no say as to the quality of the texts they contained. Eventually this growing emphasis on his craftsmanship over the works he was binding led him to seriously question his future as a binder: "If I would not go astray in binding, losing sight of ideals, I must abandon 'accidental' work, do always 'selected' work, bind the great writers of to-day, set them in permanent covers and beautiful array."⁸⁰ Much like Morris, Cobden-Sanderson thought to use the finely-made book as a means to glorify and preserve the works of the great authors, but his eventual method for accomplishing this was entirely different.

When Morris speaks of the books of the Kelmscott Press as preserving great works of literature in a form "worthy of one's feelings" there is little doubt that the preferred form and feelings of which he speaks are his own.⁸¹ He published the books he personally loved in the typography he personally preferred. For better or for worse, depending on one's opinions, his books are irrefutably marked with his own personality. Cobden-Sanderson treads a different path, one marked by his belief in the functional and spiritual purpose of books and printers. In a 1909 letter to Sidney Cockerell Cobden-Sanderson details the faults, as he perceived them, of Morris's books:

Candidly, I do not think that William Morris himself is a great printer. That his work is remarkable and in itself constitutes an epoch, is, again, another matter. William Morris came to printing with a mind set on decoration, and with a mind overscored with tapestry and woven effects, all which he reproduced where they were not wanted, on the pages of his books. And many of his effects, as I told him at the time, are 'typographical impertinencies,' and utterly destructive of the page as an

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 1.302.

⁸¹ *The Ideal Book*, 105.

expression of the author's thought.⁸²

Tapestries and, judging from the output of the Doves Bindery, book-bindings are suitable for ornamentation, but the pages of a book should be free from such decoration because it interferes with the transmission of the content. For Cobden-Sanderson, the primary problem of the artistic style arising out of the Arts and Crafts movement was the propensity to add ornamentation to items “which would have been fit and useful had they been left alone.”⁸³ As he believed that the sole purpose of typography “is simply, without other object and without loss or addition, to convey the thought or imagery of the author to the mind of the reader,” the work of Morris and the other printers who emulated the Kelmscott style did great damage to the functionality of books and thus to their spiritual purpose of communicating the text.⁸⁴

From the very outset of the Doves Press, Cobden-Sanderson decided to follow different typographical principles than Morris, and he expounded these principles in a number of works published by the press discussing “The Book Beautiful.”⁸⁵ He writes,

The Book Beautiful, it will be seen, is a sum, the organised sum, of many parts, each co-operating with the rest of the production of something not itself: (1) the contents, the thought or imagery to be communicated by the book; (2) the inscribed or printed page, the vehicle of communication; (3) the decorated and decorative letters, giving distinction to the page and enhancing at once the beauty of the vehicle and the weight and clarity of the impression; (4) the illustration, set beside or amid the script or type; and (5) the binding, enveloping, and setting its seal upon the whole.⁸⁶

On the surface this desire for harmony between the various component parts seems to differ

⁸² Quoted Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press*, 281.

⁸³ T.J. Cobden-Sanderson, *Cosmic Vision*. Thavies Inn: Richard Cobden-Sanderson, 1922. 82.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, 108.

⁸⁵ The title of Cobden-Sanderson's work is an obvious appropriation of the Arts and Crafts idea of “the House Beautiful” as a space where beauty, craftsmanship and functionalism co-exist in perfect harmony. See William C. Gannett's *The House Beautiful*. San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2006 (originally published 1896).

⁸⁶ *Cosmic Vision*, 109.

little from Morris's theories on, for example, the desire for unity of design between the two pages of an open spread or his work creating types that were complementary to woodcut engravings. Underlying Cobden-Sanderson's theories, however, is a strong belief in the Book Beautiful as a communications tool and a hierarchy of the components where rank is determined by how much that element contributes to the communicative act. Of primary importance is the actual content, for without this the book has no purpose. Next is the page, either written or printed, because it is through the words on the page that the reader can access the content. From this point on the elements see a rapid decrease in importance. Decorative letters are still important because they can act to enhance the "weight and clarity" of the material to be communicated. Illustration seems barely a part of the Book Beautiful, sitting beside or within the text but serving no stated purpose. Finally comes the binding; given his past career it is not surprising Cobden-Sanderson included it, yet he can find no better use for it than to ambiguously "set the seal" upon the whole. Although he never specifically stated that these elements are a hierarchy, there can be little doubt that he thought of them as such – obviously all Doves Press books contain the first and second, content and pages, but only one work, the Bible, has decorative letters, none contain illustration, and the necessary bindings are strictly utilitarian compared to the ornate creations of his earlier life. The Book Beautiful may have been envisioned as a harmony, but not all members in the choir got a chance to sing at the Doves Press.

As he outlines in his statement on the founding of the press, Cobden-Sanderson felt the primary purpose of the Doves Press was to redeem the typography of books from the low standards of "ordinary" printing and from the excesses of the Kelmscott Press and its imitators. The path to this redemption lay through the principles of the Book Beautiful,

which emphasize “the simple arrangement of the whole Book, as a whole ... rather than by the addition and splendour of applied ornament.”⁸⁷ This need for “simple” typography is justified by the secondary purpose of the press, “to print in a suitable form some of the great literary achievements of man's creative and constructive genius.”⁸⁸ Given the cultural importance of the books the Doves Press chose to print, communicating the contents in a clear, yet aesthetically distinguished, manner was paramount. Here Cobden-Sanderson’s goals once again resemble Morris and the other Arts and Crafts printers' desire to clothe the great books in a form appropriate to their status, but Cobden-Sanderson’s desire to make his books at once both monumental and transparent communication tools differentiates him from his peers and points the way towards the next generation of English typography.

Perhaps the best statements of Cobden-Sanderson’s typographical aims and their relationship to a desire for a clear channel of communication between author and reader are not, on the surface, about typography at all. Rather, they are his statements on the editorial theories he espoused when editing the texts for Doves Press editions; in addition to coordinating, along with Emery Walker, their printing, Cobden-Sanderson also edited the source material for some of the works. In a statement remarkably similar to late twentieth century textual critics Jerome McGann or D.F. McKenzie , he outlines his belief that the editor should refrain from introducing changes and instead present the text in its original form: “I submit that the presentment to-day, or to-morrow, of the literature of an earlier time should be in its presentment to-day in the form in which it originally appeared ... all literature both ancient and modern, has its place in history.”⁸⁹ Rather than modernize them

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 102-3. For discussion of McGann’s and McKenzie’s editorial theory, see the Introduction.

to satisfy the desires of contemporary scholars, Cobden-Sanderson chose to publish texts that contained the idiosyncrasies of the original. That this editorial theory was connected to his desire to produce transparent mediums of communication between the reader and a hallowed author is unmistakable when he writes in his journal about editing *Hamlet*:

It seems to me that the shortcomings of *Hamlet*, as of the other plays of Shakespeare, whatever in these 'finished' days one might call its crudities -- spelling, punctuation, alignment and presentment in acts and scenes -- are as characteristic of it as a work of Shakespeare, and of Shakespeare's age, though on a lower plane, as are its sublimities and beauties, and that we should be as conservative of them as, happily, we are of those characteristics on the higher plain, which make him for humanity a poet of all time, or which tend to make him for all time humanity's supreme poet.⁹⁰

In reading Shakespeare one has, according to Cobden-Sanderson, the opportunity to come into contact with “humanity’s supreme poet,” but only if the editor and, as evident in his other writings, the printer have not interjected their own presence. Thus it should come as no surprise that he strove to make his own editing and typography as unobtrusive as possible.

Just as Morris’s ornate, Gothic-inspired typography found both its supporters and detractors, the spartan typography of the Doves Press has since been evaluated quite differently depending upon the writer’s own typographical politics. Those that dislike its productions generally do so on the grounds that the very simplicity Cobden-Sanderson strove for strips them of any aesthetic personality. This sentiment was best expressed by Francis Meynell, who described the books of the Doves Press as “typographic Tiller girls,” a reference to the troupes of highly-disciplined, high-kicking dancing girls.⁹¹ Individually the books were beautiful, but when viewed *en masse* the reader could not help to notice that

⁹⁰ *The Journals of Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson 1879-1922*, 2.125.

⁹¹ Meynell, 33.

they were, regardless of the texts they contained, all exactly identical and without distinguishing traits. As William Peterson explains, “The unhappy truth is that the Doves books are boring in their cold perfection, each one an immaculate clone of the other.”⁹² However, this willingness to remove the personality of the maker of the book in favour of the content to be presented was embraced, as will be seen in the next chapter, by the next generation of English printers, and both the detractors and supporters of the Doves Press acknowledge its influence on the presses that followed.⁹³ By turning away from the Gothic styles of the other Arts and Crafts printers and returning to the Humanist form of the book as practiced by Jenson and Manutius, the Doves Press created the exemplar for the books of the early twentieth century and reinforced the belief that the physical appearance of a book must be completely subservient to the content and thus printers must erase all traces of their own existence. In the years that followed, Cobden-Sanderson’s *Book Beautiful* would become Warde’s crystal goblet and, through Warde and her contemporaries, the most popular form of the book in English.

Before passing to an examination of the typography of the early to mid twentieth century, there is one more influence on nineteenth century printing that must be acknowledged: that of Theodore Low De Vinne, the first American printer to rise to prominence.⁹⁴ De Vinne’s influence was two-fold. He, like Morris, felt that there had been a great decrease in the quality of printing during the nineteenth century, especially regarding the adoption and later developments of the Modern typeface. But, instead of retreating to the Gothic past and hand printing, De Vinne used his position as owner of one of the most

⁹² *The Kelmscott Press*, 281.

⁹³ For examples see Roderick Cave, *The Private Press*, 121-2; Colin Franklin, *The Private Presses*, 11; William Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press*, 281; Holbrook Jackson, *The Printing of Books*, 32.

⁹⁴ Obviously Benjamin Franklin achieved greater fame than De Vinne, but it was not for his printing.

successful machine-printing facilities in the United States to lead by example and push for typographical reform. As part of this reformation, De Vinne adopted the strategy first practiced by Moxon and refined by Fournier of using books about printing history to advance typographical arguments. Both as an advocate for “good” machine-printing and as a writer of works about typography, De Vinne would establish the model of the modern “scholar-printer” that would become an integral part of the discourse surrounding book typography in the twentieth century.

De Vinne began an apprenticeship as a compositor in 1843 at the age of fourteen, and was to spend the remaining 71 years of his life working in the printing trade. He opened his own press in New York in 1883, and installed it in a purpose-built, massive six story building in 1886. His most prominent client was *The Century Magazine*, but as a commercial establishment his printing facility was open to all customers. In both his embrace of mechanization and commercialization and his long association with the printing industry De Vinne is immediately differentiated from the typographical reformers of the Arts and Crafts movement across the Atlantic.⁹⁵ But while his opinions on Morris’s work, as will be examined shortly, range from contempt to admiration, there are striking similarities between what the two men had to say about “Modern” typography. Like Morris, De Vinne had little respect for the developments of the Modern typeface during the nineteenth century: “The modern punch-cutter thinks it is his first duty to make every letter of graceful shape, but his notion of grace is largely mechanical: the hair-line must be sharp and tend to its invisibility ... Every curve and angle is painfully correct and precise, but the

⁹⁵ The Socialist aspects of the Arts and Crafts would also have had little appeal for the staunchly anti-union De Vinne.

general effect of types so made, when put in a mass, is that of the extreme of delicacy.”⁹⁶ This “delicacy” posed two problems according to De Vinne, and these combined to negatively impact the readability of the text. The first was merely a pragmatic issue regarding the durability of such types under the demands of the industrial press. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, because of their hairline thins and serifs, Modern-style types used less ink than Old-Style letters and thus allowed printing machines to operate at higher speeds. However, in his experience De Vinne found that these same hairlines were soon crushed or broken by the tremendous forces of the machine press, rendering them difficult to read and robbing them of any claim to beauty or gracefulness that they might have had.⁹⁷

The second fault that De Vinne found with Modern typefaces is less pragmatic and based more on personal opinion and aesthetic tastes. Like many before him, he believed that the “delicacy” of the Modern face made it more difficult to read than Old-Style. In *Plain Printing Types* he even performs the same experiment that Anisson and Sobry first did in 1800 to compare the readability of Didot’s and Garamond’s types: attempting to read them at different distances to determine which is legible at longer ranges.⁹⁸ This perceived illegibility made Modern typefaces only suitable for very limited use: “They have a rightful place in ornamental typography, for they are exceedingly beautiful if judged by feminine standards of beauty, but they are entirely out of place in serious books, or in any text of importance, in which an indistinct letter or word demands of the reader a straining of the

⁹⁶ De Vinne, Theodore Low. *Plain Printing Types*. New York: Oswald Publishing Co, 1914. 190

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁹⁸ De Vinne, 191. There is no evidence that De Vinne knew of the original experiment, as it was not readily available until translated by Updike in 1928. For a discussion of the validity of Anisson and Sobry’s original experiment see Chapter 2, p.122ff.

eyes.”⁹⁹ Assumptions of gendered reading tastes aside, De Vinne again appears to be giving another practical reason for choosing Old-Style over Modern – not only does Old-Style last longer on the press, it is easier to read (if one accepts the results of his experiment). De Vinne's belief that readability is the paramount virtue of a type places him within the long history of humanist reading practices and, like Cobden-Sanderson's writings, points the way for the next generation of printers in English. It also explains his conflicting opinions on the work of William Morris.

At the root of much of De Vinne's writings on printing and typography lies the belief that the people responsible for the making of books should strive for obscurity so as to not interfere with the transference of an author's thoughts: “after all has been done by the type-founder, paper-maker, designer, and printer, the great value of the book is not in type or decoration, but in what the author has written.”¹⁰⁰ In his numerous books of advice on all aspects of the printing trade this central concern with the potential of a tradesperson intruding upon the author's space constantly rings out. Printers should steer away from Modern typefaces because in designing them “the punch-cutter has been more intent on showing his own really admirable skill than he has been in helping the reader.”¹⁰¹ Historically he believed the design of title-pages had been deficient until the mid nineteenth century when, thanks to the efforts of Pickering, “the title of the book and the name of the author received rightful prominence, and the publisher became content with his name at the

⁹⁹ De Vinne, *Plain Printing Types*, 253. De Vinne frequently makes use of gendered terms when describing the differences between Modern and Old Style; for an excellent examination of this aspect of his writing see Benton, Megan L. "Typography and Gender: Remasculating the Modern Book." *Illuminating Letters: Typography and Literary Interpretation*. Megan L. Benton and Paul C. Gutjahr, Ed. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001. pp 71-93.

¹⁰⁰ De Vinne, Theodore Low. *Modern Methods of Book Composition*. New York: Oswald Publishing Company, 1914. viii.

¹⁰¹ De Vinne, *Plain Printing Types*, 190.

foot of the page, in type of proper subordination.”¹⁰² Absent entirely from De Vinne’s ideal title page is the printer; for his own works the De Vinne Press is only identified in extremely small type on the verso of the title page. And if there is any doubt that De Vinne’s opinions on title pages are derived from a desire to present an unmediated view of the author’s text he dispels it at the end of his *Treatise* when again discussing Pickering’s work: “The result of this return to simplicity was a more readable title-page, in which the purpose of the author was not overpowered by the caprices of compositor or designer apparently struggling for a first recognition from the reader.”¹⁰³ His advice to compositors in *Modern Methods of Book Composition* is in a similar vein; buyers of books, at least those who actually read their books, value not the type or decoration but the “information.”¹⁰⁴ Every tradesperson involved in the creation of the book must keep this goal of unmediated information in mind and be content with having their best work go unnoticed.

Yet, despite his apparently clear opinions on the subordinate role the printer must play to the author in order to create unmediated texts, the practicalities of actual print shop operation that De Vinne describes are often at odds with, or at least problematize, his statements on the neutrality of printers. In this regard he is like the authors, beginning with Moxon, of every printer’s manual discussed so far: on one hand praising the capabilities of authors and stressing the importance of respecting their texts while on the other giving advice on how the printer must improve, augment or otherwise correct the shortcomings of the text. De Vinne writes in *Modern Methods of Book Composition* that an ‘expert’ (presumably a member of the fledgling profession of designers or typographers) should

¹⁰² De Vinne, Theodore Low. *A Treatise on Title-Pages*. New York: Oswald Publishing Company, 1914. 41.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 354.

¹⁰⁴ De Vinne, *Modern Methods of Book Composition*, viii.

examine the text before it is given to the compositor in order to give directions as to the style of composition, but here “his duty ends. He must not edit.”¹⁰⁵ But if the designer is not allowed to edit it is only because a different member of the printing house, the ‘reader,’ has already taken that liberty; he writes, “It is the belief now, as it was in the days of Moxon, the first English writer on the technics of printing, that it is the duty of the printer to supplement the negligences of the writer.”¹⁰⁶ The reader’s job was to correct deficiencies in the author’s spelling and grammar to ensure the copytext given to the compositor complied with the standards of the printing house. The compositor could then examine the text and select and arrange the “type to show fully the purpose of the writer.”¹⁰⁷ The fact that the correction of spelling or punctuation, or the selection and arrangement of the most “unmannered” types, is itself an act of interpretation that can have just as a profound an impact on the reading experience as flamboyant typography does not seem to have occurred to De Vinne.

This attitude towards the supposed neutrality of the printing craftsperson also explains De Vinne’s conflicting opinions of the work of William Morris. On the one hand De Vinne respected Morris for turning away from Modern fashions and designing types based upon historical models: “the reading world is indebted to him for his demonstration of the merit of a really masculine style. He has shown as no one ever did before that typography need not imitate photography, lithography, or copperplate.”¹⁰⁸ But for all that he admired the Roman types of the Kelmscott Press, De Vinne was dissatisfied with the overall output of the press because Morris did not respect the hierarchy between author and

¹⁰⁵ 76-77.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted Simon, Oliver. *Introduction to Typography*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1945. 22.

