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TALLY of TYPES

BY

STANLEY MORISON

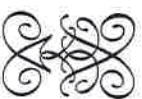
WITH ADDITIONS

BY SEVERAL HANDS

AND WITH A NEW

INTRODUCTION BY

MIKE PARKER



DAVID R. GODINE, PUBLISHER  
BOSTON

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# THE ROMAN AND ITALIC OF JOHN BASKERVILLE

ORIGINALLY USED FOR THE  
WORKS OF VIRGIL, BIRMINGHAM 1757

FIRST RECUT BY THE  
MONOTYPE CORPORATION IN 1923



The type now before the reader reproduces the first appearance in print of the style of native letter common among contemporary English writing masters such as George Shelley, the famous master of writing at the Blue Coat School. John Baskerville of Birmingham had himself been one of these professional writing masters. Having later made a fortune in the novel trade of Japaning, he reverted to his earlier interest in letters, and in 1750 began to design a type. His first printed book, a quarto Virgil published in 1757, had a great ovation abroad but a somewhat divided reception at home. Nevertheless, the *succès d'estime* which his types enjoyed over the next six years (culminating in the folio Bible printed at Cambridge in 1763) encouraged other founders to imitate them. In 1764 Isaac Moore produced for Fry's typefoundry a series which closely followed Baskerville's model. Flattery without plagiarism came from the leading continental type designers, Fournier, Didot and Bodoni. In 1779 Baskerville's types and equipment were sold by his widow to Beaumarchais, but English printers could still, if they wished, buy type of truly native design from his imitators at home. The opportunity was ignored by

the majority, who preferred the types of Caslon. Dr Edmund Fry noticed to his regret that his 'improved' versions of Baskerville's type 'did not meet with the encouraging approbation of the Printers' and by 1780 was offering types which followed the shape of Caslon's with such accuracy that they could 'not be distinguished from those of that celebrated founder'. Until the end of the eighteenth century printers and public alike remained satisfied with types cut by Caslon or his imitators.

The first decade of the nineteenth century saw a revolutionary change in typographical taste. Among the *literati* and elsewhere a liking had grown for 'modern' types after the manner of Didot and Bodoni. The few English books produced at the Parma press may have turned the scales. In 1799 *The Times* changed from 'old face' to 'modern', the 'new and beautiful Type being the product of Mrs Caslon's Foundry'. Nine years later\* not one of the once admired founts of the originator of the foundry was to be found in the Caslon specimen book. To his disgust Dr Fry saw both his series of 'Baskerville' and 'Caslon' carried to the melting pot.

And when the pendulum began to swing it was Caslon's 'old' face and not Baskerville's that was the first to return to favour. The reason is simple. The Caslon types had enjoyed continuous popularity in Britain from 1734 till past the turn of the century. They had found their way into many printing houses, and though founders may have melted down great quantities of the type, printers did not liquidate their entire stocks. As punches of both the original design and of the numerous imitations were still preserved, there was no difficulty in producing a supply equal to any revival in demand. Caslon's types were displayed again on the title-pages of several books published by Pickering in 1840. Whether the inspiration came from his printer,

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Baskerville's name mirrors and collects in the nineteenth using for fine work ville'. In Britain not agree on the a lecture before Baskerville's type had', but William interesting and first in 1893. By contrast, and fairly magic name in the design was considered Chiswick Press, it used it and boon

But Baskerville down. Birmingham! more effective book quarry, Samuel Taylor his life and work second exhumation wider public. A of printing press Baskerville was years later, a Baskerville at Cambridge University, a Baskerville cation, *A Handlist* Straus in 1905 :



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Whittingham, or from the joint intelligence of the Pickering-Whittingham alliance is not clear. But it may be asserted that the appearance of Herbert's *Temple* in 1844 and *Lady Willoughby's Diary* published by Longman in the same year marks the beginning of Caslon's return to favour.

Baskerville's memory was kept green by numerous admirers and collectors, but only in France (and there until late in the nineteenth century) did printers continue to boast of using for fine work types cut 'after the manner of Baskerville'. In Britain however the typographical experts could not agree on the merits of his type. Talbot Baines Reed, in a lecture before the Society of Arts in 1890, declared that Baskerville's type was 'one of the most beautiful we have had', but William Morris and Emery Walker found it 'uninteresting and poor' when writing their essay on printing in 1893. By contrast, they found Caslon's type 'clear and neat, and fairly well designed'. Caslon again became the magic name in the better class of English typography. His design was constantly to be seen in books printed at the Chiswick Press, and by the leading Scottish houses. Shaw used it and boomed it.

