

**SPOTTING THE PRINTER THROUGH HIS TYPE:
THE CASE OF JOSEPH BENNET**

MOST BIBLIOGRAPHERS FACED WITH THE PROBLEM of attributing an unsigned seventeenth-century book to its printer will turn instinctively to woodcuts and type-ornaments, and be somewhat at a loss when these are scanty or undistinctive. Type faces, it is believed, were too widely shared among printers, and especially among English printers with their notorious reliance on Dutch type-founders, to permit more than the most tentative of attributions. The present discussion sets out to show that this is not necessarily the case, and need not be the case at all if the investigator is alert to the possibility that even common types may be encountered in uncommon combinations.

In the printing of the Restoration comedy *The Debauchee*, an anonymous reworking, sometimes attributed to Aphra Behn, of Brome's *A Mad Couple Well Matched*, two type faces were used, an english roman and an english italic, which in combination would appear to be characteristic of the work of the printer Joseph Bennet.¹ Indeed, the italic face may well have been unique to him. Of a sample of 247 signed titles of the period 1670-90,² representing the work of 41 printers excluding Bennet, fewer were found to use the roman face, which incorporates a particular design of the letter U in upper case, than were found using faces incorporating other designs. None was found to employ the italic face. By contrast, in the process of my making this search, the following titles came to light, all of which contain both the roman and the italic designs in english size and all of which have been signed by J.Bennet or J.B.:

Wing

- L1275 Sir Roger L'Estrange, *L'Estrange's Narrative of the Plot*. By J.B. for Hen. Brome, 1680.
- D2700 Thomas D'Urfey, *The Banditti*. By J.B. for R. Bentley and J. Hindmarsh, 1686.
- F544 *Fatal Prudence, or Democrates*. By J. Bennet for R. Bentley and M. Magnes, 1679.
- L1203A Sir Roger L'Estrange, *A Brief History of the Times*. By J. Bennet for Charles Brome, 1687.
- L2305 *The Life of Michael Adrian de Ruyter*. By J.B. for Dorman Newman, 1678.
- M95 [W.M.], *The Huntington Divertissement*. J. Bennet, 1678.

There are four basic roman capital U designs to be found in English publications of the seventeenth century. That which may be regarded as the stock from

which the others sprang consists of a bowl with double serifs capping either extremity of the stroke. It is to be found in sixteenth-century publications where it sometimes represents V according to the old decorative convention which had largely fallen into disuse by the Restoration, although it does seem to have survived as a remedy for depleted cases. (By the same convention initial U was normally represented by V.) The design continued in use throughout the seventeenth century, by then representing U, and is the standard form today. However, it should be noted that prior to the eighteenth century it occurred less often than other designs.

The other designs, whose use appears to have been limited to the latter half of the seventeenth century, were originally lower case forms. The first is a double-serif, single-stroke design with a stem added on the right-hand side. The second is this last design with the serifs reduced to singles running to the left. The serifs are of equal length, most often of slab- and less often of single-bracketed design. In the third, the serif on the stem is elongated and usually the bowl is broader to accommodate it.

Table of Designs

U1 (Double Serif)	U2 (Double Serif and Stem)
U	U
U3 (Single Serif and Stem)	U4 (Single Serif, Stem and Elongated Serif on Stem)
U	U

A sample of 312 drama publications of the period 1642 to 1721, but concentrated in the years 1660 to 1690, produced the following distribution of capital U designs:

U1	23	U2, U3	40
U1, U2	18	U2, U3, U4	9
U1, U2, U3	15	U2, U4	7
U1, U2, U3, U4	1	U3	53
U1, U2, U4	1	U3, U4	20
U1, U3, U4	2	U4	21
U1, U4	6		<u>310</u>
U1, U3	28	V	2
U2	66		<u>312</u>

U1 was found in 94 publications
 U2 was found in 150 publications
 U3 was found in 169 publications
 U4 was found in 67 publications
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The 67 instances of U4 represent 13.9% of all instances of the employment of capital U designs.

This survey took in all instances of roman capital U, in titles and headlines, for example, as well as in the body of the text. However, my more particular interest, initially stimulated by the capital U in the body of the text of *The Debauchee*, has been in U4 in english and pica sizes. Therefore, another sample of publications was taken from the pre-1700 items in the Augustan Reprint Society facsimile series with the aim of determining the possible limits of the employment of type of this design and size. In the previous sample, U4 was found to occur as early as 1642 and as late as 1700 but the highest incidence of the design, in its various recuttings, was in the period 1667 to 1682, with a much-reduced but apparently stable usage thereafter. The survey now undertaken was of the incidence of the specific form of the design found in *The Debauchee*.

Within the Augustan Reprint sample, U1 was found to occur most widely (1635-1698). U2 was found to occur over 40 years (1659-1698) while the use of U3 spanned 55 years (1646-1700). The U4 found in *The Debauchee*, however, was not found in any item printed outside the period 1662-1687, a mere 26 years. Returning to the previous sample of dramatic works, I found that the *Debauchee* U4 certainly occurs in publications later than 1687. However, more significantly, the earlier sample did seem to bear out the impression given by the Augustan Reprint sample that the founts containing the particular form of U4 used in *The Debauchee* became available in England at the time of the Restoration. It is not possible to identify the earliest instance of the use of this fount within the dramatic works sample, a more exacting study of the type face being necessary before this can be done. All that can be said at this point is that U4 does appear to have been the least commonly used of capital U designs and that one particular form of U4 was used most intensively during the 1670s.