¹⁰⁷ De Vinne, *Modern Methods of Book Composition*,

¹⁰⁸ De Vinne, *Plain Printing Types*, 362. Again, see Benton for an examination of De Vinne’s gendered language.

printer:

He [Morris] had to make chopped and ragged endings to lines of capitals in positions where ragged breaks annoyed the reader. In other places he had to print verse in the style of prose, making one line of verse occupy three or more ragged lines in print. The expression of the writer's thought is unavoidably muddled by these breaks when the work of the designer is given greater prominence.¹⁰⁹

The argument that Morris made books to be looked at but not actually read, and that the 'professional' printer, unlike the 'hobby' printer should strive for the opposite would rise to prominence in the early twentieth century, and De Vinne must be acknowledged, along with Cobden-Sanderson, as one of its progenitors.

Evidence of De Vinne's influence on the next generation is easy to find. But, unlike the veneration and corresponding emulation examined thus far as later printers copied the style of earlier ones, De Vinne's influence did not stem from the actual output of his press. Perhaps because of his unrelenting focus on creating 'un-mannered' typography, the output of the De Vinne press has not been valued highly; most famously, Carl Purlington Rollins, Yale University Press Printer, described De Vinne as having "severe aesthetic limitations."¹¹⁰ His books are seen as being done to strict standards of workmanship, but without the *je ne sais quoi* that identifies them as being done by a master typographer (but, then again, maybe that was De Vinne's goal). However, the most prominent twentieth century English typographers on both sides of the Atlantic were profoundly influenced by him. D.B. Updike continued to quote De Vinne until his own death in 1941, and Stanley Morison considered him a formative influence; he wrote that De Vinne "was responsible for bringing back the realisation in America of the need for care and skilful application of

¹⁰⁹ De Vinne, *A Treatise on Title-Pages*, 394.

¹¹⁰ Quoted Ruari McLean, *How Typography Happens*, 23. For more on De Vinne's influence on Morison see James Moran. *Stanley Morison: His Typographical Achievement*. London: Lund Humphries, 1971. 24.

the craft to produce good books.”¹¹¹ De Vinne’s methodology of inserting his own typographical theorems within “historical” studies of the press also did not go unnoticed by these two men. Benton writes that by aligning himself with pre-Industrial printers, De Vinne, and Morris “cast an authoritative glow of tradition over their own work and effectively excluded the typographical developments of the industrial nineteenth century from that historical lineage.”¹¹² As will be seen in the next chapter, Morison, Updike and others use this same strategy of selectively promoting historical printers in order to advance their own opinions.

De Vinne’s influence also reached beyond those practising the craft at the highest level. The primary audience, as is evident from the practical advice contained within them, for his books on the methods of printing was other printers and the tradespeople they employed. In a 1935 review of printing manuals from Moxon to De Vinne, Lawrence C. Wroth finds them all to be derivative of the original work of Moxon except for De Vinne, who “reassembled the typographic lore of the centuries and adapted it to the click-clack and whirl of the electrically controlled printing-office of the new industrial age.”¹¹³ De Vinne preached his doctrine of simplicity as opposed to Victorian ornament to his peers for over 40 years and in the process showed that the industrial press was capable of producing quality books if the operators were both skilled and restrained. At his death in 1916 it was said, “there is no department of printing, as now practiced, that does not owe something substantial to the preserving industry and insight of Mr. De Vinne.”¹¹⁴ Unlike Morris, whose design principles never spread far beyond the confines of the small, luxury press, De Vinne

¹¹¹ Quoted Tichenor, Irene. *No Art Without Craft: The Life of Theodore Low De Vinne, Printer*. Boston: David R. Godine, 2005. 243.

¹¹² *Typography and Gender: Remasculating the Modern Book*, 82.

¹¹³ Quoted Tichenor, 143.

¹¹⁴ Quoted Tichenor, 213.

spoke to the people who were responsible for the vast majority of books, and they listened.

At the start of the nineteenth century books were printed on fifteenth century presses using eighteenth century types. The next 100 years saw rapid advancements in both the production of different typefaces and in the mechanization of the press. By the end of the century the latest presses were capable of turning out thousands of impression an hour. But while the majority of these presses were printing pages set in a Modern-style font based upon eighteenth century designs, a few such as the Chiswick Press and later the De Vinne Press had begun to make the switch to typefaces based on models from the fifteenth and sixteenth century. This move towards older typeface influenced, and was later influenced by, the rise of hand-printers such as William Morris, Emery Walker and T.J. Cobden Sanderson who completely eschewed modern types in favour of those based on fifteenth century models. The initial pioneer in this revival, William Pickering at the Chiswick Press, may simply have been looking for a typeface to set the title pages of his books apart, or to match the time period of the book being published, but the movement soon became associated with ideological positions. To the members of the Arts and Crafts movement the Modern typeface was indicative of the subjugation of the worker to the machines of production and the resultant loss of respect for the art and craft of printing. By returning to older models they hoped to restore the social value of books, printing, and the printer. Within the writings of these men there is also a concern with typefaces being as “readable” as possible, and it is this aspect that is also reflected in the writings of De Vinne. He considered the Modern typeface deficient for two reasons. Not only was it poorly suited for the wear-and-tear of the ever-faster presses; he felt, like most critics of Modern before him, that it was inherently less legible than Old Style. As a result, it stood as a barrier between

the reader and the author. The weight of these criticisms would come to bear in the early twentieth century, as typeface design shifted to historical models and the new composing machine companies phased out the Modern typefaces in favour of those that were perceived as less obtrusive.

Chapter 4

Too Much Rule and Too Little Taste: The New Traditionalists vs. The New Typography

At the beginning of the twentieth century there was a distinct separation between the practices of the Fine Press Movement, started by William Morris and his Kelmscott Press, and the work being done by the typical commercial press. The former focused on the production of limited editions, using the finest materials, proprietary typefaces and hand-presses. The latter churned out economical texts by the thousands by relying upon the technologies of the mechanized press, machine-made paper, and commonly available typefaces – generally ‘Modern’ or the transitional ‘Old Style’ which blended elements of Modern and Humanist faces. Of course there were commercial presses run by people who cared deeply about the quality of their work, such as Charles Jacobi at the Chiswick Press and, as discussed in the last chapter, Theodore Low De Vinne, but in general the ‘printing revival’ of the late nineteenth century had little influence on the early twentieth century printing industry.

This was all to change within the next thirty years thanks to the convergence of the technological innovation of the Monotype and Linotype machines that could simultaneously cast and set type and a renewed interest in the history of printing arising out of the nineteenth century ‘printing revival.’ The historical research begun by Morris, De Vinne, Emery Walker and Talbot Baines Reed in the nineteenth century was picked up by a new generation of printer-scholars, including Daniel Berkeley Updike, Stanley Morison, and Beatrice Warde, and made available to a wide audience which included those both within and outside the trade. At the same time the new composing machines made it easier

(at least for the printing houses that could afford them) for a commercial printer to have a wider variety of typefaces available. But where were these new typefaces to come from? Monotype and Linotype turned to the same printer-scholars who were advancing knowledge of the history of the craft and released faces based on historical models. These scholars, in turn, wrote about how the printer should best use these new/old faces.¹

The rise of the typesetting machines and the variety of typefaces they offered also led to a division of labour between those who designed what the page should look like and those who actually set the type. Traditionally the compositor handled both the layout and composition and generally did them in ‘house style’, but the new machines allowed for a less-skilled operator to set type. This, in turn, necessitated, at least for those printing houses concerned with quality, the need for an ‘expert’, a ‘typographical designer’ or ‘typographer’ as they came to be known, who could instruct the workers on how the page was to look. However, while some of these new members of the printing trade, like the American book and type designer Bruce Rogers, became highly respected, the introduction of an ‘outsider’ who told the actual printers what to do was not universally welcomed. The greatest concern was that these new typographers would be more interested in advancing their own reputations as artists than in respecting the tradition of subjugating the form of the book strictly to the passive transmission of an author’s thoughts. Morison, Warde, Updike and others involved in the historical revival of typefaces use their historical research, published in books, trade journals such as the *Monotype Recorder*, and new serials dedicated to good printing like *The Fleuron*, to re-iterate the importance of tradition and to criticize those who

¹ Although Updike’s historical research and practical advice were an important part of the revival of historical typefaces in the early twentieth century by the composing machine corporations, he should not be seen as an enthusiastic supporter of the new machines. See pages 196ff.

sought fame through flamboyant book design.

The initial targets for this criticism were the proprietors of the fine presses, especially William Morris, for their overly-ornate designs and reluctance to embrace modern technologies which would have resulted in more affordable productions. But as the Fine Press Movement lost its prominence, no doubt due in part to this criticism, they turned their critical gaze to those who had embraced the new technologies but were not crafting transparent reading interfaces (or at least not what had traditionally been considered as such). As the century progressed the target for this criticism increasingly became German typography, first for its reverence of William Morris and ornate scripts and then for its role, through the Bauhaus, of the rise of Modernist typography that stressed non-traditional layouts and sans serif typefaces. Yet, whether because of this criticism or despite it, history has shown that they had nothing to fear from the Modernists – while Modernist typography has come to dominate advertising and other ephemeral modes of printing, book typography remains strictly traditional. Jan Tschichold provides a perfect exemplar for this return to Humanist book forms. He began his career as one of the primary spokespeople for the ‘New Typography,’ but within a few years has neglected, or outright rejected, the radicalism of his youth and turned to the designs of the past. And through his work at Penguin he, perhaps more than any other person, takes the concern for fine book making exemplified by the Fine Press Movement, combines it with a deep respect for traditional Humanist book design, and produces ‘crystal goblets’ for the masses.

As discussed in the last chapter, the nineteenth century saw tremendous advances in printing technology, especially in regard to the speed of presses and the corresponding increase in printing volume. However, until the late nineteenth century the most primary of

tasks, cutting the punches used to make type and actually composing a page of type, remained strictly manual procedures with few changes since the original development of the press. Because of this technological stasis it remained extremely laborious, and expensive, to have a new type designed; it is telling that virtually all the proprietary types used by the Fine Press Movement in England were made from punches cut by a single man: Edward Prince. There were simply few craftspeople left with the skill to cut punches and thus printers relied upon types cast from existing models; when they were looking for something 'different' they largely turned to older types, such as the Chiswick Press's re-introduction of Caslon. But this too was rare, and most shops and foundries simply used the types they already had. If there was a dearth of punch-cutters though, it was made up for by the number of compositors required to meet the demands of the industrialized press. Stereotyping may have reduced the need to re-set type every time a new printing of a work was undertaken (and/or the corresponding tradition of leaving the formes of type for popular books intact), but the volume of material being printed meant that veritable armies of skilled compositors, each serving up to a seven year apprenticeship, were needed to supply the presses. Nowhere was this more evident than in the composing rooms of the major newspapers, who were producing increasingly large daily editions.

Both of these technological hindrances were solved by inventors working in the United States in the late nineteenth century. In 1884 Linn Boyd Benton unveiled his punchcutting machine, making it possible for a type designer to create a model for a new type and have it produced accurately without the assistance of the traditional punchcutter. Large metal patterns were machined based upon the drawings of the designer, and the operator of the Benton Punchcutting Machine would trace these, pantographically reducing

the size of the design and engraving it exactly into the punch. Where once the typesetter was a skilled craftsman 'interpreting' the designs of others, the operator of the Benton machine was simply charged with reproduction, on a smaller scale, of the originals. Had the technology existed two hundred years earlier, there would have been far less cause for tension between Granjon and the designers of the *romain du roi*. Indeed, with the invention of the Benton machine the profession of typesetter became obsolete, and the already rare practitioners of the craft first made famous by Griffo soon became all but extinct.

The Benton Punchcutting Machine greatly simplified the process for creating a new font, but the effects of this new ease of design were not readily apparent. It took another invention, the composing machine, to instigate the next era in type design. Given that the speed of composition had become the limiting factor in efforts to increase printing production, it is not surprising that the nineteenth century saw numerous efforts to produce a composing machine, but it was not until the end of the century that someone finally managed to invent a reliable means of mechanical composition. And within a few years of the first machine becoming available there developed two rival companies, resulting in fierce competition which provided the impetus for new type designs. In 1886 Ottmar Mergenthaler, a German working in the United States, unveiled the first machine that could both cast and set type based on the directives of an operator working at a keyboard. Because the machine cast single 'slugs' representing an entire line of type, it was dubbed the Linotype. But the Mergenthaler Linotype enjoyed only a few years as the sole means of mechanical composition. Numerous similar machines were released in the following years, leading to copyright infringement lawsuits and corporate buy-outs, and in 1897 Tolbert Lanston, an American civil servant, made public his invention, the Monotype. Unlike the

Linotype, the Monotype produced individual pieces of type, which made it a more versatile machine, but at the cost of efficiency of composing. Given the headstart of the Linotype machine, and the high cost of developing such an intricate machine (the Monotype relied upon the operator creating a paper tape with holes punched in it, via keyboard activated air-pressure, which was then read by the casting machine), the company went looking for funding in Britain. This resulted in the formation of two companies: the American Lanston Monotype Machine Company which largely built the factories that actually produced the machines, and the English Lanston Monotype Corporation, which focused on marketing the machine in the face of the already successful Linotype.² Thanks to their success at convincing printers that machine composition was suitable for the finest books, and not just cheap re-prints and newspapers, the people the Corporation employed to wage this battle, Stanley Morison and Beatrice Warde, have become recognized as the foremost voices of printing in the early twentieth century, due in no small part to their introduction of new typefaces and extensive writings on both the history and current use of type.

Before one can discuss fully the careers of Warde and Morison and their influence on printing through the Monotype Corporation, there are two formative influences on early twentieth century book design who first must be addressed. As is fitting, given the role Americans played in the development of the punch-cutting and composing machines, both men are American and their careers mark the rise of American printers capable of rivaling the best English presses. Both are influenced by Morris and the Fine Press Movement, but turn their backs on his archaism and hand-methods and embrace, to varying degrees, the machine as a means to produce fine books. Moxon defined the 'typographer' as “a one,

² Jennet, 190.

who by his own Judgement, from solid reasoning with himself, can either perform, or direct others to perform from the beginning to the end, all the Handy-works and Physical Operations relating to Typographie,” and for most of the history of printing this ‘one’ was a member of the printing house, and often, as Moxon himself was in favor of, was the Master Printer of the house.³ But the career of Bruce Rogers marks a change in this role, as the typographer increasingly becomes one who strictly directs others but is not involved in the actual physical production of books and who need not even be an permanent employee; Rogers’s career sees him design for presses on both sides of the Atlantic but only once does he produce a book under his own imprint. The other American influence is Daniel Berkeley Updike, whose career begins in the shadows of both Morris and De Vinne, but who goes on to redefine the notion of the ‘printer-scholar’ as one who understands the history of printing in order to produce better contemporary works. The publication of his *Printing Types: Their History, Forms and Use* in 1922 sets the standard for printing scholarship and provides the starting point for much of the typographical research that followed it.

In the opinion of Stanley Morison, Bruce Rogers “knew better than anyone else how to make a typographical form illustrate the literary content. He was, in fact, the first of typographers, and not a printer at all.”⁴ He trained as an artist and received his introduction to the printing trade producing graphics for *Modern Art* magazine. In 1896 he joined the Boston’s Riverside Press as an advertising designer, and by the turn-of-the-century he has been entrusted with the design of Riverside’s limited edition series. From 1900-1912 he designed over fifty books for Riverside, which established his reputation as a book designer. Instead of devising a single house style for the press that could be applied and

³ Moxon, 12.

⁴ *Four Centuries of Fine Printing*, 45.

subtly modified to new works, Rogers designed each work individually. Generally the designs reflected the era in which the book was written, which sometimes required new typefaces to be cut: “Books were done with rare but somehow lighthearted discrimination. Each new title was an adventure down new paths for the designer, as it was for his collectors.”⁵ The success of these books with collectors allowed Rogers to leave Riverside and become arguably the world’s first freelance typographer.⁶ Over the next two decades Rogers worked with, among others, the Metropolitan Press, the Montague Press, Cambridge (UK) University Press, Harvard University Press and Oxford University Press. He also issued a single book in collaboration with Emery Walker. This period also sees the introduction of his most famous typeface, Centaur, which was based on Jenson’s types. It was produced for hand composition in 1913, and issued by the Monotype Corporation for machine composition in 1929.

Rogers’ attitude towards book design, and printers, is perhaps best exemplified by the comments he made about J.B. Pearce, the manager of the Cambridge University Press: “he is generally contented to stop at a thing’s being correct and legible and generally decent, and one can hardly expect him to appreciate fine distinctions as to type, paper, etc. Still, he is very open-minded, and I think I have at last got him to realize that there is something else to printing beyond just getting things correct and decent.”⁷ While there is no questioning that printing should be ‘correct and legible,’ simply meeting these criteria is not sufficient. ‘Printing,’ as Rogers defines it, is only successful if the book meets the aesthetic tastes of the designer and the reader. This aestheticism disqualifies printers from being book

⁵ Blumenthal, Joseph. *Art of the Printed Book 1455-1955*. New York: Pierpoint Morgan Library, 1973. 49.

⁶ Ruari McLean, *Modern Book Design: from William Morris to the Present Day*, 18.

⁷ Quoted McLean, *Modern Book Design*, 21-22.

designers because, presumably, they are too concerned with profits or mere mechanics to appreciate ‘fine distinctions.’ Thus, if the press was to go beyond the production of merely practical books, it required an artist like Rogers to tell the printers what to do.

This seeming disdain for the actual operators of printing equipment is also evident in Rogers’ comments on type design. In a letter to D.B. Updike he expresses his preference for hand-cut types over those produced by an operator of the Benton machine:

Even with strict instructions and with the best intentions, it is difficult for the habitual user of a very accurate machine not to insensibly smooth out what he’s always been taught to consider ‘imperfections’ and to make as mechanically perfect a letter as is possible ... I have come to believe that perhaps only hand-cut punches, cut by the designer of the type, can preserve the real feeling of the design.⁸

The argument here is a familiar one, with its roots in the design of the *romain du roi* and subsequent criticisms of Modern-style typefaces. Mechanical perfection in type design, such as was attempted by the Jaugeon Commission, Baskerville, Bodoni and other proponents of Modern typefaces, is aesthetically inferior to those designs which appear more ‘human’ because of their perceived irregularity. Generally this argument is also tied to the Modern typeface being inferior in readability to Old Style but, as will be discussed shortly, Rogers tended not to discuss the actual use of books in his typographical writings.⁹ But what is clear from Rogers’ statement is that he considered machine operators to have become ‘habituated’ by their use of machines and thus incapable of aesthetic judgment. He had no problems with the machines themselves; while others in the early twentieth century, like Updike and Bernard Newdigate, were railing against machine composition for ‘fine’ work, Rogers accepted it without a word of criticism.¹⁰ He even had his Centaur types made

⁸ Quoted Updike, *Printing Types*, 1.11-12.

