Monotype Plantin

A Digital Revival by Brigitte Schuster
Monotype Plantin

A Digital Revival by Brigitte Schuster

An Essay for the Master of Design
in Type and Media Course
at KABK, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts,
Den Haag, The Netherlands,
January 2010
The cover of *Fables Choisies II* in original size. This book is the base for this essay.
Abstract

When interpreting a typeface from the past into a digitized format, a type designer has to go through various steps of decision making, including determining how close his design will be to the original, as well as considering past and present cultural and technological contexts. Eventually, the new digital revival is supposed to differ from existing revivals of the typeface in question.

The project was based on the typeface Monotype Plantin from a book (figures 1, 36) entitled *Fables Choisies II* by La Fontaine, dated 1934, and printed in letterpress. In the theoretical part of the project, I analyzed the typeface by researching its historical context, in particular Monotype Plantin’s historical model named *Gros Cicero*, which is its base. In the practical part, I created my own digital revival. I drew average shapes for each letter, tested the colour of the type, decided on details, and spaced the created character set.

As a result, my design contains relatively low contrast, and roundish serif shapes. I succeeded in creating a personal interpretation of the typeface model that on the one hand comes close to its original appearance in letterpress printed book, but on the other hand is in contrast to existing revivals.

Keywords: digital revival, Monotype Plantin, digital typeface, type-design, letterpress
## Contents

11 Introduction

13 Historical Research
   - Description of the Typeface Monotype Plantin 13
   - The Design of Monotype Plantin 14
   - The Monotype Corporation: Plantin’s Type Foundry 21
   - Printing Technology during Monotype Plantin’s Release 21
   - Monotype Plantin’s historical Type Model *Gros Cicero* 24
   - Monotype Plantin compared to its historical Model 30
   - Monotype Plantin Italic 31
   - Monotype Plantin’s Success 32
   - Monotype Plantin and Times New Roman 33

37 Revival Process
   - Design Decisions and Reasons 37
   - Monotype Plantin Revival Specimen 42
   - Examples of running Text 44
   - Comparison of the original Typeface and the Monotype Plantin Revival 46
   - Monotype Plantin Revival and existing Revivals 48

53 Conclusion and further Development
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the course supervisor Paul van der Laan for his guidance, suggestions and support throughout the project.

I would also like to thank the staff of the Plantin-Moretus Museum Antwerp, including Nico de Brabander, Guy Hutsebaut, Dirk Imhof, and Mieke Slechten.

I am grateful to Prof. Dr. H.D.L. Vervliet for his generosity, and to Chip Coakley for his help. I would like to thank Robin Nicholas from Monotype Typography Ltd. for letting me examine the Monotype archives.

Thanks to Françoise Berserik for her advice on the paper’s layout.

Special thanks to all of my Type and Media classmates for their help and support.

Introduction

The revival project is a requirement in Paul van der Laan’s course, and a part of the Type and Media Master’s program at KABK, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Den Haag, The Netherlands.

Students were asked to acquire an inexpensive book set in letterpress, and to reproduce its typeface in a digitized revival. I eventually chose a book from my personal collection of old books, one I had found more than fifteen years ago at a Parisian flee market. It had been part of a pile of books discarded at the end of the market. The acclaimed book is *Fables Choisies II* (La Fontaine), printed in 1934 in Paris (figures 1, 34).

The main typeface of *Fables Choisies II* is Monotype Plantin. Footnotes in the volume are set in Cheltenham. The latter will not be considered.

The layout of this paper is as follows: The first part covers Monotype Plantin’s historical context. It contains the description of the typeface, including its stylistic period, the way it has been designed, and under which type foundry and circumstances it has been produced. Furthermore, I layout the historical model *Gros Cicero*, and how its elements have been translated into the Monotype Plantin typeface. A part of the roman weight, the italic weight is looked at, and finally the typeface’s success in the context of other typefaces used during this period is established. The second part is dedicated to the revival process with the goal of reproducing the typeface from the past into a digital format. Design decisions and the reasoning behind these decisions are explained, other revivals are analysed, and the original and revival designs are compared. Eventually, I present my Conclusion and further Development.

Den Haag, The Netherlands, January 2010
**Description of the Typeface Monotype Plantin**

Montotype Plantin is a sturdy serif typeface, which uses slightly condensed proportions. Its x-height is tall and is advantageous for readability at reduced sizes.