But Baskerville, in more senses than one, would not lie down. Birmingham's pride in his achievements became more effective between 1861 and 1876 when a local antiquary, Samuel Timmins, avidly collected information about his life and work. In the *fin de siècle* atmosphere of 1893, the second exhumation of his body attracted the interest of a wider public. At Cleveland, Ohio, where the construction of printing presses has a regional importance, a paper on Baskerville was read to the Rowfant Club in 1899. Two years later, a Baskerville Club was founded by enthusiasts at Cambridge University. A copy of this Club's first publication, *A Handlist of Baskerville's Books*, was given to Ralph Straus in 1905 and was incorporated with additions into

his memoir of John Baskerville, printed at Cambridge in 1907 for Messrs Chatto and Windus. American interest in the Birmingham printer was stimulated anew by Josiah Benton's paper to the Boston Society of Printers in 1914, handsomely printed in the same year by D. B. Updike at the Merrymount Press.

Between 1910 and 1917, the types cut in imitation of Baskerville's for Fry's foundry were to be found in the specimen books of English and American typefounders. Messrs Stephenson, Blake and Company, into whose possession the punches had come after their absorption of the firm of Sir Charles Reed and Sons in 1905, took pride in issuing a notice in April 1910 offering the roman design, adapted to the lining system and paired to a so-called Georgian italic. The Fryroman was shown again, without cropped ascenders or descenders, in the supplementary catalogue issued in 1917 by the American Type Founders Company. From this source, Frederic Warde obtained a fount for the Princeton University Press, where he was appointed printing manager late in 1921. In the same year, Bruce Rogers made use of a fount of authentic Baskerville type at the Harvard University Press. During his time in Cambridge as typographical adviser, he had identified some type from the Fonderie Bertrand as bearing the true Baskerville design and as being mostly cast from original matrices, but being unable to transact business with France during the war he had to wait until his move to Cambridge, Massachusetts, before ordering a fount of the type from Paris. It remained for the Monotype recutting of Baskerville in 1923 to bring the design for the first time into popular use. By now, Bembo and Baskerville have so decreased the use of 'old face' that it is possible that Caslon, after so long an innings, will become obsolete. Baskerville cannot be said to be more picturesque than Caslon, but its propor-

tions are better, roman and italic of this page), mon That the need confirmed by the simile was public companies in Arrivals. Yet the appearance of the seventeen sizes of the proportions unusual degree fi were not followe as a model for a Baskerville in his folio Bible. The this model was t any of the other between 1925 and recutting was the the Linotype vers had the advantage of type cast mostl the size he cast or It is not so ea italic. There is n design but it is character. The c and combine well lower case is a fr Fry's italics are a But it is not to b design as a whole of Birmingham.



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tions are better, the face is clearer and the whole design,  
roman and italic (upon which see the paragraph at the foot  
of this page), more efficient for present-day work.

That the need for a round, open type was widely felt is  
confirmed by the fact that, when the Corporation's fac-  
simile was publicized, foundries and composing-machine  
companies in America and Germany followed with similar  
revivals. Yet there is to be noted a great disparity in the  
appearance of these revivals. When John Baskerville cut his  
seventeen sizes of type for text, titling and display, he varied  
the proportions and even the pattern of his letters to an  
unusual degree from one size to the next. These variations  
were not followed in the Monotype recutting, which took  
as a model for all sizes the great primer design used by  
Baskerville in his finest books, the quarto classics and the  
folio Bible. The Monotype series judiciously produced on  
this model was to prove of greater utility to the trade than  
any of the other types named after Baskerville, introduced  
between 1925 and 1929. Of these, the Stempel Foundry's  
recutting was the more faithful in the smaller sizes, whilst  
the Linotype version, launched in 1929 with a 14-point size,  
had the advantage of being directly adapted from a fount  
of type cast mostly from true Baskerville matrices struck for  
the size he cast on English body.

It is not so easy to be enthusiastic about Baskerville's  
italic. There is neatness, modesty and consistency in the  
design but it is lacking in nobility, picturesqueness and  
character. The capitals of the italic are regular in slope  
and combine well—no mean advantage over Caslon's. The  
lower case is a fraction too narrow to permit of elegance.  
Fry's italics are a decided improvement upon Baskerville's.  
But it is not to be denied that, all deficiencies apart, the  
design as a whole possesses a degree of efficiency well worthy  
of Birmingham.

THE Press acquired the Monotype series in 1924 and has employed it as a standard book type ever since. One of the earliest books in which it appeared was, appropriately, an edition of Milton's *Paradise Regained* printed for *The Fleuron* in that same year; and it was used in 1926 for the *Journals of T. J. Cobden-Sanderson*, issued in two volumes. The special pride and interest that Cambridge takes in Baskerville's design was recently rewarded by the great generosity of Monsieur Charles Peignot in presenting to the Press the original punches, acquired by his firm in 1936.

The prophecy may confidently be made that the neglect into which Baskerville's name was allowed to fall is at an end and that his design will retain its already established position as one of the half-dozen standard book and jobbing founts of the world.

THE second section of the book is devoted to the history of the Monotype process, and to the work of the Monotype Corporation. The book is a valuable contribution to the history of the book, and is a must for all those who are interested in the history of the book. The book is a must for all those who are interested in the history of the book. The book is a must for all those who are interested in the history of the book.