⁹ In quoting Rogers Updike was definitely trying to establish the superior legibility of ‘irregular’ types. See pages 192ff.

¹⁰ Handover, “British Book Typography,” 162-3.

for use on Monotype machines. But Rogers clearly thought of the new machines, and their operators, as tools to be used by the designer, and just as the machines could not work without an operator, the operators should not work without strict instructions from a designer. Morris had cried out against the de-humanization of printers by their machines, but Rogers accepted it, and even supported it; he regarded printers as merely part of the operation of the press – it was up to the designer to re-introduce humanity back into the book.

In order to achieve this re-humanization, Rogers generally relied upon allusive typography: choosing a typographic style that hints at a previous era, usually the one in which the book was originally written or the content appertains to. This was not a new approach; William Pickering ‘re-introduced’ Caslon’s types in the mid-nineteenth century for the same reason. But, as evident in the Morison quote that opened this discussion of Rogers, Rogers has become heralded as the foremost practitioner of allusive typography. Joseph Blumenthal writes of his work, “Always within the limits of readability and good sense, these books had (and still have) charm, assurance, and an elusive luster difficult to analyze.”¹¹ But, this style of typography also opened him up for criticism on two fronts, and this criticism reveals much about typographic opinions in the twentieth century. The first is that, despite the contrary view of some such as Blumenthal, Rogers’ typography sacrifices function for form. By choosing to model his books too closely on old models Rogers repeats the errors of past book design instead of taking advantage of modern, more functional, design models. Alan Bartram describes his 1909 *Compleat Angler* as proving Rogers “had little interest in function ... this example, with self-conscious wrong fonts and

¹¹ *The Printed Book in America*, 65.

wobbly type, is unconvincing pastiche.”[FIGURE 4.1]¹² Bartram even considers Rogers’ books that were not purposefully designed in an allusive style to be failures in usability. Examining Rogers’ Magnum Opus, the Oxford Lectern Bible, Bartram comments on the “absence of leading in the text ... [which] would be wayward if there were any pretence that this monstrous book was seriously intended for use at a lectern.”¹³ For those critics interested strictly in the functionality of the book, Rogers’ typography is seen to be sorely lacking.

Criticisms of Rogers and his apparent willingness to sacrifice the functionality of the book in order to fulfill his artistic goals have much in common with critiques of William Morris’s books in that both artists are criticized for turning their back on contemporary styles and for being content to reproduce the ‘mistakes’ of the past. In her “Epitaph Upon ‘Period’ Printing,” Beatrice Warde (writing under the pseudonym Paul Beaujon) strongly associates Rogers and his English contemporary Francis Meynell with the archaism of the Fine Press Movement, even though Rogers and Meynell had embraced the mechanized press. As opposed to the first Humanist printers who roughly modeled their work on the books of Humanist scribes, “Nowadays we have learned not only to trace accurately, but to photograph. We have learned not so much to imitate as to forge; and not very long ago the 'luxury' book ... was in danger of demonstrating to historians of typography examples of the

¹² Bartram, Alan. *Five Hundred Years of Book Design*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2001. 124-5. In fairness to Rogers it must be pointed out that this same book was Stanley Morison’s favourite work by Rogers, but in describing it as such Morison uses terms such as “happiest” and “charming” while passing no comment on the actual readability of the work; see *Four Centuries of Fine Printing*, 45.

¹³ *ibid.*, 137.

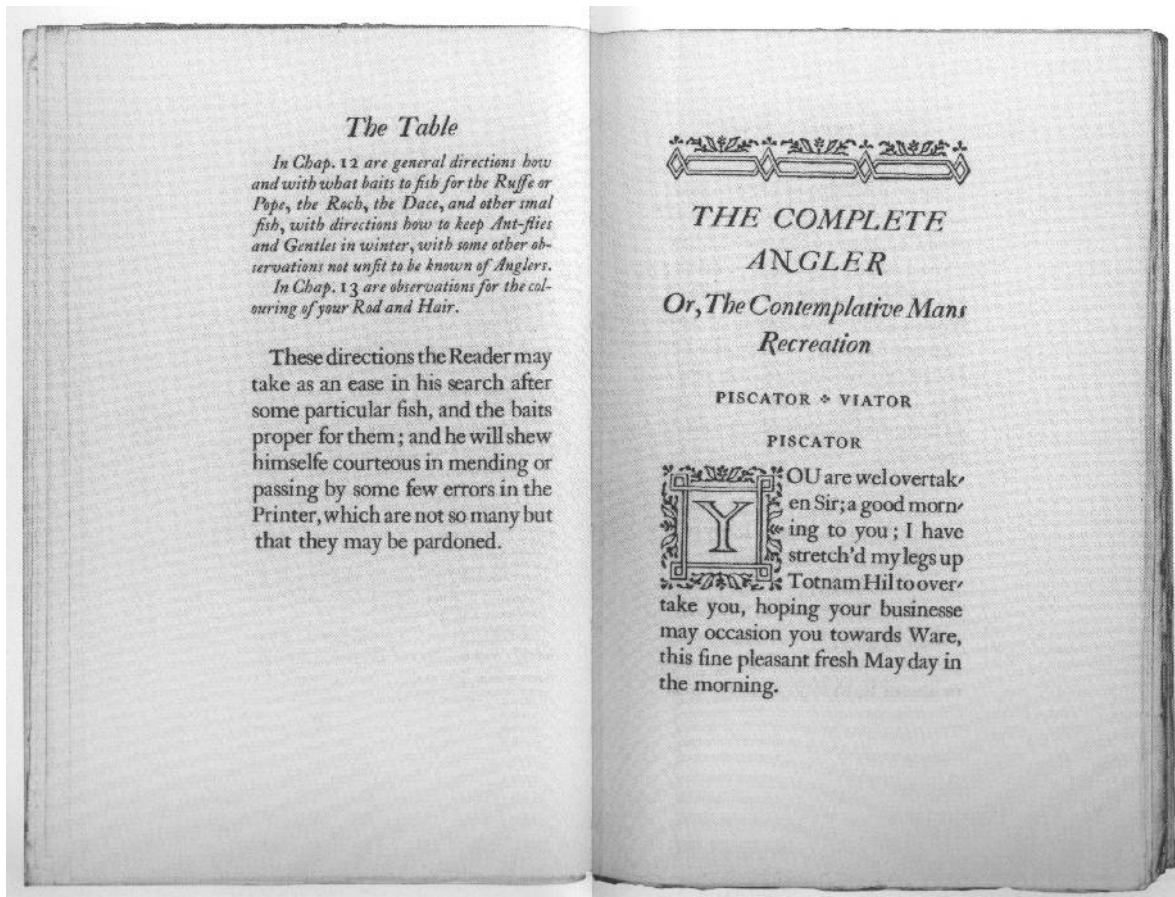


Figure 4.1 Bruce Rogers, Riverside Press, Isaak Walton's *Complete Angler*. 1909.

worst printing done since Gutenberg's time."¹⁴ But, writing in 1930, Warde sees hope in the situation because this style of typography was giving way to the contemporary model being forwarded by herself and *Fleuron* editor Stanley Morison, and thus she can write an epitaph to 'Period' typography: "it faded into unimportance when it was discovered that our age is busily producing a style of its own, a style in which perfect mechanical reproduction is not put to the use of making facsimiles of an individual craftsman's work; in which, on the contrary, the designer looks to the machine to obliterate many of the accidental

¹⁴ *The Fleuron*. VII(1930): 150-54. 152.

characteristics of his work.”¹⁵ Warde, as will be seen later in this chapter, had her own very strong principles as to the purpose of book design, and she deems those “imperfections” that Rogers so valued as evidence of human involvement no longer desirable in an age when books are to be conduits of information.

Rogers, himself, was not blind to these changing currents in typographical fashions. Throughout his rise to fame in the early twentieth century he, by his own regard, “cannot recall ever having written anything about ‘how it was done.’”¹⁶ He first undertakes to write about the making of books at the behest of the Monotype Company in 1935. This work on the making of the Oxford Lectern Bible is significant for several reasons. It serves as an excellent example of how Monotype promoted their machines as being capable of the finest work. It was produced by them and distributed as a ‘keepsake’ to the members of the American Institute of Graphic Artists, which was both the professional organization for typographical designers in the United States and the sponsor of the annual “50 Books of the Year” competition and exhibition. Rogers was awarded their first gold medal for lifetime achievement in 1925, and it is difficult to imagine a better group for Monotype to advertise to or a better spokesperson for their machine (at least in America). Monotype had also only recently (1929) released Rogers’ Centaur typeface for their machines, and this work provided an excellently printed specimen of it. Advertising propaganda aside, this work is the first public statement of Rogers’ design principles and, despite Alan Bartram’s claim that “Nowhere in his pamphlet ... does Rogers mention usage,” it contains numerous statements on how design choices affect the reading experience.¹⁷ Rogers opens by stating

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 153.

¹⁶ Rogers, Bruce *An Account of the Making of the Oxford Lectern Bible*. Philadelphia: Lanston Monotype Machine Co., 1935. 1.

¹⁷ Bartram, 135.

that the complexities of book design make it difficult to offer any general statements in a work shorter than a complete book, so he is going to focus on the particulars of the making of the Oxford Lectern Bible. And at several points his design principles are strongly motivated by usage: “a double-column page was inevitable for ease of reading”¹⁸; “my purpose . . . was to produce a clear, legible page”¹⁹; “the thinner type permitted much closer spacing, which resulted in richer colour and increased legibility.”²⁰ Usage also was central to the design of the paragraph mark, which needed “to be unobtrusive on the page when it was looked at as a whole, yet to be picked out by the eye without too much trouble when it was needed for reference.”²¹ Whether or not he was successful is up to the individual reader, but in this pamphlet Rogers certainly seems to be as concerned with the function of the book as he is with the form.

But if the pamphlet on the making of the Oxford Lectern Bible serves as evidence against those who found Rogers willing to sacrifice usability for appearance, it also provides evidence of Rogers’ continued opinions of the hierarchical relationship between typographic designers and printers. The final pages are devoted to praise for the workers at the Oxford University Press, especially John Johnson, the head of the press. But this praise is faint, for it is given to the men who did exactly what he told them to do: “the standard we set then *was* kept up faithfully throughout the work.”²² And it is telling that the discussion of the relationship between Rogers and the printers begins with an account of John Johnson displaying skepticism as to the practicality of Rogers’ criteria: “What protection am I to be given against Rogers in the matter of spacing? If he has his way throughout, none of us will

¹⁸ *An Account of the Making of the Oxford Lectern Bible*, 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4

²⁰ *ibid.*, 5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²² *Ibid.*, 14. Emphasis his.

live long enough to see the end of this book.”²³ The printer felt the need to ask for protection against the demands of the typographer, and the typographer the need to tell skilled workers how to do their jobs. Rogers had been designing books for over 30 years at this point, but the relationship between designer and printer was still very much evolving.

It is not happenstance that Rogers finally decided to commit some design principles to writing in the 1930s, as the previous decade saw a flowering of writing about all things typographical. And, just as in Rogers’ pamphlet on the Oxford Lectern Bible, these writings prominently displayed a concern with the suitability for use of a given typographic design or typeface. He did not have to look far to find a model for his writings, for one of the primary forces behind these writings which focused neither on the pure practicalities of running a press nor the ‘art’ of printing, but rather on how typography, and typographical history, influence the reader’s use and appreciation of the text was also from Boston: Daniel Berkeley Updike (1860-1941).

Through the example of the output of his Merrymount Press and the message he preached in his typographical writings D.B. Updike established himself as one of the primary practitioners of the emerging field of “typography” and as one of the foremost voices calling for a return to pre-nineteenth century typefaces and ‘functional’ typography. He started his career at Houghton Mifflin as an errand boy and eventually worked his way up to being a typographer at their Riverside Press. He left in 1893 to start his own press, which in 1896 was re-named the Merrymount Press. Like many printers of the time, he was profoundly influenced by William Morris and the early output of his press has much in common with the Kelmscott books. But he soon left the Arts and Crafts style behind and

²³ *Ibid.*, 13.

turned instead to the types and designs of the fifteenth, sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. One influence who may have led him in this direction and away from Morris is De Vinne; Updike did not think much of De Vinne as a designer, but considered him one of the great scholars of printing history and frequently quoted from him throughout his career.²⁴ Like De Vinne, his work at a commercial press may also have convinced him of the unfeasibility of ornate Gothic designs for books designed for everyday use. But, regardless of the cause of his switch to humanist typography, “simplicity and clarity . . . would remain firm objectives throughout his career.”²⁵ His stated goals for the Merrymount Press were firmly in line with this move towards functionalism: to make a book “better for its purpose than was commonly thought worth while.”²⁶ To this end he only took on work at the Merrymount Press if the client was willing to respect his design choices; he, not the client, was the final arbiter when it came to deciding which typographic features contributed to the purpose of the book and which were merely ornament and thus distracting.²⁷

This firm control over the output of the Merrymount Press ensured that its products always satisfied Updike’s design criteria, and the quality of these books place him within the first rank of typographer-printers. But his influence on the trade goes much deeper than merely providing an impressive array of editions to serve as exemplars to future printers – not only did subsequent typographers have Updike’s own work to refer to, they also had access to those typefaces and designs from the past that he most admired, thanks to his extensive scholarship in the field. Here, again, Updike seems to be following the lead of De Vinne, but his scholarship reaches audiences that De Vinne and other printer-scholars rarely

²⁴ Tichenor, 242.

²⁵ Blumenthal, *The Printed Book in America*, 57.

²⁶ Quoted Morison, *Selected Essays*, 313.

²⁷ McLean, *How Typography Happens*, 31.

did; Ruari McLean considers Updike's 1922 *Printing Types: Their History, Forms and Use* to be "the first book ever written about printing types and how to use them that was addressed not to the printing trade but to intelligent people interested in printing."²⁸ When Updike announced he was working on the second edition, Morison wrote to him, "The original edition of 1922 was at once a revelation and an inspiration. I do not believe that any of the work since done by others would even have been attempted otherwise. I am sure that you are not able yourself to realise the immense effect the book made fifteen years ago."²⁹ Morison's words to his friend might be a touch effusive, given that he, Francis Meynell, and others were already working in the early 1920s on their own typographic research and planning to publish it in the *Fleurion*, but *Printing Types* did become the authoritative text whose findings later researchers either clarified or challenged. It is also worth noting that it is the only typographic history book of this period still in print now. Lawrence Wroth, writing the introduction to the second edition, discusses the work's value to the average American printer:

Every American printer with ambitions beyond the completion of the day's work perceived through his reading of the book that knowledge was something which could be acquired, and that the process of acquiring it was an adventure which would broaden his field of experience and increase the number of his pleasures. The search for it sent him to a thoughtful examination of the pages of old and new books and taught him the value of tradition in the successful carrying on of his craft ... *Printing Types* performed this service for the thoughtful American printer, acquainting him with a great tradition and providing him with a grammar of its language.³⁰

²⁸ *Ibid.* While the importance of *Printing Types* cannot be overstated, any assertion of "the first" is always open to challenge – one could argue that Moxon's original work was also addressed to general readers and not printers, who would have presumably already known how to operate a press, and De Vinne wrote many shorter pieces for *Century Magazine* that were certainly intended for non-printers, thus opening the door to the claim that his longer works were also for a general audience. But Updike's work did capture the public's attention in ways no previous author on this subject was ever able to.

²⁹ 23 March 1937. *Stanley Morison and D.B. Updike: Selected Correspondence*, p.181.

³⁰ *Printing Types*. 1.vii-viii.

Updike, the printer-scholar, inspired a new generation of printers to seek that mantle for themselves or, at the very least, to become informed about the types they were using instead of indiscriminately using whatever was already in their cases. Most importantly, printers, and his non-trade readers, learned that the best types were old types and that adherence to tradition was the primary virtue of the successful printer. And, lest there be any doubt, Updike spends over 600 pages informing his readers which past practices have a rightful place in this tradition and which are best forgotten.

The subtitle to *Printing Types* is “A Study in Survivals” and this reveals much of Updike’s argumentative strategy. By relying upon the language of contemporary discourse about evolution and eugenics he gives an air of scientific authority to an argument that could otherwise be dismissed as personal opinion (albeit that of an expert in the field): “I have called this book a study in survivals, because in it I have tried to show not only what types have survived, but what should survive through their fitness for the best typography, and in so doing to lay down those general principles which may help ‘survival of the fittest’ in days to come.”³¹ In cataloging typefaces and providing a history of their lineage Updike provides a chronology of variant breeds and uses the degree of their historical survival to pass judgment on which were better suited to their purpose. He uses the traits he identifies as being superior not just to discuss which types “have” survived, but which types “should” – he does not always agree with the selections that history has made and wishes instead to create new breeds of types, and of printers, based on his opinions of what are the most desirable traits. And, more importantly, he wishes to revive those strains which he feels are unjustly headed towards extinction: humanist, Old Style fonts and the scholar-printer.

³¹ *Printing Types*. 2.244.

Despite the influence of William Morris on his early work, Updike has little use for Gothic typefaces; in describing the earliest typefaces he breaks them into two categories: “Gothic (a corrupt national following of the Carolingian miniscule), which was used earliest, and Roman (a fairly faithful return to the Carolingian miniscule), which came in later.”³² Both types share a common ancestor but there the similarity ends; Gothic is a “corrupt” descendant while Roman is “faithful.” Furthermore, Roman appears after Gothic and thus represents an evolutionary jump forward. And as one final strike against the Gothic, Updike declares it “national” as opposed to what he sees as the universal appeal of Roman; he comments that the move from Gothic to Humanist scripts facilitated the spread of information as opposed to the regionally distinct Gothic scripts which hindered communication outside their areas of common usage.³³ As further evidence of his belief in the universality of Humanist styles, Updike instructs readers truly interested in comparing different styles of typography not to compare texts which contain literature from different nations but instead “to choose a classic which belongs to the literature of them all”: the Greek and Roman classics.³⁴ Presumably a regional style might seem appropriate if it is applied to a text from that region, but such a style will be unable to live up to the standards required for a true classic.