The contrast in stroke thickness is low. Serifs are strong and slightly heavy. The ascending lowercase strokes imply wedge-shaped serifs that are common for the old style model. The oblique weight stress classifies Monotype Plantin as a Dutch old style.

The baseline-counterparts, with their impetuous and heavy brackets and the square-cut ends, look similar to those of Bookman or Clarendon (Haley 85) (figure 2).
The Design of Monotype Plantin

Frank Hinman Pierpont was the production manager of Pierpont and Stelzer, a large British printing and publishing house in Salfonds, UK, which was a part of the Monotype Corporation. In 1912, he visited the Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp and left with ‘knowledge, hundreds of photographs, and stack of antique typeset specimens including a few examples of Robert Granjon’s’.

He gave this acquired material to the Monotype Drawing Office, where, under his direction, the adaptation of this 16th century type had been drawn (figures 4–5) and pantographically cut by skilled draughtsmen and mechanics (Haley 85; Morison 22).

Whereas Pierpont is today known as Monotype Plantin's designer, the actual design can be contributed to Fritz Stelzer, Pierpont's assistant and successor, who was the literal man guiding the team (Nicholas).

In 1913, only eight months after the start of production of the typeface, the Monotype Plantin Series 110 was ready for the market (Barker 117; Carter 28–29). The typeface Monotype Plantin is named after the printer, Christopher Plantin (Lawson 143).

Monotype Plantin is a typeface that demonstrates a non-logical sequence of proportions throughout its sizes. Usually, the x-height is in small sizes larger, and ascenders and descenders are shorter, while in bigger sizes this ratio changes to smaller x-height and longer ascenders and descenders. Monotype Plantin, however, does not always conform to this ratio. University Press, one of Monotype's prestigious customers, commissioned point sizes with certain characteristics. At the time, this particular cut was added to the regular typeface and caused this mismatch in proportions. Today, such a demand would result in a commissioned typeface (Nicholas).
The Design of Monotype Plantin

Original pencil drawing of Monotype Plantin on heavy paper with a coarse surface, 35 x 35 cm in dimension. Originally, drawings were not dated.
The hand-drawn round curves show some imperfections. Using later technologies, and in particular digitization, these shapes have been modified to perfect shapes. Consequently, the appearance of the original typeface itself has also changed.
The Monotype Corporation: Plantin’s Type Foundry

The (Lanston) Montotype Corporation had been formed in 1897, in Washington, D.C., in the USA. At first, the sales of the Monotype machine, which had been invented by Tolbert Lanston in 1897, were the company’s key business. In 1900, they started producing typefaces for its casting machines (figures 6–9) in a new set up factory at Salfords, UK. In 1903, a Type Drawing Office (TDO) had been established that employed six people.

Whereas the Lanston Montotype Corporation’s initial goal was to sell their Monotype casting machines, a secondary benefit could be achieved through the sales of typefaces (Burke 4; Wallis 46).

Printing Technology during Monotype Plantin’s Release

Two separate units built the Monotype machine: the keyboard (figure 6) is used to enter the text to be printed. From there, perforated tape in the form of a paper spool (figure 8) is created, and is later inserted in the hot-metal composition system (figure 7).

Using the instructions of the perforated tape, and based on a grid system, one matrix of each character is positioned in a steel case. Individual pieces of type set in lines were created (Twyman 62–63). The matrix case can be used as a basis for further printing.
The Monotype Corporation: Plantin’s Type Foundry

HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Monotype ‘D’ keyboard, introduced in 1908

Monotype hot-metal composition caster

Monotype perforated tape on the keyboard and in the composition caster

Monotype matrices in matrix case
Monotype Plantin’s historical Type Model Gros Cicero

Monotype Plantin was based on the type used in *Index Characterum Architypgraphiae Plantinianae* (figure 10), printed in 1905 by Max Rooses, the first curator of the Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp, Belgium (Barker 117). The type in question is Robert Granjon’s Second Pica Roman, or Cicéro, named *Gros Cicero* (Vervliet 226–227).

That the type can be attributed to Granjon is confirmed in correspondences between Guillaume II Le Bé and his colleagues, Pierre Mourier and Sébastien Bouillant from Geneva and Lyon, dating from 1614. These letters judge the type to be Robert Granjon’s; the same typeface is also mentioned in his inventory, dated 1618.

