



ORNAMENTED  
TYPES

PROSPECTUS

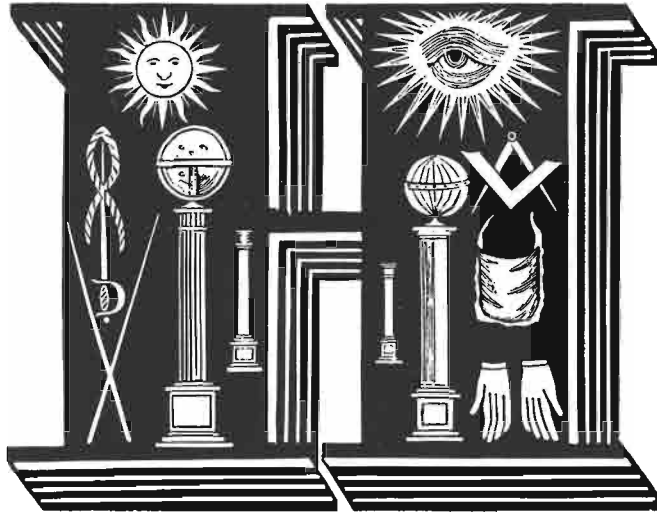


THE TWENTY-THREE decorated alphabets in the St Bride Printing Library in London which are the subject of this publication are the most richly ornamented letters ever to have been made for letterpress printing. The original hand-engraved wood blocks from which they have been printed form one of the finest collections of typographical material to have survived from the early nineteenth century.

This survival has been due largely to a series of fortunate accidents. The alphabets came to light at the sale of the Caslon foundry in 1936 when they were purchased by the Monotype Corporation, together with a large quantity of typefounders' punches. At that time their history was unknown: they were loosely described as 'Victorian' and were regarded as curiosities. They survived the Second World War in a store in central London, where they were at one time believed to have been destroyed, and were transferred for a time to the University Press at Oxford, and from there to the St Bride Printing Library, where they joined an important existing collection of typefounding material.

They were first described in print by James Mosley, Librarian of the St Bride Printing Library, in the *Journal of the Printing Historical Society* No. 2 (1966) and in *Motif* 13 for 1967. He identified them as typefounders' patterns, each letter engraved on a piece of end-grain boxwood. From them the typefounder would make reproductions in typemetal by a process known as 'dabbing'. The reproduction, or matrix, was 'dabbed' in its turn and the resulting metal casts were sold by the letter to printers for use on handbills and posters.

This mode of producing big decorations and ornamental letters for printers belonged to the later eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth. Types produced by 'dabbing' were superseded by machine-cut types made entirely of wood. Wood types were cheaper,



lighter, and less vulnerable, but they were also less complex in design, and it was never possible to reproduce the delicate surface decoration of the letters 'dabbed' from engraved patterns such as these.

James Mosley, in his 1966 article, tentatively attributed them to the 1820s, and to the foundry of the little-known London typefounder L. J. Pouchée. He recognized that, whatever their origin, they were a unique collection and without parallel in the exuberance and inventiveness of their designs. After the wood blocks were transferred to the St Bride Printing Library, he invited Ian Mortimer to take experimental proofs using one of the Library's own nineteenth-century Albion hand presses.

The immediate aim was to provide the Library with a complete set of archive proofs for study. As the letters were made for reproduction by 'dabbing' and not for printing, only the engraved face of each one had been carefully prepared. The blocks of wood bearing the engraving varied alarmingly in height, and their sides and bases were often uneven. Additionally, they showed signs of their age: some letters had warped and shrunk, causing concavities and twisting of the printing surface, and a few of the larger ones were partly split. One of the purposes of the proofing was to test the feasibility of setting up and printing a full alphabet together on one sheet, given these extreme variations in the individual blocks.