Updike broke with Morris over the suitability of Gothic typefaces, but there was one area where they, and De Vinne, agreed completely: the degradation of Humanist typefaces by the introduction of Modern fonts. He lays the blame for this evolutionary branch on two parents, the *romain du roi* and Baskerville, and the language he uses to compare them and

³² *Ibid.*, 1.59-60.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1.56.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.59n1

their descendants to the Old Style types he prefers reveals much about his personal typographical beliefs and his interconnection of humanism and functionalism. While he has a great deal more respect for the primogenitures than for their children, he consistently describes them as “dazzling” or “modeled.”³⁵ He expands this vocabulary of disdain when he moves on to the Didots and Bodoni to include phrases indicative of sterility or bareness; for example, when describing the work of Pierre Didot he writes: “He was at the forefront of the neo-classical movement in printing, and with his brother Firmin’s chilly types and the dry designs of a chosen group of artists, produced editions of arctic frigidity.”³⁶ Opposed to this tundra of academic rigidity Updike posits Old Style typefaces which represent to him the fecundity of the proper craftsmanship: “He [Baskerville] put his books together ingeniously; but they were in the nature of a pastiche, and not a simple, healthy growth – or so it seems to me. Thus his editions, however ambitious, are not quite the ‘real thing.’”³⁷ To see an example of the ‘real thing’ one must turn to the work of a craftsman who is willing to let human error be an integral part of his work and to let the content of the book, not his own artistic reputation, be the centre of attention.³⁸ The two printers/typecutters who exemplify this to Updike are Nicholas Jenson and William Caslon. In his opinion Jenson’s Roman typeface is the finest face ever produced because of “its readability, its mellowness of form, and the evenness of colour in mass. Analyzed closely, his letter-forms were not very perfect; had they been so, their effect would not have been so good.”³⁹ He further explains the benefits of slightly imperfect type designs when

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.159

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.217

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.117

³⁸ The importance of human error to Updike would be an interesting area of investigation given his strong Puritanical Christian beliefs.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.73.

differentiating Caslon's types from the Dutch letters that served as his models:

Dutch fonts were monotonous, but Caslon's fonts were not so. His letters when analyzed, especially in the smaller sizes, are not perfect individually; but in mass their effect is agreeable. That is, I think, their secret – a perfection of the whole, derived from harmonious but not necessarily perfect individual letterforms ... Caslon's types are, too, so beautiful in mass, and above all so legible and 'common-sense,' that they can never be disregarded.⁴⁰

Unlike the cold, aggressive and even violent terms he reserves for Modern typefaces, his language when discussing Old Style types is saturated with language suggestive of an idyllic community: "mellowness", "evenness", "harmonious", "perfection of the whole", "beautiful in mass." And opposed to the "academic" Modern typefaces, Old Style types are "common-sense." All of which adds up to, in Updike's opinion and thus the opinions of the many typographical critics who were influenced by his work, Old Style types being more legible than Modern.

Choosing the right typeface is only one part, albeit a critical one, of crafting a book, and Updike's work makes it clear that printers who choose to become educated in printing history, and thus, naturally, to prefer Old Style types, are less likely to make the mistake of putting anything, be it the desire for personal recognition or for profit, above the effective communication of the author's words to the reader. He leaves little doubt as to what he thinks is the purpose of the book and what he thinks of those who disregard this purpose: "when a book becomes decorative at the expense of its readability, it ceases to be a book and becomes a decoration, and has no *raison d'être* as a book."⁴¹ When a printer chooses to advance his own reputation at the expense of this purpose, the result, no matter how impressive, is not as good as a book in which the printer erases his presence; in his final

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.105-6

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 2.218

assessment of Baskerville he writes, “He was not among the world’s greatest printers, because what he had to say was not in itself great. When we look at his books we think of Baskerville; while to look at the work of Jenson is to think but of its beauty, and almost to forget that it was made with hands!”⁴² While the assumptions here seem to slightly undercut his previous assertions about the book as decoration (is he admiring the text of Jenson’s book or the type?), there can be no doubt that because Baskerville’s text is imbued too strongly with his individuality it fails at some level as an interface for reading.

One of the ways printers can fail is by putting too much of themselves in the book; the other, which Updike feels is far more common among the printers of his own era, is by not putting in enough, and instead solely being concerned with making a profit:

All the great printers had a conception of what they wanted to do. They did not permit themselves to be overwhelmed by trade conditions, by so-called practical considerations, by ‘good business,’ or the hundred and one excuses printers make for being too ignorant, too unimaginative, or too cowardly to do what the older men did. Nor were they pulled about by ignorant customers who wanted first this type and then that . . . If they had allowed what some standardless, uneducated printers today allow, no individuality would have been left in their books to be remembered!⁴³

A great printer worries not about making money or pandering to the customers’ desires; by becoming educated in printing history and working within the traditions of this history the printer can hope to make ‘good’ books and, presumably, customers and money will follow. Updike’s own practice at the Merrymount Press stands as evidence that this model can be successful, but one wonders how many printing establishments like the Merrymount can actually be financially viable. Nicholas Jenson himself seemed more than willing to scrap his Humanist publishing program when the market for these texts became saturated, instead

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1.115.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 2.273-5

turning to the production of legal texts in Gothic typefaces.⁴⁴ Before judging Updike's statements too harshly though, it is worthwhile to consider that despite the fiery tone of his rhetoric, his intention was to educate printers and the reading public about what constituted a good book so that their tastes, and thus the average book, might become 'better.'

As part of his argument of how printers can improve their practices by adhering to the traditions of the past instead of simply trying to maximize profit, Updike looks unfavourably upon the influence of mechanization on type design and composition. Here one can again see the influence of Morris, but Updike was willing to accept that machine presses were capable of fine work – he installed cylinder presses at the Merrymount Press (although he ran them more slowly than most printers).⁴⁵ Where he was less willing to accept mechanization was the cutting and setting of type. Among the many reasons he prefers older types to more modern ones is that “when cut from a model alphabet by machine, there is too much rule and too little taste.”⁴⁶ This argument is consistent with his criticism of Modern typefaces, beginning with the *romain du roi*, for being too geometric and uniform in comparison to the more irregular Old Style types and thus more difficult to read. Similarly, he eschews machine composition in favour of traditional hand-setting; as Ruari McLean writes, “*Printing Types* ... contained over 600 pages of text which were all set by hand – because in Updike's opinion ... the Linotype and Monotype composing machines could not yet produce as good composition in as good typefaces as a well-trained hand compositor.”⁴⁷ But within the next few years this would change as, in part due to Updike's own work, the composing machine companies began to release typefaces based

⁴⁴ see Chapter 1, p. 21ff.

⁴⁵ Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press*, 308.

⁴⁶ *Printing Types*, 1.12.

⁴⁷ *How Typography Happens*, 33.

on the best Old Style fonts of the past.

Criticisms of Updike's work are rare, but his stance on mechanization left him open to attack by those who embraced the new technologies. Looking back on the typography of 1919-1939, Beatrice Warde writes of *Printing Types*,

That urbane and scholarly book ... appeared in the very last year in which it was still possible (though it was no longer easy) to do what Updike managed to do – ignore the existence of mechanical composition, and ignore its momentous concomitant, the professional typographic designer 'per se' (i.e. not a master printer). Hence those two richly-illustrated, charmingly-readable volumes, so valuable as a connected narrative of the whole past of typography, utterly failed to recognize what was most significant in the present and most clearly posited for the future of the art.⁴⁸

As will be shown later in this chapter, any examination of Warde's stance on machine composition, or printing in general, must always remember her position as one of the primary spokespeople for the Monotype Corporation – her writings are scholarly and readable advertising propaganda. But in this case her criticism is valid for by ignoring machine composition Updike does his readers a disservice and leaves a noticeable gap in his history of printing. It also makes his advice to other printers less effective; many of them would have no choice but to use composing machines, and thus would have little chance (at least for the time being) of using the typefaces Updike says they should. But as Warde points out, the book was published in the last year when this omission was would be possible. For in the 1920s the composing machine companies, especially the Monotype Corporation, embarked upon a program of re-issuing historic typefaces and advocating their use for even the finest books. Updike's research played no small part in the typefaces chosen for reproduction and, thanks to the encouragement of fellow scholar-printer Stanley

⁴⁸ "Some Notes on the British Typographic Reformation, 1919-39." *The Crystal Goblet: Sixteen Essays on Typography*. Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1956. pp 187-201. 194.

Morison, Monotype machines were installed at Merrymount.

The impact of Stanley Morison (1889-1967) on western typography is difficult to over-estimate; in 1933 Morison's career was only half over when John Johnson, head printer at the Oxford University Press, called him the “greatest figure in the last three centuries of the printing craft.”⁴⁹ Coming from humble roots, he trained first as a clerk. In 1912 he was struck by the power of typography while reading a special supplement on printing in the *Times*. He resolved to become a printer and in 1913 found a job working for Gerard Meynell who, among other ventures, published *Imprint* magazine, a trade paper that sought to reconcile fine press standards with commercial press methods.⁵⁰ As practical evidence of this purpose, the proprietary typeface designed for *Imprint* was the first 'fine' typeface made available for use on the Monotype machine. Through these connections Morison became involved with other printers and scholars interested in reforming industrial typography: Oliver Simon (Pelican Press), Francis Meynell (Nonesuch Press), Holbrook Jackson (*To-Day* magazine), Bernard Newdigate (Shakespeare Head Press), and others. His career paused during WWI when he was imprisoned as a conscientious objector.⁵¹ Upon release he returned to printing and began to publish articles on typographical history and design, and from this point onward his career becomes a series of overlapping contracts, commissions and appointments, all of which give him an opportunity to further his typographic agenda. He published *Four Centuries of Fine Printing*, an edited collection of plates from the 'best' books in 1924, and continued to write books on typographic and

⁴⁹ *The Printer, his Customers, and his Men*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1933. Quoted Jackson 50n1.

⁵⁰ Handover, “British Book Typography,” 161.

⁵¹ This imprisonment brought him into contact with many of the founding members of the Communist Party of Great Britain. He applied for membership in 1923, and was turned down due to his staunch Catholic beliefs. He later convinced Eric Gill to design the masthead for the *Daily Worker*. See James Moran, *Stanley Morison: His Typographical Achievement*, 42.

religious history throughout his life. Between 1925 and 1930 he, Oliver Simon and others published seven volumes of the *Fleuron*, a journal dedicated to showcasing the latest typographical designs and research, and in which Morison's work and research figures prominently [FIGURE 4.2].⁵² During this period he was also typographic consultant at the Cambridge University Press. He was the typographical consultant to the *Times* from 1929 to 1960, the editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* from 1945 to 1948 and produced the *History of the Times* from 1935 to 1952. Perhaps most importantly, from 1923 to 1967 he was the typographic consultant to the Monotype Corporation and instituted a programme of re-cutting historical faces, and designing new ones, for use on the machine. Among the typefaces he helped re-introduce: Garamond, Baskerville, Poliphilus Roman, Blado, Fournier, Centaur, Bembo, Perpetua, Gill Sans and Times New Roman.

This web of careers put Morison in the singular position of influencing both supply of and demand for new typefaces. His typographical research made him aware of past designs and current trends. When published, it acted as advertising, sometimes pre-release, sometimes post-, for the typefaces he was convincing Monotype to cut. His network of professional associates running the premiere presses ensured a ready market for any new face, as did his work at Cambridge and the *Times* and, thanks to the high visibility of these presses, more common printers saw and desired the new faces. In short, Morison could convince Monotype to issue a new typeface through either his typographical writings or

⁵² In his assessment of the *Fleuron* Grant Shipcott writes that it is tempting to see it as a “mutual appreciation society,” given that much of the journal consists of praise by the editors for others in their circle and these others’ praise for the editors, but that this level of overlap is understandable given that these men were the outstanding members of a relatively small field. See p.18ff. Nevertheless, one cannot help but think of Fournier and his attempts at self-promotion through his “historical” writings when reading an article by Morison praising a font he himself designed.

THE FLEURON
A JOURNAL OF TYPOGRAPHY
EDITED
BY
STANLEY MORISON



Cambridge New York · Garden City
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS DOUBLEDAY PAGE & CO
1926

Figure 4.2 Stanely Morison, *The Fleuron*, Number 5, 1926.

having an associate commission it; once produced he could assist its chances of success by praising it in the *Fleurion* or other publications and by convincing his other associates (like Updike) to use it. Despite this appearing like a self-serving monopoly, it would be a mistake to characterize this circle of influence as a capitalist venture on Morison's part; he was not interested in making money – rather, he was interested in books and making them “better.” Even the people one would expect to be his harshest critics recognized this; in his manifesto against “traditional” typography, a young Jan Tschichold writes, “under the influence of Stanley Morison, there has been a revival of traditional styles ... which affords by far the best examples of modern decorative typography.”⁵³ Tschichold did not like the direction Morison was taking typography, but could acknowledge he was very good at it. In summing up Morison's career Herbert Jones notes that the primary beneficiaries of Morison's work were not his fellow printers or the companies he worked for, but “the millions of ordinary readers who are the unconscious beneficiaries of his activities.”⁵⁴ Given the sustained prevalence of those typefaces he helped re-introduce, he continues to influence readers and producers of texts both physical and electronic to this day and will do so for the foreseeable future.

Morison and his peers preached a doctrine of the reconciliation of traditional practices and careful typographic design with modern methods of production. They were not the first to do so; Gerard Meynell founded *Imprint* to advocate this same principle and Theodore Low De Vinne's career and writings testify to his belief that quality and machine production were not mutually exclusive. Both men were strong influences on Morison's career – Meynell gave him his first job and De Vinne's emphasis on simplicity in

⁵³ *Asymmetric Typography*, 20.

⁵⁴ *Stanley Morison Displayed*, 112.

typography and his research publications were an obvious model for Morison to follow.⁵⁵ In the hands of Morison this doctrine was to spread and become the primary discourse of Western typography. Of utmost importance was a respect for tradition; in his landmark essay *First Principles in Typography*, Morison defines tradition as

more than the embalming of forms customary in states of society that have been long since cast aside. The sum of experience accumulated in more than one man's lifetime, and verified by succeeding generations, is not to be safely discarded. Tradition, therefore, is another word for unanimity about fundamentals which has been brought into being by the trials, errors and corrections of many centuries.⁵⁶

Morison's "tradition" is not a static entity. Rather, it is like Updike's evolutionary development of typography – a dynamic discourse that is modified over time as new practices become accepted and old ones fade into oblivion. Importantly, one person or group cannot change "tradition," for it is only after succeeding generations have had a chance to adapt and adopt the practice into the dominant discourse that it becomes traditional. Thus William Morris's typographic return to Gothic styles was, in the eyes of Morison and his fellow designers, not "traditional," for he broke with what they considered the typographic "traditions" of the past 400 years; instead, they considered his and other Arts and Crafts work as an archaic revival and/or experiment and strove to keep it from becoming part of "tradition" by criticizing it widely and thus denying it the requisite "unanimity."⁵⁷

But this respect for past printing practices did not preclude the "New Traditionalists" (Morison, Meynell, Simon, Jackson, etc) from wanting to have their own

⁵⁵ James Moran. *Stanley Morison: His Typographical Achievement*, 26

⁵⁶ *First Principles*, 24. Morison's tone here, and elsewhere, is remarkably similar to John Henry Newman's discussion of the development of religious practices. For example Newman proposes the "cutting off and casting away as corruptions all usages, ways, opinions, and tenets, which have not the sanction of primitive times." *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920. 10.

⁵⁷ For examples of this criticism see the discussion of William Morris in Chapter 3.

typographic beliefs become “traditional.”⁵⁸ In particular, they were insistent that the prejudice against machine composition was unjust, and that work of the finest quality could be produced using modern methods. Reflecting back on English typography in the 1920s Francis Meynell writes that Morison’s introduction of historical typefaces for use on the Monotype was

a means to enrich printing by putting at the universal service cheaply, swiftly and in a minute space, a magnificent array of types, revivals, adaptations, new adventures. Mr. Morison furnished also much of the study on which the principles of type-making and use were based ... Thus scholarship went hand in hand with mechanization ... And for new use, matching the new opportunity, the example must be the Nonesuch Press, founded in 1923 for the set purpose of shaping the newest and most mechanical methods of production to the uses of fine book printing.⁵⁹

Overlooking the self-praise for his Nonesuch Press (which continues for several more sentences), Meynell succinctly summarizes the belief system of the New Traditionalists and the methods they used to make these beliefs, in a very short period of time, “traditional.” They introduced the types for mechanical composition. They provided the historical context for the types, praised their usage, both historically and in the current day, and they used the types successfully in their own work.

Meynell’s quotation also provides the answer to the question of how he, Morison, and others, reconciled the seeming paradox between respecting traditional practices and embracing modern methods. Morison’s additions to the selection of types for the Monotype put them at “the universal service.” Combining tradition and mechanization was a means to ensure and advance the continued functionalism of the book. Morison writes in the “Art of Printing” that “The first duty of printing is to distribute, as widely and cheaply as possible,

⁵⁸ The phrase “New Traditionalists” was coined by Jan Tschichold to differentiate the practices of this new generation of English printers from the Modernist “New Typography” movement; see “New Typography.” *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*. London: Faber & Faber, 1937. p.249-55.

⁵⁹ *English Printed Books*, 36.

the works of all those who write for the education, information, and recreation of the public.”⁶⁰ Quite simply, mechanization is necessary in order to increase the number and lower the price of books. The role of tradition is not so easily explained, but it has to do with both Morison’s perception of the “inflexibility” of the reading public and the ultimate purpose, in his eyes, of the book: communicating the “works of all those who write for the education, information, and recreation of the public.” He believed that the time for radical changes in letter design had passed:

Centuries ago it was no liberty to change, say, the slope of the g. Now, any change, improvement or modification needs to be so subtle as to be almost invisible. There are two reasons for this. First, our letters were developed when scholarship and education were restricted to a small society, predominantly religious; secondly, this literary aristocracy was seriously interested in, and intimately involved with, the practice of beautiful and legible handwriting. Today, education is unrestricted but interest in the practice of handwriting is limited. The infinity and complexity of the reading public of today, as compared with the simplicity of the time of Charlemagne, makes our alphabet rigid and irreformable.⁶¹

The democratization of education made possible by the printing press eliminated the possibility of letter re-design. When only a few could read and write and these few were controlled by some authoritative council (church, state or university), it was relatively easy to bring about handwriting reform: a new form was developed, it was authorized, scribes were trained in it and books were written in it. Morison’s 1957 Lyell Lectures, published as *Politics and Script*, trace this process of innovation and authorization. But in a society where these authority structures no longer hold sway and where people are no longer required to communicate by hand-written messages, there is not the means, nor the market, for letter reform.⁶²

⁶⁰ 18.