The style of the type corresponds to Robert Granjon’s:

- It looks similar to a slightly larger English Roman, also called *Saint-augustin Roman* (figure 11), that was cut by him in Rome, in 1583. Both typefaces use similar key letters, which are the capital A with acute top terminal, K with serif-less tail, splayed M, and lowercase g with broad loop (Vervliet 226–227).
- The body of the typeface is large, whereas it occupies relatively small horizontal space (Barker 292). It was a version of the classic French old face with a larger x-height than the roman typefaces of Claude Garamond (Burke 8–9).

**Monotype Plantin’s historical Type Model Gros Cicero**

- **Monotype Plantin**
- **Historical Type Model**
- **Gros Cicero**

---

10 Showing of Robert Granjon’s *Augustin Roman* from the 1905 Plantin-Moretus type specimen.

11 Similarities in style can be noticed by comparing Granjon’s (above) *Gros Cicero* (1569) and (below) *Saint-augustin* (1580).
The complete set of *Gros Cicero* is not mentioned in the Plantin inventories (today the Plantin-Moretus Museum) until 1652, because it had probably not been in possession of it. It was likely bought in the 1730’s, during which time Joannes Jacobus Moretus revived the Plantin type foundry, and hired Johan Michael Smit as a punch-cutter, and Pierre Perreault as type-founder (Vervliet 226–227).

At that time, the fount was contaminated with letters of the later date. In the specimen of 1905, a small letter, a which did not belong to the font, predominates (Burke 8–9; Vervliet 226–227).

This lower case a has been replaced by an eighteenth-century sort, probably engraved by Johan Michael Smit (Vervliet 226–227) (figures 12–13).

This a was adopted in Monotype Plantin (Barker 292; Burke 8–9) and later also in the Times New Roman (Mosley). (see also chapter Plantin and Times New Roman)

*Gros Cicero* had first been seen in Cologne (1569, 1574, 1576, 1591) and Strasburg (1569, 1581). It appeared in Basle (1570, 1571), Paris (1571, 1576, 1578, 1584), Sevilla (1572), Venice (1572) Antwerp (1577), Rennes, Turin (1578, 1587), Lyons (1586), Barcelona (1587), Mexico (1636). *Gros Cicero* can also be found in numerous type-specimens, such as the above mentioned *Index Characterum Architypgraphiae Plantinianae* from 1905 (figure 10) or *Epreuves générales des caractères* from 1727 (figure 14), in which the typeface is named *Romain Gros Oeil, Num. XXXIV.* (except capital J) (Vervliet 226–227).
CICERO-ROMAIN GROS ŒIL,
Numero XXXIV.

Outre ces Divinité communes & universelles, dont nous avons parlé jusqu'à présent, il y en a voir d'autres dans la créance des Payens, qui n'étoient attachées qu'au bien particulier, ou des mahions, ou des perfonnes.

Les Dieux domestiques s'appelloient Lares, ou bien, Penates, & étoient souven de petits Marmoufets attachés en divers lieux de la maison, qu'ils honoroient comme leurs protecteurs, & de temps en temps leur offroient des sacrifices de vin & d'encens.

Chacun encore, à leur dire, naifoit avec deux Génius, propres & particuliers, qu'on nommoit Démons, l'un des- quels étoit le bon, qui les portoit au bien, & leur procuroit toutes fortes de prosperitez convenables à leur condition. L'autre au contraire leur étoit ennemi, & ne leur causoit que malheur, lorsqu'il devenoit le plus puissant.

Après tout cela ils reconnoissoient aussi une Fortune, qui tenoit en sa puissance les honneurs, les richefles, & les autres biens de cette vie, pour les donner, ou pour les ôter à qui bon lui sembloit; mais qui étoit une Divinité aveugle & très-inconstante, maniant une roué qu'elle tournoîoit incessamment, mettant la condition des uns & des autres, tantôt en haut & tantôt en bas, de sorte qu'elle n'avoyoit rien de ferme ni d'afuré. Elle étoit adorée de la plupart des hommes, & les grands Princes en conervoient communément une hors de chez eux, pour leur être toujours favorable.