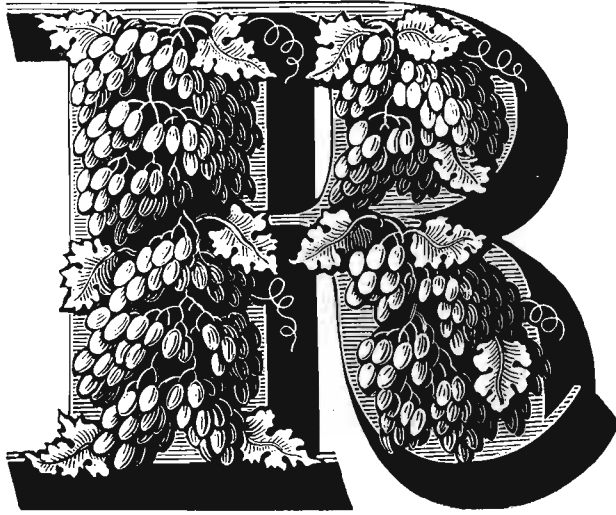


After careful preparation for each letter over the next few months, proofs of all the alphabets were obtained for the Library. These were probably the first complete set of proofs ever to have been made, and they revealed that, however extreme the distortion of the blocks, the engraved surface of the letters was sharp and fresh—being patterns, they were not worn by frequent printing—and was capable of yielding crisp impressions which did justice to the brilliance of the designs.

These results were sufficiently encouraging to warrant the printing of a small limited edition directly from the wood. The alphabets were taken two at a time to Ian Mortimer's Press, I. M. Imprint, and over the next two and a half years they were printed on iron hand presses identical to those in use at the St Bride Printing Library.

The printing of the edition was almost complete when, in 1988, the typefounder's specimen book came to light which confirmed James

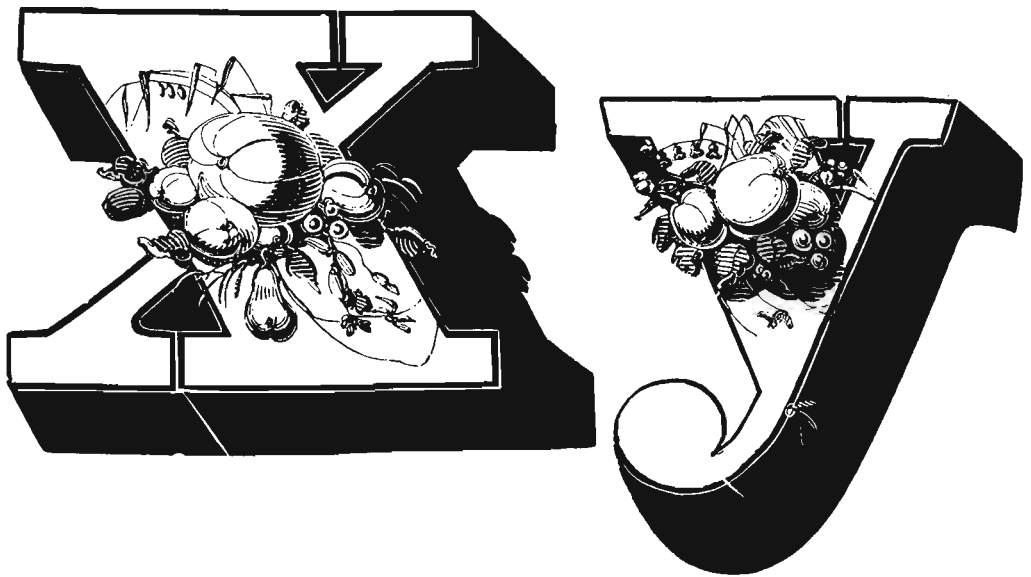




Mosley's earlier attribution: *Specimens of stereotype casting from the foundry of L. I. Pouchée*. This magnificent specimen showed each of the alphabets in the collection at the St Bride Printing Library, proving that they were indeed the patterns from Pouchée's foundry, and revealed Pouchée himself as a major manufacturer of pictorial stock-blocks and printers' ornaments.

Louis John Pouchée was active as a typefounder from about 1811 to 1830, when he may have been forced out of business by the other typefounders, whose prices he undercut. The patterns for his ornamented alphabets were acquired by Caslon, presumably at the sale of his stock in 1830, and they re-appeared at the sale of the Caslon foundry in 1936.