⁶¹ *On Type Designs Past and Present*, 78. Morison makes an almost identical statement in his “Memorandum on the Typography of the *Times*,” 296.

⁶² Stanley Morison’s sometimes collaborator Eric Gill disagreed with this point. He believed that the government, through public education, still had the power to institute large-scale changes (orthography in

Modern printers must respect the authority of tradition and not attempt to challenge its imposed rigidity or else they risk fundamentally damaging the texts they produce.

Morison writes,

A high sense of discipline in letter-designing and in book-designing are the paramount virtues unless, which God forbid, the printer is to come between the reader and his chosen author. The printer must learn to satisfy his public first and himself last. He must avoid the exotic and the unfamiliar. His primary duty is to respect the author's intention and aid in the fullest comprehension of his words.⁶³

Morison spent several years in prison for refusing to compromise his religious beliefs and enlist in WWI – one should not take his use of “God forbid” lightly. He felt printers had a moral duty to authors to represent their works as accurately as possible and to readers to provide them a text free from distractions. This means that the printer must sacrifice his own desires for public recognition, or at least obvious attempts at it. Instead Morison, like Updike, believed that the best typographers exerted their personal style through “simplicity and restraint” while managing not to become monotonous.⁶⁴ When a printer or type-designer failed to show this humility he became an object of scorn for the two men; their personal favourite target was American type designer F.W. Goudy:

Now I entertain very decided opinions about this latest of Mr. Goudy's achievements. I don't know why Mr. Goudy allows it (I know he has been ill and perhaps this accounts for it) but it appears to me that his press agent is disgracefully handling the ordinary proprieties of life when he gives Goudy's name the prominence he does.⁶⁵

In their eyes, Goudy doubly sins; not only do they not like his types, but he makes the situation worse by attaching his own name to his type designs. Morison, on the other hand,

Gill's case); see Gill, Eric. *An Essay on Typography*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1960.

⁶³ *The Typographic Book*, 5

⁶⁴ *The Typographic Book*, 5

⁶⁵ Morison to Updike, 25 July 1923. *Selected Correspondence*, 58. The context of this letter is a reply to Updike's query if the forthcoming Monotype Garamond is going to be based on Goudy's recently released ATF Garamond. Morison was particularly touchy about this subject, and in later years may have even “misremembered” the date he started working on the type in order to have its inception precede Goudy's.

gave the type for which he is most famous a purely descriptive name (albeit with a nod to the commissioning press), Times New Roman, and strove to keep any of his own identity from its design: “It has the merit of not looking as if it had been designed by somebody in particular – Mr. Goudy for instance, who has designed a whole century of peculiar looking types.”⁶⁶

Morison repeated this doctrine that the printed book should and must be an unobtrusive interface between author and reader throughout his sizeable corpus of writings.⁶⁷ But it would find its greatest voice through the work of his friend and fellow typographic scholar Beatrice Warde (1900-1969). Warde was an American who was interested in calligraphy and typography from an early age. She became acquainted with Bruce Rogers and, thanks to a letter of recommendation from him, was hired to be assistant librarian for the American Type Founders Company. In 1922 she married Frederic Warde, printer to Princeton University, but the marriage did not last. During this period she also became acquainted with the best practicing typographers of the time, if not always in terms she would have desired; discussing Frederic Warde with Morison, Updike writes, “He has lately married himself to an uncommonly silly person.”⁶⁸ But this reputation was soon to change. The Wardes went to England in 1925, and when Frederic returned to the U.S. in 1926, Beatrice stayed. Under the pseudonym Paul Beaujon she began to publish articles on typographic history; in particular she published in the *Fleurion* the definitive article on the history of the Garamond typefaces.⁶⁹ On the strength of this work Paul Beaujon was offered

⁶⁶ Morison to Updike, 15 September 1937. *Selected Correspondence*, 185

⁶⁷ For example, see *Politics and Script*, 338; *First Principles of Typography*, 5; *Four Centuries of Fine Printing*, 12; *The Typographic Book*, 3-7.

⁶⁸ Nov 13, 1923. *Selected Correspondence*, 78-9.

⁶⁹ Beaujon, Paul. “The ‘Garamond’ Types.” *The Fleurion*. Number 5. Westport: Greenwood Reprint Corporation, 1970: 131-179.

the editorship of the Monotype Corporation's newsletter, *The Monotype Recorder*. Much to the surprise of the management, "Paul" turned out to be a woman, and in her hands *The Monotype Recorder* began to disseminate the best typographic writings of the era to working printers on either side of the Atlantic. She also began to deliver numerous public lectures on both the practice and purpose of printing. As a result of her learning and eloquence she becomes one of the primary spokespeople for the New Traditionalists.

Morison writes to Updike of her:

I do very little nowadays of that sort of writing. For one thing I consider that Mrs. W does it all a very great deal better, more gracefully, more humanely and more informingly because less donnish and "scientific" than I find it possible to avoid ... It is one of the real merits of *Printing Types* that it can be enjoyed by people who have a humane, and not a trade reason, for studying the book. So also with Mrs. Warde's writing.⁷⁰

The "uncommonly silly person" becomes the author of some of the most widely read treatises on printing in the history of the trade and, in the process, opens the door for women to have a greater stake in printing than simply selling off their husband's assets.

Warde's typographic opinions are by no means radical given the group of printers and scholars she associated with; she describes herself as a disciple of Henry Lewis Bullen, for whom she worked at ATF, who was in turn a disciple of T.L. De Vinne.⁷¹ Thus from the earliest stages of her career she was taught the doctrine of 'neutral,' functional typography and the advantages of mechanized printing. This obviously meshed well with the beliefs of Morison, Updike and other New Traditionalists who were influenced by the same typographic currents. When one reads Warde the basic message is not that much different from reading Morison, but the delivery is; where Morison relied on historical facts to make

⁷⁰ Morison to Updike, 15 September 1937. *Selected Correspondence*, 184

⁷¹ *The Crystal Goblet*, 5

his points, Warde, even though she was well-grounded in the history, used metaphor. And one of these metaphors became, and is still, the dominant metaphor for describing the aims of the book typographer. Her address in 1932 to the British Society of Typographic Designers was entitled “The Crystal Goblet, or Printing Should be Invisible” and it encapsulates the beliefs of the New Traditionalists. She begins by setting up a situation where a person is given the choice of drinking wine out of a gold goblet or a crystal one:

if you have no feeling about wine one way or the other, you will want the sensation of drinking the stuff out of a vessel that may have cost thousands of pounds; but if you are a member of that vanishing tribe, the amateurs of fine vintages, you will choose the crystal, because everything about it is calculated to reveal rather than hide the beautiful thing which it was meant to contain.⁷²

Readers, or at least the ones who actually care about what they are reading and not about who made their book or how much it cost (yet another sly criticism of the favourite target of the New Traditionalists, William Morris), do not wish to be aware of the reading interface – they simply want the best possible access to the text the book contains and thus it is the printer’s obligation to provide them with type which is “invisible as type.”⁷³

In a less famous metaphor of transparency Warde does admit that complete humility, in the form of printers completely eliding their own presence, is not necessary or even possible for those aspiring to be listed among the greats of typography. Here again she agrees with Morison, Updike and the other New Traditionalists with regards to printers displaying personal style through restraint, but she expresses the idea more eloquently and still manages to fit in the requisite criticism of Morris:

The book typographer has the job of erecting a window between the reader inside the room and that landscape which is the author’s words. He may put up a stained-glass window of marvelous beauty, but a failure as a window; that is, he may use

⁷² “The Crystal Goblet.” *The Crystal Goblet*. 11.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 13

some rich superb type like text gothic that is something to be looked at, not through. Or he may work in what I call transparent or invisible typography. ... The third type of window is one in which the glass is broken into relatively small leaded panes; and this corresponds to what is called 'fine printing' today, in that you are at least conscious that there is a window there, and that someone has enjoyed building it. This is not objectionable, because of a very important fact which has to do with the psychology of the conscious mind. That is that the mental eye focuses through type and not upon it.⁷⁴

The first two examples she gives are restatements of her crystal goblet metaphor, but the third one, the leaded window, is new – perhaps the equivalent of the cut-crystal goblet? And her explanation of this window undercuts her argument about the other two. She identifies the leaded window as being superior to some degree, equating it with 'fine printing,' but then admits that it fails at some level as a transparent vessel because one is aware that it is there. She reconciles this apparent contradiction by invoking a 'psychological fact,' but beyond the complete lack of explanation regarding how this psychology functions, if psychology acts in the way she says it does, there is no need for crystal goblet typography; if the "mental eye focuses through type and not upon it," what does it matter if that type is text gothic or Garamond? In a similarly troubled statement, which both serves as an example of how Warde makes ideas similar to Morison's much more palatable to the non-academic reader and explains Warde's 'psychology' reference, Stanley Morison writes: "Familiarity is the first law of legibility, for subjective ocular habit will, to a considerable extent, overcome objective ocular mischief."⁷⁵ In the context of the statement Morison is arguing that people read best those types that resemble those they read most. In Warde's window example, as long as the 'leaded window' typography is not overly radical and uses familiar typefaces, readers will still be able to focus on the text and not the typography.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 15-16

⁷⁵ "Memorandum", 310.

Thus, in answer to the question posed above, it is preferable to the reader for the text to be set in Garamond over Gothic because the reader is likely to be more familiar with Garamond-style typefaces and will therefore be able to ignore the type in favour of the text. But Morison's statement simultaneously undercuts this assertion; presumably if readers were supplied with reading material only in Gothic, they would quickly become accustomed to it and thus ignore it and focus on the text. The fact that familiarity breeds anything but contempt for a typeface was seized by Eric Gill, Morison's type designer for both the sans-serif Gill Sans and the very traditional Perpetua, when he postulated a new system of letters and spelling that would be accepted because "once it became a recognized vehicle of the common language we should soon endow it with loveliness."⁷⁶ Gill proposed that a change in the writing styles taught in elementary schools would result in a complete change in orthography within a generation, thereby countering Morison's argument that modern readers were firmly entrenched in their ways. As evidence of this, William Morris's own comments and those of his supporters about the 'readability' of Kelmscott editions show that with repeated use stained-glass typography can become just as effective a portal into an author's words as crystal.⁷⁷

Yet despite these apparent contradictions in their beliefs about transparency and readability, throughout their long careers Morison, Warde and Updike never tempered their arguments in favour of tradition and transparency and against experimental or artistic book typography. As their careers advanced and, not coincidentally, Arts and Crafts typography fell by the wayside, they found a new target for their criticisms – the Modernist typography that arose from the practices of the Bauhaus and other Continental schools of design and

⁷⁶ Gill, Eric. *An Essay on Typography*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1960, 122.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 3, p.151ff.

artistic practices, particularly in Germany. Despite being the birthplace of printing, discussion of German printers has heretofore been absent from this discussion for one simple reason: unlike the typography of the nations previously discussed, Germany did not accept Roman typefaces as the national letterform until well into the twentieth century and then only by the dictate of the Hitler's National Socialist regime. Until that point German literature was largely printed in a variety of Blackletter or Gothic forms, and these typeforms continue to be strongly associated with Germanic culture.⁷⁸ It is not that German printers never used Roman types: in 1467, the same year Roman types first appeared in Italy, similar were cut by Adolph Rusch in Strassbourg.⁷⁹ The first works of Martin Luther were also printed in Roman types, and then as his message became more populist he switched to Gothic.⁸⁰ Latin authors were also often printed in Roman typefaces or Rotunda, a rounded Gothic style imported from Italy.⁸¹ But the vast majority of Germanic works continued to be printed in Gothic scripts, and while Roman typefaces were evolving in other parts of Europe the development of Gothic types continued apace with the introduction of Schwabach and Fraktur forms. In the eighteenth century the debate between Roman and Gothic became more heated with Kant and Goethe becoming involved.⁸² Beginning in the late eighteenth century there were several attempts to merge the two families into a single typeface, but they met with very limited success and instead the Roman and Fraktur faces of Justus Erich Walbaum became accepted as the models for

⁷⁸ Given the subject of this thesis, and my knowledge of German, it is not possible for me to do justice to the importance of Gothic types in German typography and culture. For further discussion of this topic see *Blackletter : Type and National Identity*. Peter Bain and Paul Shaw, eds. New York : Princeton Architectural Press, 1998.

⁷⁹ Goldschmidt, *The Printed Book in the Renaissance*, 4.

⁸⁰ Febvre and Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450-1800*, 83.

⁸¹ Johnson, *Selected Essays on Books and Printing*, 53.

⁸² McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450-1830*, 193.

German types, with each type being used for specific purposes but with the Fraktur remaining dominant.⁸³

But the Germans' continued use of Gothic types was not the reason they were scorned by the New Traditionalists. Indeed, Stanley Morison was a great admirer of Gothic typefaces, especially their use in books of devotion.⁸⁴ It was developments in German typography at the end of the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth century that raised their ire. The first of these was Art Nouveau, or, as it was called in Germany, *Jugendstil*. Georg Kurt Schauer describes the impact this movement had on German typography: “The dissolution of traditional letterforms ... stimulated German type designers like Rudolf Koch and F.H. Ehmcke to experiment with decorative faces.”[FIGURE 4.3]⁸⁵ From this description alone it is easy to see why Morison and Updike would dislike the resultant typography – it was both non-traditional and decorative, instead of their preferred traditional and utilitarian. But the damage, in their opinion, that this style did to the book was minimal, for the new style was largely limited to the covers and title pages and the body text remained largely traditional.⁸⁶ Subsequent design movements did not ignore the interior of the books. The British Arts and Crafts movement had a profound influence on German typography, and other artistic practices, but not in the same fashion as it did in England and the United States. While there were a few imitators of the Kelmscott style, which was not that different from the *Jugendstil*, it was Morris' emphasis on the quality of materials and an object's fitness for purpose that catalyzed new

⁸³ Georg Kurt Schauer. “The Art of the Book in Germany.” *Book Typography 1815-1965 In Europe and the United States of America*. Kenneth Day, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966. 101.

⁸⁴ In his book on T.B. Reed, Morison, the staunch Catholic, goes so far as to say Reed would have had a much higher regard for traditional blackletter liturgical printing if he had not belonged to a non-conformist sect. See Moran, *Stanley Morison*, 24.

⁸⁵ 105.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 106.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z Æ OE Œ S ſ Z abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy z	Eckmannschrif 1900
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z Æ abc defghijklmnopqrstuvwxy z ch ck sch fl st si	Behrensschrift 1901
A B C D E E F G H I K L M N O P Q U R S T U V W X Y Z Æ C E abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy z sch	Behrens-Antiqua 1908
<i>A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z Æ C E</i> abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy z ch ck sch ff	Behrens-Kursiv 1907
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z Æ C E abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy z ch ck sch	Behrens-Mediäval 1913
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z abcdefghijel mnopqrstuvwxy z ch ck sch fffiffiffiffiffiff	Liturgisch (Hupp) 1906
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z Æ C E abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy z	Hupp-Antiqua 1909
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy z ä ö ü ch	Hupp-Unziale 1909
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy z ch ck fffiffiff	Hupp-Fraktur 1910
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxy z ch ck fffiffiffiffiff	Maximilian (Rudolf Koch) 1914

Figure 4.3 Types from the Klingspor foundry, 1900-1914.

German typographic practices. The Doves Press of T.J. Cobden-Sanderson and Emery Walker also played an important role here, as their books showed that books could be typographic successes without relying upon decoration.⁸⁷ This interest resulted in the foundation of the *Deutsche Werkbund* in 1907 in Munich, which had markedly different aims than the Arts and Crafts practitioners who inspired it. In the Inaugural Address at the first Annual Meeting of the *Deutsche Werkbund*, the architect Theodor Fischer said, “There is no fixed boundary line between tool and machine. Work of a high standard can be created with tools or with machines as soon as man has mastered the machine and made it a tool.”⁸⁸ This does not sound very different from the aims of the New Traditionalists who sought to establish the composing machine and machine-press as tools of the fine printer, but the resulting typefaces were very different, perhaps because of the continued influence of the *Jugendstil* and the Arts and Crafts in Germany. While British type designers were busy re-cutting traditional typefaces and adapting them to machine composition, German designers such as Rudolf Koch and Paul Renner turned to their historical models and modified them according to their own tastes.⁸⁹

It is this individualism in type design that first makes German typography into an item of concern for Morison and Updike, but they are not overly distressed. In the 1924 first edition of *Four Centuries of Fine Printing* Morison writes, “They [some German printers] fail to respect many traditions and conventions which are so strong with us, and very extraordinary things have been achieved by some of the Teutonic private presses which specialised in ignoring them. Gradually, however, they are learning moderation.”⁹⁰ In

⁸⁷ Windisch, Albert. "The Work of Rudolf Koch". *The Fleuron*. VI(1928): 1-36. 1-2

⁸⁸ Quoted Nikolaus Pevsner. *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2005. 24-5

⁸⁹ Schauer, 108.

⁹⁰ 48.

his review of this book, Updike notes, “Modern German printing is fairly and generously accorded such praise as it deserves -- though not all that it probably desires.”⁹¹ They may not like much of the individualistic design being currently done in Germany, but the two men treat it like a passing craze. In their correspondence, Morison comments on Updike's opinions regarding German typography on numerous occasions. When discussing the forthcoming *Fleuron* edition, he tells Updike, “For the next number I have an article on the work of Klingspor which you won't very much like (!).”⁹² Later, when discussing potential alterations that Updike might make in the second edition of *Printing Types*, Morison quips, “As you know, the Germans consider that you seldom miss an opportunity of laughing at them. At the present stage of the European situation, I should not be willing to make any concessions to Teutonic pride, but I suppose a strictly scientific historian would not have admitted certain of your lines directed against them.”⁹³ The two men may not agree on the worth of these German typographic experiments, but they are able to treat them with humorous condescension instead of true concern.