This form of U4 is to be found in the work of at least five printers of this period and its presence takes us only a little way towards the identification of the printer of an unsigned work. However, in *The Debauchee*, there also occurs an english italic of curious design which is only to be found, as far as I am able to tell, in publications issuing from the printing house of Joseph Bennet and which does appear to have been employed by him as a complementary face to the english roman incorporating U4. Standard italic lettering in use in the seventeenth century was designed around an angle of 115°, with some letters varying towards

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L'Estrange's Appeal.

G

makes to be a *Common Representative* of the Nation. But so far am I now, from confounding men of Honour and Integrity with Rascalls; that I have set upon these Varlets an Expreſſe mark of *Opposition* to the *Sober and considerable part of the Land*; and I have done This too, with all the *Clearneſſe*, and *Contempt* imaginable.

Citt & Bumpkin a couple of Rascals.

Citts Character.

And YOU, (*says Truman*) are the Representative, forsooth, of the City; and YOU, of the Country: Two of the Pillars of the Nation, with a Horſe-Pox a man would not let down his Breeches in a House of Office, that had but two such Supporters. Do not I know you, Cit, to be a little Grub-street-Inſect, that but to'ther day Scribled handy dandy for some eighteen pence a Jobb pro and con; and glad on't too? And now, as it pleases the Stars, you are advanc'd from the Obort, the miscarriage of a Cause-Splitter, to a drawer up of Articles; and for your Skill in Counterfeiting hands, preferr'd to be a Sollicitor for Fobb'd Petitions. You'l do the Bishops businesse, and you'l do the Dukes businesse; and who but you to tell the King when he shall make War or Peace; call Parliaments; and whom to Commit, and whom to let go? And then in your Fuddle up comes all; what such a Lord told you, and what you told him, and all this pudder against your Conscience too, even by your own Confession. Pag. 26. And then Truman again, Pag. 35.

The dreggs of the people.

Bumpkin an ignorant sawsy Fellow.

Who made You a Commissioner for the Town, or You for the Country? But we are like to have a Fine businesse of it, when the Dreggs of the People set up for the Representatives of the Nation, to the Disbonour of the most considerable and Sober part of the Kingdom. Pre'thee, Bumpkin, with thy Poles and Baltiques, how shouldest Thou come to understand the Ballance of Empires; who are Delinquents, and who not; the Right of Bishops Votes? And you (forsooth) are to teach the King when to call a Parliament, and when to let it alone.

Our

the vertical but none falling below that angle. Bennet's italic, however, is designed around an angle of 125° $\frac{1}{2}$, the most acute inclination being apparent in the letters A, E, F, L, M, T, V, W and Y.

Given that, after an examination of upwards of 600 titles of the Restoration period, I have been unable to locate any work incorporating the italic that bears the signature of any printer other than Bennet, I am reasonably confident in the belief that this type face was unique to him. On that basis, therefore, I would like to propose the provisional attribution of the following unsigned publications to Bennet, each of which contains both Bennet's U4 and the characteristic italic:

Wing

- B1763 Aphra Behn, *The Rover*. For John Amery, 1677.
 B4869 [Aphra Behn?], *The Debauchee*. For John Amery, 1677.
 D2789 Thomas D'Urfey, *Trick for Trick*. For Langley Curtiss, 1678.
 I78 *An Impartial Account of the Trial of Lord Cornwallis*. 1679.
 L795 John Leaner, *The Country Innocence*. For Charles Harper, 1677.
 L1221 Sir Roger L'Estrange, *Citt and Bumpkin in a Dialogue*. The Second Part. For Henry Brome, 1680.
 L1202 Sir Roger L'Estrange, *L'Estrange his Appeal Humbly Submitted*. For Henry Brome, 1681.
 O41 Titus Oates, *An Exact and Faithful Narrative of the Horrid Conspiracy*. For Tho. Parkhurst, Tho. Cocker and Benj. Alsop, 1680.
 O542 Thomas Otway, *Don Carlos*. For Richard Tonson, 1676.
 O566 Thomas Otway, *Titus and Berenice with a Farce called The Cheats of Scapin*. For Richard Tonson, 1677.
 P2977 Samuel Pordage, *The Siege of Babylon*. For Richard Tonson, 1678.
 R331 Edward Ravenscroft, *King Edgar and Alfreda*. For M. Turner, 1677.
 M1983 [Thomas Betterton?], *The Counterfeit Bridegroom*. For Langley Curtiss, 1677.
 B1719 Aphra Behn, *The City Heiress*. For D. Brown, H. Rhodes, T. Benskin, 1682.

The greater part of this preliminary investigation was carried out as long ago as 1975 and the results were presented to members and friends of BSANZ in a paper delivered at Monash University in 1976. They are put forward here in the hope that they may be of interest and in the belief that some other researcher in the field, intrigued by Joseph Bennet's italic, might carry the study to a proper conclusion with a detailed study of his typefaces, their character, their origins and their history.

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¹ *The Debauchee: or, The Credulous Cuckold, a comedy. Acted at His Highness The Duke of York's Theatre. Licensed, Feb. 23. 1676/7 Roger L'Estrange.* London: printed for John Amery, at the Peacock, against St. Dunstan's-Church in Fleet-Street 1677.

² Originals in the State Library of Victoria, the libraries of Melbourne and Monash University and private collections were used in the first instance. However, given that the examination was of letter designs, facsimile reproductions and reproductions on microfilm and microcard were found adequate, provided, of course, that the printing of the originals had been done well and that photographic reproduction had not exacerbated deficiencies in the original impression.

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