Pouchée's influence may be seen in copies of some of his alphabets which appear in specimens issued by Wood & Sharwoods towards the middle of the nineteenth century. Some of these were reproduced by Nicolette Gray in her *Nineteenth century ornamented types and title pages* (1938). Another alphabet of wood pattern letters, which was discovered over thirty years ago in a shop in the part of London formerly occupied by the typefounders, closely resembles his fruit-embellished 17-line, but with the addition of a complete lower case, a development not seen in Pouchée's designs. This alphabet is not known in any typefounder's specimen. It is now in the USA and was loaned by its owner



for inclusion in the edition. It is printed from the wood as the twenty-fourth alphabet. The twenty-fifth and final alphabet is printed directly from pattern letters loaned by the typefounders Stephenson, Blake & Co. These letters of extraordinary design are not, like the others, engraved on wood but hand cut in brass, and date probably from the 1830s. Other than the specimens printed in this edition, no ornamented alphabets from this period are known to have survived.

The sheets of the alphabets are published together with a separate Introduction by James Mosley, who gives a full account of their history, purpose, and stylistic origins. The text is illustrated with comparative material drawn largely from typefounders' specimens in the St Bride Printing Library, many of which have not previously been reproduced. All the illustrations are printed actual size. There are five appendices including unpublished source material on Pouchée, with reproductions printed from line-blocks of eight further ornamented alphabets shown in his *Specimens of stereotype casting* which are not thought to survive in the original wood.

The text has been set by hand in 'Scotch Roman' (Monotype series 137). This type is based on the modern face believed to have been cut by Richard Austin for the Miller foundry of Edinburgh in about 1812. The display types used are Fry's Canon and the 'Egyptian' of William Caslon IV.



# ABCDEFGHI

Fry's *French Canon No. 2*, a semi-fat face of about 1806, was recast by Stephenson, Blake & Co. for the Kynoch and Curwen Presses in 1930. It is printed in this edition from type acquired from the Curwen Press when it closed in 1984.

# ABCDEFGHIJKLMNO PQ

The 'Egyptian' of William Caslon IV is the first sanserif type. It was shown in 1816, and is therefore contemporary with Pouchée's type-founding activities. It is used in this edition as an austere contrast to the extravagance of his ornamented types. Caslon's 'Egyptian' was specially cast for this edition by Don Turner at the Oxford University Press from the original matrices generously loaned by Stephenson, Blake & Co. It was the last complete fount to be cast at the Oxford University Press foundry before its closure in 1987.



## ORNAMENTED TYPES

The publication is in two parts, both printed on the same special making of 175gsm acid-free white Zerkall mould-made paper, page and sheet size 21 inches x 15 inches (530 mm. x 380 mm.). The two parts are boxed and bound as a uniform set.

### THE SPECIMENS

The 25 alphabets (of which 23 are from the St Bride Printing Library) are displayed on 46 sheets: 14 alphabets are shown complete on single sheets and 11 alphabets occupy between two and five sheets each. The specimens are accompanied by a title-page, a two-sheet printer's note, a colophon sheet with production details and set number, and a two-sheet visual index which identifies each alphabet according to the recently discovered copy of Pouchée's *Specimens of stereotype casting* and gives a brief résumé of the state and the completeness of each. The sheets are presented unbound in a Solander box covered in black library buckram with a printed label.

### THE INTRODUCTION

A bound folio book of 48 pages, with 51 full-size illustrations and five Appendices as follows:

- I List and concordance of Louis John Pouchée's ornamented types.
- II Reproduction from *Specimens of stereotype casting* of eight other alphabets from Pouchée's foundry which are not known to have survived in the original wood.
- III Pouchée's 'Address to the Printers' reprinted from his 1819 specimen book in the St Bride Printing Library.
- IV List of type specimens from the foundry of Louis John Pouchée.
- V Ornamented types from the foundry of Wood & Sharwoods.

The Introduction is bound in black library buckram with a matching slip-case and a printed label.

The edition is published by I. M. Imprint in association with the St Bride Printing Library. There are 200 numbered sets for sale and 10 *hors commerce*. There will be no further edition of Pouchée's alphabets printed from the original wood for fifty years.

Orders and enquiries to  
I. M. Imprint, 219a Victoria Park Road, London E9 7HD  
Telephone: 081-986 4201