Part of the reason these two may not have been overly concerned with German expressionistic typography was that they were far more worried about another typographic reform coming out of that country. In the same 1937 letter to Updike quoted above Morison writes,

It would be very useful if you could give us a few words towards clearing our minds of some of the current typographical cant. Owing to the European situation and the consequent immigration, we are suffering to a greater extent from idle chatter about art. One or two affluent Teutons are setting about to blow up the whole of English typographical tradition. They do not see that typographical tradition is the embodiment of the commonsense for generations. They wish to

⁹¹ *The Well-Made Book*, 83.

⁹² Morison to Updike, March 2, 1926. *Correspondence*, 150.

⁹³ Morison to Updike, March 23, 1937. *Correspondence*, 181.

substitute style for sense.⁹⁴

This request results in the inclusion of the following in the Introduction to the second edition of Updike's *Printing Types*:

[quoting Santayana] "The merely modern man never knows what he is about ... Fidelity to tradition, I am confident, has and will have its reward ... New ideas in their violence and new needs in their urgency pass like a storm; and then the old earth, scarred and enriched by those trials, finds itself still under the same sky, unscarred and pure as before." English and American printing -- especially book printing -- will not, in the long run, be much affected by temporary fashions; and while for a moment they seem to obscure the horizon, it is but for the moment.⁹⁵

The "tradition" that Updike and Morison held so dear was being threatened by a new movement out of Germany that sought to dispense with all previous styles and to fashion new modes of aesthetic and practical expression based on the functionalism of modern machines: the Bauhaus.⁹⁶

The *Staatliches Bauhaus*, School of Building, has its roots in the *Deutsche Werkbund*'s concern with the integration of fitness for purpose with machine production. Founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar in 1919, the school quickly came to have a strong typographical presence, both through the training of printers and through the appearance of its various publications. The central tenet of Bauhaus typography, like Bauhaus architecture, was functionalism; Herbert Bayer, the director of the printing and advertising department until 1928, writes that "Modern" typography is "based on the understanding of the purpose and a better utilization of typographical materials, which up to date had been enslaved in the traditions of antiquarian styles."⁹⁷ Primary among these traditional

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 182-3. Among the "Teutons" moving to Britain were Herbert Bayer and László Moholny-Nagy, important Bauhaus figures discussed in the next paragraph.

⁹⁵ xx-xxi

⁹⁶ The Bauhaus is used here as a catchphrase for several schools of design focused on creating new styles for "Modern" life such as Futurism and Constructivism. As seen in the discussion of Jan Tschichold to follow, not all proponents of the new style were actual students or teachers at the Bauhaus.

⁹⁷ Bayer, Herbert. "Typography and Commercial Art Forms." *The Bauhaus*. Hans M. Wingler and Joseph

constraints which stood in the way of functional typography were serified typefaces and the use of capital letters, the latter being especially problematic given the German practice of capitalizing all nouns. László Moholy-Nagy, who taught typography, among other things, at the Bauhaus from 1923 to 1928, bemoaned the lack of suitable typefaces for the modern printer: “for the time being we do not even have a practical typeface of the right size that is clearly legible, has no individual peculiarities, is based on a functional, visual form, and has neither distortions nor curlicues.”⁹⁸ He desired a type that was purely functional and saw the inclusion of any element, such as serif, that contributed to giving a certain typeface individuality as a retrograde step. Likewise, he and other Bauhaus proponents felt that there was no need for both lower and upper case letters; in his essay “Bauhaus and Typography” he quotes the architect Adolf Loos, “for the german there is a wide gap between the written and the spoken word. one cannot speak a capital letter. everyone speaks without thinking of capital letters, but when a german takes a pen to write something, he no longer is able to write as he thinks or speaks.”⁹⁹ By forcing the writer, and presumably the reader, to confront capital letters, traditional orthography impedes the clear communication of ideas. There is also the further advantage that eliminating capital letters would roughly half the number of characters the printer needed.

Stein, Ed. Wolfgang Jabs and Basil Gilbert, Transl. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983. 135.

⁹⁸ Moholy-Nagy, László. "Modern Typography. Aims, Practice, Criticism." *The Bauhaus*. Hans M. Wingler and Joseph Stein, Ed. Wolfgang Jabs and Basil Gilbert, Transl. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983. 88.

⁹⁹ Moholy-Nagy, László. "Bauhaus and Typography." *The Bauhaus*. Hans M. Wingler and Joseph Stein, Ed. Wolfgang Jabs and Basil Gilbert, Transl. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983. 114-115. 114. No capitalization in original.

Beziehungen nachzuweisen und seine Konsequenzen darzulegen, Klarheit über die Elemente der Typographie und die Forderung zeitgemäßer typographischer Gestaltung zu schaffen, ist Gegenstand dieses Buchs. Der Zusammenhang der Typographie mit allen anderen Gestaltungsgebieten, vor allem der Architektur, hat in allen bedeutenden Zeiten bestanden. Heute erleben wir die Geburt einer neuen, großartigen Baukunst, die unserer Zeit das Gepräge geben wird. Wer einmal die tiefe innere Ähnlichkeit der Typographie mit der Baukunst erkannt und die Neue Architektur ihrem Wesen nach begriffen gelernt hat, für den kann kein Zweifel mehr daran sein, daß die Zukunft der Neuen und nicht der alten Typographie gehören wird.

Und es ist unmöglich, daß etwa, wie manche meinen, auch in Zukunft beide Typographien wie noch heute weiter nebeneinander bestehen. Der kommende große Stil wäre keiner, wenn neben der zeitgemäßen noch die Renaissanceform auf irgendwelchen Gebieten, sei es Buchdruck oder Architektur, weiter existierte. Der Romantismus der vergehenden Generation, so verständlich er ist, hat noch nie einen neuen Stil verhindert. So wie es heute absurd ist, Villen wie Rokokoschlösser oder wie gotische Burgen zu bauen wie vor vierzig Jahren, wird man morgen diejenigen belächeln, die die alte Typographie noch weiter zu erhalten trachten.

In dem Kampfe zwischen dem Alten und dem Neuen handelt es sich nicht um die Erschaffung einer neuen Form um ihrer selbst willen. Aber die neuen Bedürfnisse und Inhalte schaffen sich selbst eine auch äußerlich veränderte Gestalt. Und so wenig man diese neuen Bedürfnisse hinwegspürren kann, so wenig ist es möglich, die Notwendigkeit einer wirklich zeitgemäßen Typographie zu bestreiten.

Darum hat der Buchdrucker heute die Pflicht, sich um diese Fragen zu bemühen. Einige sind mit Energie und Elan schöpferisch vorgegangen, für die anderen aber gilt es noch fast

ALLES !
zu tun

DIE ALTE TYPOGRAPHIE (1450—1914)

Während die Geschichte der Typographie von der Erfindung bis etwa zur Mitte des vorigen Jahrhunderts eine fortlaufende, ruhige Entwicklungskurve zeigt, bietet die Entwicklung seit dieser Zeit das Bild rückweiser, unorganischer Störungen, einander durchkreuzender Bewegungen, die Tatsachen neuer technischer Erfindungen, die auf die Entwicklung bestimmend einwirken.

Die Typographie der ersten Epoche (1440—1850) beschränkt sich fast ausschließlich auf das Buch. Die Gestaltung der daneben auftauchenden Flugzettel und der wenigen Zeitungen entspricht der der Buchseite. Bestimmendes Element, besonders seit dem Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts, ist die Typo. Die übrigen Teile des Buches erscheinen sekundär, sie sind angefügt, schmückend, nicht Wesensbestandteil. Die Buchgestalt als Ganzes wird im Laufe der Jahrhunderte zwar variiert, aber nicht entscheidend gewandelt. Gutenberg, der nichts anderes im Sinne hatte, als die damalige Buchform — die Handschrift — zu imitieren, entwickelte seine Typen aus der damaligen Buchschrift der gotischen Minuskel. Sie, die man heute gern religiösen und anderen feierlichen Inhalten vorbehält, diente zu ihrer Zeit zur Niederschrift oder zum Druck aller vorkommenden, auch profanen, Texte. Der Erfinder wählte mit der gotischen Minuskel, der „Textur“, eine Schrift zum Vorbild, die für Inhalte von Bedeutung, d. h. für solche Bücher verwendet wurde, deren Inhalt den Horizont nur aktuellen Interesses überschritt. Neben dieser gotischen Minuskel war im täglichen Leben für aktuelle Schriften, Urkunden und kurze Niederschriften die gotische Kursiva (in Frankreich Bâtarde genannt) in Gebrauch, die später Schoeffer zur Ausgangsform der von ihm zuerst benutzten Schwabacher machte. Mit diesen zwei Schriftarten begnügte sich das Zeitalter zwischen der Erfindung und dem Beginn des 16. Jahrhunderts. Von den Variationen der Gotisch und der Schwabacher, die mit den Schriften Gutenbergs und Schoeffers die allgemeine Linienführung gemein haben, dürfen wir bei dieser historischen Betrachtung ebenso absehen, wie von den Formen der Antiqua von 1500.

Die Buchform als Ganzes gleicht zu dieser Zeit fast vollkommen der Form des geschriebenen spätgotischen Kodex. Sein Reichthum an bemalten, goldgehöhten großen und farbigen kleinen Initialen, die Rubrikatur, die Randleisten der Anfangsseiten werden in das gedruckte Buch übernommen. Ursprünglich mit der Hand eingefügt, werden diese schmückenden Teile bald in Holz geschnitten und mitgedruckt, bei kostbareren Ausführungen eines Buches nachträglich koloniert. Der Satz in zwei Kolonnen überwiegt. Die Titel zeigen eine asymmetrische, von Logik nicht übermäßig belastete Aufteilung. Seltener, daß axiale Gliederungen erscheinen — sie bleiben auf Italien beschränkt. Die Harmonie von Text, Initialen und Titel wird von

Figure 4.4 Jan Tschichold, *Die Neue Typographie*, 1928.

The best synopsis of the Bauhaus typographical style is *Die Neue Typographie, the New Typography*, written by the twenty-six year old Jan Tschichold in 1928 [FIGURE 4.4].¹⁰⁰ Tschichold's father was a sign-letterer, and Jan, then named Johannes Tzschichhold, trained as a letterer and calligrapher from early in his life. In 1923 he began to work in the fledgling field of typographic design for a large printing firm in Leipzig. In this same year he attended an exhibition of the Weimar Bauhaus and came to know Moholy-Nagy and El Lissitzky. He began to work in a Modernist style and adopted the name Iwan Tschichold as

¹⁰⁰ Robin Kinross, "Introduction to the English-Language Edition." *The New Typography*. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp xv-xliv. xv.

he came to identify with the Russian Constructivist movement (soon after changed to Jan, the Slavik form of Johannes). He began to publish articles about these new typographical principles and took a teaching position at the *Meisterschule für Deutschlands Buchdrucker* (advanced-level college for German printers) in Munich under the direction of Paul Renner, who was at this time working on his own Futura sans serif typeface in response to the new typographic movement.¹⁰¹ It was during this period that Tschichold wrote *Die Neue Typographie*.

Tschichold opens his book by discussing the problems facing modern printers and posits a solution based upon adopting an entirely new model of typography (and typographer):

The objects in use by the new generation [Tschichold's] suffer from the fatal compromise between a supposedly “artistic” intention and the dictates of technical manufacture; from a feeble turning back to historical parallels; from the conflict between essence and appearance. Instead of recognizing and designing for the laws of machine production, the previous generation contented itself with trying anxiously to follow a tradition that was in any case only imaginary. Before them stand the works of today, untainted by the past ... These objects, designed without reference to the aesthetics of the past, have been created by a new kind of man: **the engineer!**¹⁰²

Like his contemporaries Morison and Meynell in Britain, Tschichold calls for an embrace of machine production, but his call for reform runs much deeper: simply using machines is not enough – the entire philosophy underlying the production of the book must be replaced by one that disposes with the historical and the individual artist and replaces them with the contemporary and the anonymous engineer. Also like his British contemporaries, Tschichold argues his points by grounding them in typographical history and how that

¹⁰¹ Paul Renner's career and writings provide another example of the rise (and fall) of Modernist typography. See Christopher Burke's *Paul Renner*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998.

¹⁰² Tschichold, Jan. *The New Typography*. Ruari McLean, Transl. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. 11. Emphasis in original.

history influences the reader. He argues that the Modernist's concern with “functionalism” is fundamental to the New Typography because “Modern man has to absorb every day a mass of printed matter ... As a rule we no longer read quietly line by line, but glance quickly over the whole, and only if our interest is awakened do we study it in detail.”¹⁰³ In order to facilitate this awakening of interest, much of Tschichold's text is a handbook for design principles for focusing the reader's attention. In opposition to this Modern reader, he posits the ideal reader of the “old” typography who

had plenty of time to read line by line in a leisurely manner. For them, function could not yet play any significant role ... Problems of formal aesthetics (choice of type, mixture of typefaces and ornament) dominated considerations of form. It is for this reason that the history of typography since Manutius is not so much a development towards clarity of appearance (the only exception being the period of Didot, Bodoni, Baskerville, and Walbaum) as an embodiment of the development of historical typefaces and ornaments.¹⁰⁴

In Tschichold's view, previous generations of readers did not require functional typography because they encountered so little printed material that it was still a novelty and/or the average reader was of sufficient affluence that he had the time to read carefully. His account of typographical history was largely dismissive as he saw it as little more than new artists reworking old designs, with a few exceptions, such as the eighteenth and early nineteenth century typographers he named above (who were, not coincidentally, the prime movers in the previous Modern movement).

This dichotomy between historical aestheticism and contemporary functionalism is perhaps best seen in Tschichold's discourse on type-designs. Although he admired them as part of the movement towards the clarity of the New Typography, Tschichold was unwilling to use the types of Didot, Bodoni and Walbaum because “they divert the reader's attention

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 64

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

into certain emotional and intellectual spheres and clearly belong to a past with which we have no connection.”¹⁰⁵ Instead, if the printer was forced to use a Roman type because, for example, the printer lacked sufficient quantities of sans serif type, he should use anonymously-designed romans because it will be “uninteresting”.¹⁰⁶ More preferable yet would be to use a sans serif, the design of which “is a logical development from Didot. The letters are free from all extra accessories: their essential shapes appear for the first time pure and unadulterated.”¹⁰⁷ With sans serif types the designer can reproduce the text without instilling it with anachronistic elements of times past and without distracting the reader with unnecessary ornamentation. In his follow-up book *Typographische Gestaltung (Asymmetric Typography)*, Tschichold gives sans serif further desirable attributes: “Sans serif is more expressive than any other face, because its wide range of weights ... gives every colour in the black-and-white scale and contributes most easily to the abstract image aimed at by the new typography.”¹⁰⁸ Hinting at the personal changes which he had undergone by the time this book was published 1935 which will be discussed later in this chapter, here Tschichold attributes artistic qualities to sans serif: in the hands of a skilled typographer it is better suited for the photo-montages and other abstract works of typographic art that were an important part of Modernist typography. Yet, even as he was growing disillusioned with his previous manifesto, he still preferred sans serif types, and in his first book suggested that the ideal sans serif would not be produced by a single type designer, but rather that it should be the product of a committee whose membership includes an engineer.¹⁰⁹ While waiting for this type to be designed, Tschichold contented

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 76

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 20

¹⁰⁸ Tschichold, Jan. *Asymmetric Typography*. Ruari McLean, Transl. Toronto: Cooper and Beatty, 1967. 24

¹⁰⁹ *The New Typography*, 74. Among the current designs he dismisses as being too individualistic are Rudolf

himself by using a nondescript sans serif jobbing type for the book as it was as close to his ideal anonymous type as he could find.

By dismissing traditional practices for both page layout and type design, Tschichold and his Modernist peers threatened the ideals of Morison, Warde and those other typographers who were trying to reconcile machine production with traditional book design -- a threat that intensified as many of the Modernists moved to Britain from Germany in order to escape the growing threat of the National Socialists. As discussed earlier, these events precipitated Morison asking Updike to say something against the new style, and Updike responded by writing an assurance that book typography would remain largely unchanged by current fashions. This was not the only volley launched against the Modernists; in particular, Morison and others set about a program of publications that undermined the claims of the New Typography by granting it suitability for ephemera but not for “serious” book work. Even more damning, Morison set out to prove that there was nothing “modern” about sans serif types or other Modernist experiments; by looking at the historical development of these types and other typographical experiments he attempted to nullify the claims that this was “new typography for a new age” -- rather, he argued that it was simply a rehashing of previous failed attempts at design reform. In so doing, he subsumed the New Typography into the tradition that he held so dear.

Koch's Kabel, but he does say that Paul Renner (his current supervisor) is moving in the right direction with Futura.

* MEETING  FEDERATION OF MASTER PRINTERS

ANNUAL



BLACKPOOL

PUBLICITY AND SELLING CONGRESS



on Monday, 21st May, 1928

at the Imperial Hydro Hotel

at 2.30 p.m.

Figure 4.5 Stanley Morison, "Publicity and Selling," 1928.

At the 1928 Annual Meeting of the British Federation of Master Printers, Morison gave an address that warned of the rise of advertising and publicity agents and the corresponding loss of business for printers. Morison prepared a programme for the talk and set it in the new sans serif that he had just commissioned Eric Gill to cut for Monotype [FIGURE 4.5]. With its stark black and red capitals and vertical setting of “ANNUAL,” this programme was not all that different from the products of the Bauhaus. His conservative audience was not impressed and he was accused of “typographical bolshevism.”¹¹⁰ But the radical appearance of his programme was part of the rhetorical strategy of the essay it contained, “The 2 Kinds of Effectiveness”:

The conventions of fine book-typography have been developed, accepted and obeyed for centuries. When a book is legible, pleasing to the eye, and above all unobtrusive, we say it is “effectively” printed. But there is another kind of printing ... An unobtrusive advertisement, a catalogue page, which only a connoisseur can distinguish from a piece of “classic” printing, might have caught the eye of the casual reader in the days when any advertisement was something of a novelty. Now it is elbowed out of sight by display printing which is deliberately planned to catch attention and hold interest. It would be unthinkable to impose this calculated “attention appeal” upon book-printing. But it is no less dangerous to base all sales-promotion matter on the temperate conventions of classic printing.¹¹¹

Morison was not opposed to attention-getting typography or sans serif types, as evident from his work with Eric Gill to get him to produce Gill Sans for Monotype or the series of jarring yellow dustjackets he designed for Victor Gollancz. He was in complete agreement with the statements that Tschichold was making about the proliferation of printed material vying for the attention of the reader and the need for the printer/typographer to employ visual strategies for catching and focusing this attention. The critical point of diversion, though, was that Modernist printers were recommending the new style for all printed

¹¹⁰ Just how much of an insult this would have been at the time to the Communist-leaning Morison is unknown, but it is interesting that this same argument was leveled against Tschichold by the Nazis. See Christopher Burke, *Active Literature*. London: Hyphen Press, 2007. 280n62.

¹¹¹ Quoted Moran, 218.

works, while Morison wanted to reserve it strictly for advertisements and other forms of ephemera. In the Postscript of the 1960 edition of *Four Centuries of Fine Printing* he laments that “there is a marked tendency on the part of designers of book to be influenced by the forms seen in magazines, catalogues, prospectuses, and other media.”¹¹² The New Typography was fine for throw-away material, but for a book to be effectively printed it needed to be “legible, pleasing to the eye, and above all unobtrusive.”

This last statement explains much of the New Traditionalists' focus on the “Crystal Goblet” -- by arguing that book typography needed to be unobtrusive they were arguing against the New Typography. In her famous essay Warde writes, “Now the man who first chose glass instead of clay or metal to hold his wine was a 'modernist' in the sense in which I am going to use that term. That is, the first thing he asked of this particular object was not 'How should it look?' but 'What must it do?' and to that extent all good typography is modernist.”¹¹³ Here the concept of modernism is tied strictly into fitness for purpose, and Warde claims that the crystal goblet typography is the most functional so thus it is modernist. But as time goes on her argument in favour of unobtrusive printing loses this appeal to modernism; once modernism becomes “Modernist” it becomes the enemy, and not the foundation, of functional printing. Approximately fifteen years after she first delivered her “Crystal Goblet” speech Warde had this to say about new movements in book design:

We have all seen the pantomime comedian dropping a trayful of dishes, then finding one that has somehow failed to break, and finishing it off with a hammer. That is a well-worn comic gag which must appeal particularly to those who make a sort of religion of Modernism -- for instance, those designers, architects, and writers to whom novelty is a stock-in-trade, and living tradition no more than rival or barrier to

¹¹² 49

¹¹³ “The Crystal Goblet,” 12.

their personal ambitions.¹¹⁴

Going back to a familiar argument for those advocating transparent typography, Warde accuses them of focusing on advancing their own personal agenda instead of on the needs of the reader. And 'modern' is no longer a synonym for functionalism – it has become, quite literally, a dirty word: “a book may be printed in sans-serif type because its designer is one of those aesthetic nudists who think anything looks better, or at least more 'modern', for being stripped.”¹¹⁵

But the New Traditionalists did not rely solely upon old arguments of the self-effacing craftsman versus the egotistical artist when confronting the New Typography; through their historical studies of typography they sharpened their arguments against typographical trends in their own time.¹¹⁶ The best example of this is their discussions of the previous 'Modern' typographical movement begun by the design of the *romain du roi* at the end of the seventeenth century. As discussed in Chapter Two, this design process was the first known case of design by committee, and much abuse has been heaped upon it for this reason.¹¹⁷ If Morison found the report of the Jaugeon Commission “excogitating and codifying,” one can be fairly certain what he thought of Tschichold's proclamation that the ideal type could only come from a committee which included an engineer.¹¹⁸ Morison also more specifically linked eighteenth century Modern types and typography with the New

¹¹⁴ Warde, Beatrice. "The Design of Books." *The Crystal Goblet: Sixteen Essays on Typography*. Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1956. pp 31-46. 31.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹¹⁶ In *Modern Typography* Robin Kinross forwards the argument that in most typographical histories “Modernist typography is held to be an incursion of artists blundering into the quiet preserves of book-printing and there violating the wisdom of tradition and convention” (18). I obviously agree with him, but feel that the criticisms of the New Typography by Morison and his peers goes far deeper than just dismissing them as meddling artists and was far more pervasive than being strictly limited to the points where they explicitly identify the “Modernists.”

¹¹⁷ See Chapter 2, p. 79ff.

¹¹⁸ Morison, *The Typographic Book*. 42.

Typography: “The typographical result encouraged by the Bauhaus is the equivalent of that reached by Bodoni in his second, Jansenist, phase when all ornament was, for a theological principle or dogma, excluded.”¹¹⁹ With these connections, explicit and implicit, in mind, the many points where Morison, Updike and others comment negatively upon eighteenth and nineteenth century typography take on new light – not only are they criticizing past typographers, they are also commenting upon current. Thus when *The Fleuron* published Updike's translation of a French document which claimed to prove that Old Style types were more readable than Modern they did so for more than just historical reasons; they were also forwarding an argument about the claims that contemporary sans serif types were more readable.¹²⁰

There was another way the New Traditionalists sought to use typographical history to undermine the claims of the New Typography: by showing that the new practice was neither innovative nor a break with past traditions. Fundamental to the new movement was the principle that modern society placed new requirements upon the reader, and thus the printer and, in Jan Tschichold's opinion, “[T]he concepts of the New Typography, in use, allow us for the first time to meet the demands of our age for purity, clarity, fitness for purpose, and totality.”¹²¹ Obviously if one could undercut these claims to innovation, the position of Modernist typographers that their designs being the only ones fit for modern usage would be seriously weakened. The first volley in this line of attack was launched by a German, Albert Windisch, in *The Fleuron* VI (1928):

Those of our days who exert themselves in preaching the 'spirit of modern Positivism' as the only progressive movement, those who are of opinion that the spirit of 1927

¹¹⁹ *The Typographic Book 1450-1935*, 11.

¹²⁰ Updike, D.B. “A Translation of the Reports of Berlier and Sobry on Types of Gillé Fils.” *The Fleuron*. No. 6 (1928): 167-83. For further discussion of the politics of this report, see Chapter Two, pages 95-6.

¹²¹ *The New Typography*, 7.

may only be expressed in 'grotesque' or block-letters -- this section of our contemporaries is, we may well say, much more prejudiced by history than others, for its members go back to far older characters than the Gothic, in seeking models, viz. to the writing found on stones about 500 BC, characters that were held to be 'old-fashioned,' 'obsolete,' 2000 years ago. They ought perhaps to be more wary in contending, by means of such naïve arguments, with opponents whose intellects are differently, though none the less progressively, inclined.¹²²

Windisch mocks the Modernists for their lack of historical knowledge; instead of breaking with history, they are simply going back to an earlier stage. Although Windisch derides their Positivism, he is definitely of the belief that later developments in letter style (including those espoused by the New Traditionalists) are much superior to the earlier models to which the Modernists are, unknowingly, returning. D.B. Updike similarly dismisses the New Typography as the work of those who lack sufficient knowledge in book history; in another attempt to mollify Morison's worries about the Bauhaus' growing influence, Updike shows him a previous experiment in printing entirely in lower-case letters: "This volume, entitled *Typographie Economique*, was published in 1837 and so far as it had any influence on printing, then or later, is as dead as Queen Anne ... This supports the contention that many new and disturbing experiments, under the patronage of distinguished names, are merely survivals or revivals of ancient failures."¹²³ There is nothing for Morison to worry about; these experiments have all been tried before and they have all failed, and the knowledgeable typographer should just sit back and laugh at their folly.

But this was not Morison's way. As he pointed out when discussing Warde's strengths as a writer and speaker, he was more of the don.¹²⁴ Thus his response was to craft,

¹²² Windisch, Albert. "The Work of Rudolf Koch". *The Fleuron*. VI(1928): 1-36. 10

¹²³ Updike, Daniel Berkeley. *The Well-Made Book: Essays and Lectures*. William S. Peterson, Ed. New York: Mark Batty, 2002. 181

¹²⁴ See Morison to Updike, 15 September 1937. *Selected Correspondence*, 184

as part of his Lyell Lectures at Cambridge in 1956-57, a lengthy rebuttal to the Bauhaus' claims that the sans serif was somehow superior for modern usage. In the last section of his talks he elaborates upon Windisch's claims that sans serif types are far from innovative, and summarizes their development: "the sans serif which began c. 1820 as a by-product of a gentlemanly survey of the monuments of ancient Greece, next adopted by advertisers because it was a novelty, used by engineers and draughtsmen because it was easily thickened, finally progressed to acceptance as a norm by artists and intellectuals."¹²⁵ Every stage in this development represents a quality that makes the sans serif inappropriate for printing literature and/or undercuts the Modernists' claims of its fitness for the twentieth century. He situates the origin of the monoline (no thicks or thins) sans serif letter in ancient Greece, thereby making it a precursor, and not a successor, to the Roman letter. He attributes its re-entry into western culture to architects such as John Nash who required a suitable letterform for inscriptions on their Grecian-style buildings; he describes these men as a "Society of Dilettanti" whose choices were based upon "taste" and "feeling" -- the exact opposite of the utilitarian anonymity Modernist proponents attributed to the sans serif.¹²⁶ But sans serif did not truly come into being as a typeface until it was discovered by early nineteenth century advertisers, and as he pointed out elsewhere in his writings, "the types distinctive of the period 1810-50 represent the ugliest ever cut."¹²⁷ Despite this, they had their purpose, for these types were to be strictly used for advertising, which was a realm where Morison encouraged novelty in type design. Thus did the sans serif move from being an artistic, architectural letterform to being the preferred style for Capitalism which,

¹²⁵ *Politics and Script*, 335

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 327.

¹²⁷ *On Type Designs Past and Present*, 63.

given both Morison's and most Modernists' Socialist leanings, cannot be seen as a compliment. At the same time it became a part of industrialization, as it was the easiest to draw letter for those making technical drawings. Indeed, this connection is one of the attributes which recommended it to the Modernists who emphasized the role of the engineer in modern society – but fitness for blueprints and fitness for Shakespeare were two entirely different things to Morison. This connection with industrialization was authorized when the District Railway of London adopted sans serif as its default lettering in the 1860s.¹²⁸ Given that this discussion of sans serif comes at the end of a long discussion of how various authorities, mostly ecclesiastical, influenced letter forms, the importance of Morison's statement that sans serif was authorised by capitalists and industrialists should not be underestimated: “Its only authority is that of the most powerful of all forces of modern society: the 'mass-market.' This may be, indeed is, the antithesis of the imperial, papal, literary and artistic aspects of authority ... but it would seem that there is today no higher sanction.”¹²⁹ Thus, when the Bauhaus and their peers proclaimed that the only typeface suitable for modern expression was sans serif, they were simply aping the commercial sentiments of their times. Finally, when Morison refers to them as “artists and intellectuals” he is doing so within a tradition which considered both groups to be meddlers who sullied the craft of printing by failing to understand its traditions.¹³⁰

This is a subtle and damning critique, and it encapsulates most of the criticisms lodged by the New Traditionalists against the New Typography. Because it focuses on the style, and not the underlying design principles, of the Modernists, however, it does not fully

¹²⁸ *Politics and Script*, 330.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 336.

¹³⁰ See, for example, previous discussions of the *Romain du Roi*, Baskerville, Bodoni or Morris.

explain why the Modernist style, especially sans serif typefaces, was eventually rejected for the printing of literature: the insistence by both sides that the book be a transparent conduit of information between author and reader. Here again the career of Jan Tschichold sheds much light on the discussion, for he came to reject much of his earlier beliefs and moved towards traditional book design. For the books of literature he was designing he believed the traditional style was also the most functional because it best removed the presence for the printer from the reading process. And, thanks to the wide dissemination of books designed by him for publishers such as Penguin, his interpretation of the New Traditionalist style continues to be influential.

That Tschichold “converted” to more traditional typography is not surprising when one reads his Modernist manifestos and realizes he was just as strong an advocate for crystal goblet typography as was Warde; one of the reasons he advocated for the New Typography was he felt that it provided a less obtrusive interface between reader and information than did traditional typography: “The New Typography is distinguished from the old by the fact its first objective is to develop its visible form out of the functions of the text. It is essential to give pure and direct expression to the contents of whatever is printed.”¹³¹ This necessitated the removal of any presence of those involved with the physical production of the text: “The creator disappears completely behind his work. People of today regard the arrogant thrusting forward of the man before his work as aesthetically embarrassing.”¹³² Or, as he put it more succinctly in his second work, “Every

¹³¹ Tschichold, “The New Typography”, 66-7.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 12. Tschichold's statement was part of a general movement among the Modernists calling for a replacement of the individual artist with an anonymous craftsperson; see J.M. Richards, “The Condition of Architecture and the Principle of Anonymity.” *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*. J.L. Martin, Ben Nicholson and N. Gabo, eds. London: Faber and Faber, 1937. pp 184-189.

effort of the compositor must be directed to transferring the words smoothly to the reader.”¹³³ The difference between him and Warde was that he felt that the New Typography was better suited for this because it was free from any traditional connotations and thus did not impart any unnecessary “feeling” to the text while she held that these very traditions allowed the reader to ignore the typography and that their absence was conspicuous. This difference, though, was soon to be resolved.

Like many others associated with the Modernist movement in Germany, Tschichold was forced to leave Germany when the Nazis rose to power. His communist leanings resulted in his being held in 'protective custody' for six weeks, and then, because he was not Jewish, he was allowed to emigrate.¹³⁴ Unlike Herbert Bayer and László Moholy-Nagy, Tschichold did not move to Britain; instead, he relocated his family to Switzerland where he had been offered a book designer position. This forced move forced him to re-think the typographical dogma he had been preaching for two reasons. On the purely pragmatic side, his employment was tenuous and he was largely commissioned to design books. The asymmetric design strategies he had been advocating while in Germany were not desired by his clients and he began to work more within the realm of traditional book design. And on the personal, reflective side, he began to associate Modernist typography with Fascism; in 1946, thinking back on his earlier career, he would write:

The Third Reich was second to none in pursuing technical 'progress' through its preparations for war, which were hypocritically concealed behind the propaganda for medieval forms of society and expression. Deception lay at its root, and that is why it could not abide the honest modernists who were its political opponents. Yet they themselves, without knowing it, stood very close to the mania for 'order' that ruled the Third Reich ... The New or Functional Typography is perfectly suited to advertising the products of industry ... But many typographical problems cannot be

¹³³ Tschichold, *Asymmetric Typography*, 46.

¹³⁴ Ruari McLean. *Jan Tschichold: A Life in Typography*. Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997. 10.

solved along these regimented lines without doing violence to the text.¹³⁵

Tschichold saw the modernists', including his younger self's, desire to remake the world according to new, inflexible rules as part of the same desire for strict order that enabled the Nazis' rise to power. As he was forced to work on different kinds of texts, including more traditional books, he realized that there was no single formula of design suitable for all types of texts, and begins to concur with Morison that more radical designs are well-suited for seizing the potential consumer's attention, but are a poor fit for more literary works.¹³⁶ The similarity to Morison may also have been due to his increased contact during this time with those he had previously labeled "New Traditionalist." In 1937 he gave an address to the Double Crown Club in London, a gathering of printer's and designers that arose out of the original Fleuron Society. In 1938 he also designed *The Penrose Annual*. These events, along with his ever-growing portfolio of traditionally designed books for Swiss publishers, made him known in British book design circles and a candidate for the job when Allen Lane went looking for a new designer for Penguin Books.

Lane founded Penguin Books in 1935 under the slogan of "Good Books Cheap," and his paperback books were tremendously successful: by 1945 Penguin had nearly 500 titles in print and its sister press, Pelican, had over 150.¹³⁷ This volume necessitated distributed production at presses across Britain, and Allen Lane realized that if the Penguin brand was to maintain its reputation for quality that it required someone to implement an overall typographic design. He asked Oliver Simon for a recommendation, and Simon suggested Tschichold. He moved to Britain in 1947 and spent the next two years re-defining

¹³⁵ *The Form of the Book*, xv-xvi.

¹³⁶ However reflexive Tschichold may be about the absolutism of his previous typographic rules, this did not stop him from instituting new rules and insisting on other's compliance to them, as will be seen in the following discussion of his work at Penguin.

¹³⁷ Doubleday, Richard B. *Jan Tschichold, Designer: the Penguin Years*. New Castle: Oak Knoll, 2006. 23.

the design of mass-produced books.

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing Penguin was that their books were produced by numerous printing firms, each of which had their own standards and rules. Tschichold's solution was to implement his "Penguin Compositional Rules," a set of guidelines to be followed by all firms engaged in the composition and printing of Penguin texts. If there were any worries that Tschichold might use this as an opportunity to return to the New Typography, his rules and the designs soon laid these to rest as he implemented strictly traditional designs [FIGURE 4.6]. Like Bruce Rogers, who pioneered the career of typographic designer, Tschichold saw those he was instructing as tools in the design and production process and not as collaborators. Reflecting back upon his time at Penguin he writes that the operators of the composing machines were quite amenable to being told what to do and to following his rules, but that the hand compositors stubbornly ignored them and were, in short, incompetent.¹³⁸ His assistant Erik Ellegaard Frederiksen notes that this resistance was due, at least in part, to the compositors feeling slighted that a foreigner was breaking all their typographical traditions, but also that Tschichold's designs were actually very traditional in that they all had historical precedents.¹³⁹ With an eye towards history Tschichold also diversified the typefaces used by Penguin. Prior to his arrival they were printed almost entirely in Times New Roman, but Tschichold expanded this selection to include other Monotype faces: Baskerville, Bembo, Garamond and Caslon. Just prior to starting at Penguin he wrote of the importance of Morison's work at Monotype: "The rebirth of the classic types brought with it a typographical revival the world over that is at

¹³⁸ Tschichold, Jan. "My Reform of Penguin Books." *Schweizer Graphische Mitteilungen*, No. 6, 1950. Reproduced in Doubleday, Ruari McLean, Transl, 141-143.

¹³⁹ Doubleday, 172.

MARIA: No.

BOYET: What then, do you see?

ROSALINE: Ay, our way to be gone.

BOYET: You are too hard for me.

Exeunt.

III. I

Enter Braggart and Boy.

Song.

BRAGGART: Warble child, make passionate my sense of hearing.

BOY: Concolinel.

BRAGGART: Sweet air, go tenderness of years: take this key, give enlargement to the swain, bring him festinately hither: I must employ him in a letter to my Love.

BOY: Will you win your love with a French brawl?

BRAGGART: How meanest thou, brawling in French?

BOY: No my complete master, but to jig off a tune at the tongue's end, canary to it with the feet, humour it with turning up your eye: sigh a note and sing a note, sometime through the throat: as if you swallow'd love with singing love, sometime through the nose as if you snuff'd up love by smelling love with your hat penthouse-like o'er the shop of your eyes, with your arms cross'd on your thinbelly doublet, like a rabbit on a spit, or your hands in your pocket, like a man after the old painting, and keep not too long in one tunc, but a snip and away: these are complements, these are humours, these betray nice wenches that would be betrayed without these, and make them men of note: do you note men that most are affected to these?

BRAGGART: How hast thou purchased this experience?

Figure 4.6 Jan Tschichold, Penguin, Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, 1951 (designed ca. 1948).

least as important as the cleaning-up process of the New Typography was for Germany.”¹⁴⁰ The New Typography introduced rationalism to the world of German black letter printing, but Morison's work at Monotype made better typefaces available around the world. As for his previous assertions that sans serif typefaces and asymmetric layouts were the only ones suited for modernity, he used Gill Sans sparingly for title pages and children books and produced only one asymmetric title page while at Penguin: *The Artist at Work*, a book dealing with art history.¹⁴¹

By 1949 Tschichold had designed over 500 books for Penguin, and this, combined with the depreciation in value of the English pound, led to his leaving Penguin and returning to Switzerland. Despite his short tenure, his influence on the design of books was, and continues to be, tremendous. The man who began his career challenging the tenets of traditional book design, and who, if indirectly, helped to create the field of graphic design as separate from book design, also realized the primary goal of the New Traditionalists: the combination of good design and mass production. P.M. Handover writes, “The emphasis was on detail: spacing of letters, leading, margins and so forth. Thus the mechanised printers of the sixpenny Penguins were instructed as precisely as the craftsmen of the ”Kelmscott Press.”¹⁴² Beatrice Warde praises his work in similar terms, but links him to other printers, those held in higher esteem by the New Traditionalists than William Morris – Cobden-Sanderson, the Elzevirs and Manutius: “It has taken less than sixty years for the excitement over the hand-printed Book Beautiful, in its costly limited edition, to spread and democratize all the way down to the Penguin Classics and the New Penguin Shakespeare,

¹⁴⁰ “Glaube und Wirklichkeit.” *Schweizer Graphische Mitteilungen*, June, 1946. Quoted Doubleday, 122.

¹⁴¹ See Doubleday, pp 105-109.

¹⁴² “British Book Design,” 172.

which only need a parchment binding to put them on the same shelf with the Aldine and Elzevir pocket editions.”¹⁴³

That Tschichold could be referred to in the same sentence as these historic printers comes as no surprise after one reads his post-conversion writings. Indeed, in his article “On Mass Producing the Classics” he links his Penguin volumes by association to both Manutius and the Elzevirs, and further includes the Didots.¹⁴⁴ But he had more in common with these men than simply the design of pocket editions – in the wake of his conversion he came to believe that there was more to design than simply making it functional; the printer/typographer had a moral duty to preserve and disseminate the writings of “great” men:

I find it consoling, in these days when civilization appears to be tottering, to think that the great tradition of European book-printing has been revived by a few faithful men and is now in our hands, to carry on and, even in the changed conditions of modern mass-production, to improve, if we go to our task with enough seriousness and sense of responsibility. Where could such qualities be more desirable than in the work of passing on the wisdom of the great poets and thinkers by means of books available to Everyman.¹⁴⁵

The one-time challenger of the humanist book-printing tradition becomes, through the tremendous distribution of his designs, its greatest champion.

¹⁴³ "Tradition and Progress in Printing." *The Crystal Goblet: Sixteen Essays on Typography*. Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1956. pp 129-136. 133

¹⁴⁴ Appeared in *Signature*, No.3, March 1947. reprinted Doubleday, 147-52.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 152.

Conclusion

The gestalt of the written word irrevocably ties the education and culture of every single human being to the past, whether he is conscious of it or not. That we have to thank the Renaissance for today's printing type -- indeed, that the very typefaces used today are often Renaissance faces -- is either unknown or of no consequence to most people. The average man accepts letters as common and given symbols of communication.¹

Jan Tschichold wrote these words in 1964 as he reflected upon a life working with type and the future of typographic practice. His days as a radical Modernist typographer were long behind him, and he now wrote as a venerated senior spokesperson for traditional book design. A few years before he had designed the typeface Sabon, yet another revival of Garamond, which was both created for the new technology of photo-setting and was the last new typeface produced in metal by both Monotype and Linotype. And, as is clear from the above quotation, he no longer believed that type design should attempt to reflect the “spirit” of an era; rather, type designers need to respect the long traditions of printing and European intellectual history, even if the potential readers do not. Thus he based his design of the most technologically complex typeface of its time, because of the varied printing technologies it was intended for, on another face over 400 years old.

Even more interesting than Tschichold's respect for tradition is his observation that most readers are not aware of the role tradition plays in type design and/or that it is of no consequence whether they are conscious of it or not. This seems at odds with his statement that “[t]he gestalt of the written word irrevocably ties the education and culture of every single human being to the past.” One would think that a connection so important should be central to any understanding of Western culture and literature, but instead it goes

¹ Tschichold, Jan. “The Importance of Tradition in Typography.” *The Form of the Book*. Point Roberts: Hartley & Marks, 1991. 23-32. 23.

completely unnoticed. Roger Chartier writes,

The space between text and object, which is precisely the space in which meaning is constructed, has too often been forgotten, not only by the traditional sort of literary history that thinks of the work as an abstract text whose typographic forms are without importance, but also by the “aesthetics of reception” that, in spite of its desire to historicize the readers’ experience, postulates a pure and unmediated relationship between the “signals” emitted by the text (which play with accepted literary conventions) and the “horizon of expectation” of the public to which those signals are addressed.²

Readers, arguably even the most sophisticated ones – literary critics – ignore the materiality of the text and focus only on the content. This is true not only for the Formalist school of literary criticism, but also for later forms of criticism that include the activities of readers in the interpretive act. If this is so, why do readers, despite their long love affair with books as physical objects, ignore that physicality when reading?

In examining the writings of those involved with the production of books since that same Renaissance that provided the typeface models for Western culture, it is clear that the overriding concern is to eliminate, as much as possible, the physical presence of the book so that it does not detract from the reader’s experience of the text:

What makes printing good is neither the ritualism of handicraft nor the methodism of the machine, but the accordance of the design with the wishes of the reader who wants to get down to the business of reading. Good printing is readable printing, and no print is readable that is not simple, direct, plain, and inclining towards austerity. Printing is not a thing in itself like a picture, admitting the maximum of personal expression, but part of a tool called a book; a bridge between writer and reader. It should contain nothing to impede that traffic. Graciousness, friendliness, even dignity should be there, but always unobtrusively. Self-effacement is the etiquette of the good printer.³

The language here is unmistakable. Good printing is unobtrusive and good printers are self-

² Chartier, Roger. *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Lydia G. Cochrane, Transl. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994. 10.

³ Holbrook Jackson. Quoted in Updike, “The Essentials of a Well-Made Book.” *The Well Made Book*. 39-54.

effacing. And this language has been a consistent part of the discourse of book production since Petrarch first described his ideal script as “*clara et castigata*.” Thanks to his influence and that of other early Humanists, the first printed versions of Humanist texts were produced in a similar format with a typeface based upon their book script. Thus, from its very beginnings, the printed book was designed to provide as clear a channel as possible between author and reader. At every stage of the development of book typography since, those designs which were most convincingly able to argue that they provided this unimpeded communication became part of the tradition of “good” printing. As time goes on, this tradition becomes important in itself and adherence to it becomes one of the first steps in establishing oneself as a printer of distinction. Closely connected to this is the idea of the scholar-printer. Initially this phrase referred to a printer, Aldus Manutius being the paradigm, who was also a scholar and who took an active role in the selection and editing of material for his press. But as the separation between publisher and printer emerged and the first texts written about printing began to appear, the phrase increasingly came to refer to a printer who was knowledgeable about the history of his craft and who used this knowledge to make books that respected the best historical models: the printer-scholar. These same printer-scholars were often the ones who wrote about printing, thus ensuring that traditional practices were passed on to the next generation.

If the ideal printer is one who is knowledgeable about the history of the craft and self-effacing (the two being near synonymous), it is not difficult to ascertain what would result in a printer being identified as 'bad': a printer who puts any other concern besides crafting transparent interfaces at the top of his list. Primary among the offenders are those more concerned with making money than fine books, those who come from outside the

craft and are unaware of its traditions and those more concerned with advancing their own artistic reputations than with communicating the author's thoughts to the reader. These are not mutually exclusive; for example, part of the reason an artist or a business man might put self-interest ahead of the perceived needs of the reader is an unawareness of printing history.

Once one is aware of this discourse of 'good' and 'bad' printing, it is easy to identify how it has shaped writing about the history of typography. The business practices, extensive Gothic-style publications and lack of scholasticism of Nicolas Jenson were overlooked for much of typographical history because his Roman typefaces were held up as the exemplars of the Humanist era. Similarly, Aldus Manutius has been heralded as the proto-typical scholar-printer while his business concerns remained un-commented on, or were considered to be the untoward influences of his business partners. Seventeenth century European printers are generally considered sub-standard, for it was a time of censorship, of piracy and, at least in the Low Countries, of business prosperity. The development of the *Romain du Roi* typeface at the end of the seventeenth century and the subsequent rise of Modern typefaces is held up as the exemplar of those from outside the craft meddling where they do not belong. Fournier writes his treatise on printing and becomes one of the first of the new breed of printer-scholars, but the fact that sections of it are self-aggrandizing attempts to advance his business interests goes largely unnoted by later commentators (who may have had similar motivations). The technical advances of the nineteenth century and the subsequent explosion of printed material leads to a criticism of the era as one dominated by financial and not typographical concerns. The first response is from William Morris; the Fine Press Movement is heralded for its return to craftsmanship,

but attacked because it goes back to pre-Humanist book traditions and thus forsakes 'readability' (even though Morris was clearly concerned with it). In the twentieth century the New Traditionalists aim to reconcile machine-production and traditional typographic practices and a new generation of printer-scholars preaches the gospel of tradition on behalf of the corporations trying to sell the new machines and new/old typefaces. The Bauhaus and other Modernist schools try to upset typographic history and re-make it for a new era, but they too are chastised as outsiders, and all they accomplish is facilitating the final split between ephemera and advertising design (henceforth called Graphic Design) and book typography.

This brief summary of the arguments of the preceding chapters shows the resiliency of traditional book design and the continued centrality of the 'crystal goblet' school of printing over the first 500 years of printing. Although this study ends with the end of the metal type era, there has been little change in this mentality as printers switched first to photo-setting and then to digital type-setting. Both of these technologies made the design of typefaces much easier, and cheaper, as they no longer needed to be made from metal. As a result, there has been a vast proliferation in typefaces available to the printer. Use of the new designs has been largely limited to graphic design and advertising, however, while books continue to be set in the same, or similar, typefaces as they have been since the Renaissance. Even a cursory examination of contemporary book design handbooks reveals that the traditionalism of Morison and Tschichold is under no threat. Robert Bringhurst is a skilled typographer, essayist and poet, and his *Elements of Typographic Style*, first published in 1992, is now in its third edition. It is a beautifully written book and it displays both Bringhurst's lyricism and his deep respect for multi-culturalism. It also shows his deep

commitment to typographical traditions and to the idea of transparency. In the Foreword, Bringhurst invites the reader to break his rules at any time, but cautions against it because of the risks of going against tradition.⁴ The first chapter opens with a photo-enlargement of Nicolas Jenson's type and Bringhurst's first principle, "Typography exists to honor content":

In a world rife with unsolicited messages, typography must often draw attention to itself before it will be read. Yet in order to be read, it must relinquish the attention it has drawn. Typography with anything to say therefore aspires to a kind of statuesque transparency.⁵

By beginning with a "First Principle," Bringhurst aligns himself with the Morison essay of the same title which stressed the new for traditionalism in typography, and his metaphor strongly invokes Warde's "Crystal Goblet." The rest of the book continues in the same vein – providing extremely lucid instructions for designing typography that complies with traditional practices.

An even more recent work, Ari Rafaeli's *Book Typography* (2005), advertises its allegiance to traditional book design on its back cover:

This book ... considers how maximum-quality typography of books or of any text intended for continuous reading, consonant with traditional standards, can be achieved by users of present-day technology ... The famous Monotype and Linotype book faces are surveyed in their historical contexts with remarks on the qualities of current digital versions of them.⁶

This is not a book for the graphic designer creating logos and advertisements – it is for the aspiring book designer who wishes to use a computer to create a book worthy of sitting on the shelves with the great works of the printing-press era. The front cover visually connects

⁴ Chappell, Warren and Robert Bringhurst. *A Short History of the Printed Word*. 2nd Ed. Vancouver: Hartley and Marks, 1999. 9-11.

⁵ Rafael, Ari. *Book Typography*. New Castle: Oak Knoll, 2005. 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, back cover.

Rafaeli's book to tradition; it is a stack of previous treatises on printing, including works by Morison, Gill, Simon, Meynell and Bringhurst. The book opens with an epigraph from Ruari McLean's 1980 *The Thames and Hudson Manual of Typography*:

As a typographer, you are the servant of the author – colleague, if you like – but your job is to help the author to reach his public. You are not making works of art of your own; you are transmitting, with as much skill, grace and efficiency as may be required, the words of someone else.⁷

This is followed by another epigraph that also stresses the need for typography, and the printer, to be self-effacing. On the opposite page the second paragraph of the preface includes a quotation from Stanley Morison's "First Principles" on the importance of tradition. This is a book firmly grounded in the teachings of previous generations, and nowhere is this clearer than when he critiques Bringhurst's work. He sees some value in the work but overall seems to think negatively of it because it contains too much of Bringhurst's personality and politics (or, as he refers to it on page 60 – "dogmatism"). In particular, he is put off by Bringhurst's insistence on advancing multiculturalism through the use of types that support multiple orthographies and by his insistence on including accent characters wherever possible; as he sarcastically writes, "Perhaps it is better to set one's Minion in Pinyan."⁸ In this and other ways Rafaeli finds Bringhurst's typographic style distracting, and as a final dismissal, invokes the words of the master: "It is well to recall Stanley Morison's dictum: 'No reader wishes to be made conscious at every other page of some typographical dexterity, however well intended.'⁹ Not only must printing be self-effacing – so must be printing manuals.

Given this long and continued tradition of printers and printing trying to hide their

⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

very materiality, it is no surprise that most readers, even critical ones, tend to ignore the physicality of the texts they are reading: the books themselves teach the reader to ignore the book and view the author as a transcendent source of wisdom. This is not to say that readers do not appreciate the physical nature of the book – when one picks up a well-printed and well-bound book there is (at least for many readers) a sense of pleasure, of knowing that one holds something of value. Thanks to the influence of typographers such as Tschichold, it does not need to be a boutique, hand-press book; my personal paperback copy of Neal Stephenson's *Cryptonomicon* feels just right, even though it stretches to almost 1000 pages and is beginning to show the wear of its multiple readings (although part of the personal appeal of this particular book is undoubtedly the attachment that I feel for the content).

There has also been a resurgence in attention being paid to things typographical, with many books now including a colophon or other note describing the typeface used. The success of Gary Hustwit's documentary *Helvetica* (2007) is further evidence of growing interest in the physical underpinnings of the book. But this film also shows the viewer how ubiquitous the discourse of neutrality and transparency is within typographic practice – the very purpose of the movie is to tell the story of a typeface that people in Western society are exposed to every day but never notice.

Part of the reason for this renewed interest in the physicality of books is that the book is being challenged by the screen. Seemingly many of the existing rules that have governed typography (and reading) should no longer apply: there are no distinct ‘pages;’ there is no physical presence besides the interface device; typeface and size can be changed at the designer’s (and, in many cases, the readers’) whim. And, without a doubt, there is a virtual riot of design on the internet. But there is also a move to develop standards for

electronic publication, and the language used in these documents often differs little in substance from writing about printing. The most well-known spokesperson for this Newest Traditionalism is Jakob Nielsen, who, according to his biography, has been named one of the ten most influential people on the Internet.¹⁰ The back cover of his *Designing Web Usability* reads, in large sans-serif letters, “The Practice of Simplicity” and much of what it contains is merely a re-working of the ideas of Morison and Tschichold to suit the new media: “There are two basic approaches to design: the artistic ideal of expressing yourself and the engineering ideal of solving a problem for a customer.”¹¹ The vocabulary has changed and he speaks in terms of customers instead of readers, but the basic tenet is still the same: they want the information and do not want to be bothered with interface. As a result the interface needs to be as unobtrusive as possible. One of the means of achieving this is to maintain traditions, whether they be old ones (black text on a white screen) or emerging ones (the use of blue for hyperlinks).¹² His approach has not met with universal approval, especially from those who wish to take advantage of the multimedia capabilities of the internet, but it is telling that the first authoritative voice to emerge about internet design bears significant resemblance to print-based typographic traditions.¹³ For over 600 years readers have been taught to ignore the media in favour of the content and typographers have been taught to hide behind the text; to expect them both to change now because the words are no longer on paper is, perhaps, to expect the impossible.

¹⁰ Jakob Nielsen. *Designing Web Usability*. Indiana: New Rivers, 2000. Bookjacket.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹² *Ibid.*, 64.

¹³ For examples, and explanation, of the resistance to Nielsen’s opinions, see George Olsen, “The Backlash against Jakob Nielsen and What it Teaches Us.” *Usability News*. 31 July 2002. Accessed 26 March 2009 <http://www.usabilitynews.com/news/article603.asp>

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