Je ne parle point ici; ni de la Déesse Nemefis, qui avoit l'œil sur les crimes d'un chacun, pour les venger, ni du Dieu Momus, qui se rendoit méprisable & odieux à caufl de ses mauvais qualitez. Car il ne tiroit sa naifance que du sommeil & de la nuit; & encore qu'il fût très-fainéant & inhable à tout, c'étoyoit néanmoins un bavard, qui vouloit parler de tout, & trouveroit à redire sur tous les autres; ce qui provenoit tant de sa vanité, que de la foiblefse de son esprit: comme c'est l'ordinaire de ces esprits critiques, qui contre-
Monotype Plantin compared to its historical Model

In 1912, the typeface Imprint had been developed by Monotype. It is a dual-purpose face, created from an old-face model and intended for the use on antique and coated papers (Carter 27; Morison 22). Imprint was a typeface that had been commissioned from printers to be exclusively used for the journal The Imprint (Burke 7).

Monotype Plantin, also based on an adaptation of a historical model, can be considered the first typeface on demand, which had been developed with the goal of encouraging printers to experiment with new, and different, typefaces and papers (Nicholas). Monotype Plantin has been designed with modern printing processes in mind: It was made for the Monotype machine (figures 5–8), which achieved initial popularity in Europe (Burke 8–9).

In our face the lines have been somewhat strengthened, as well as modified, to meet the requirements of modern mechanical processes of printing. (Monotype Recorder in its first showing of the typeface) (Burke 9)

Monotype Plantin is one of the first roman typefaces that has been designed with objectives of durability and economy of space in mind (Haley 85). In order to give compact setting, the descenders were shortened considerably, and ascenders slightly, for Monotype Plantin in comparison to the historical model (Lawson 143; Morison 22).

Like Imprint, Monotype Plantin was intended to print on art paper, as well as antique and coated papers (Morison 22). Printing on smooth and coated papers should be brought to a perfect level (Burke 8–9; Sutton 50). Therefore, the letter strokes have been thickened to almost monotone weight (Burke 8–9; Lawson 143). Whereas in early times punchcutters reduced the weight of their letters knowing that the printing process would make them bolder, Monotype Plantin favoured the effect of ink-spread. The fact that Monotype Plantin was bolder than its model built this effect (Carter 27). When printing on cheap paper, there were no potential ink traps (Morison 22).

This strength and colour of the Monotype Plantin typeface is also helpful when used in display and carving sizes (Morison 22). Its colour made Monotype Plantin also more suitable for magazines and periodicals, rather than books. To adapt it even more to this kind of operation, the x-height of Robert Granjon’s type was exaggerated in Monotype Plantin as well (Burke 8–9; Lawson 143). Legibility in small sizes, including as small as 6-point, should be ensured. To achieve this, the serifs were strongly bracketed and several letters rationalized. for instance, counters of a and e were enlarged (Morison 22).

Eventually, Monotype Plantin was supposed to retain the spirit of a classical historical model (Burke 8–9). Classic old-face text design was preserved in the structure. However, the final design was more comparable to a Clarendon (figure 2) than to a 16-century Garamond (Morison 22).

Monotype Plantin Italic

The Augustin Cursiv (figure 15), the historical model that has been used for the Monotype Plantin italic, is unlikely to have been designed by Robert Granjon (Burke 8–9; Vervliet).
Monotype Plantin’s Success

Monotype Plantin was an English bestseller (Lawson 143): The sixth best seller in Monotype’s history of supplying sets of matrices for hot-metal composition.

Thanks to its ample weight, which lacks a strong contrast in thick and thin strokes, it survived well throughout today’s period of digital technology and offset printing (Burke 8—9; Lawson 143).

Presses that adopted Monotype Plantin were, for instance, Francis Meynell’s Pelican and C. W. Hobson’s Cloister Press. It has also been used by advertising agencies, as well as newspaper reproduction.

The slogan When in doubt, use Plantin lost its power with the dominance of grotesques.

As highlighted in one of the previous chapters, Monotype Plantin compared to its historical model, Monotype Plantin, was generally not suitable for bookwork. However, because of its value for catalogue setting and other semi-jobbing work, stocks were increased (Morison 22).

Soon after Monotype Plantin’s initial release in August 1913, a lighter version was created, the Monotype Plantin Light Series 113. It was more suitable for book composition and printing on uncoated paper than the Plantin 110 Series, because its colour appeared less heavy on the page (Burke 8—9) (figures 16, 18—19).

Monotype Plantin and Times New Roman

The colour of both Monotype Plantin and Times New Roman is almost identical, and their proportions are the same.

Times looks like a Plantin on Diet. (Haley, 93)

Times appeared in October 1932, almost twenty years after Monotype Plantin (Lawson 273–274).

For the design of Times New Roman, a photographic copy of a page printed by Christopher Plantin, the same copy that had been used as the source of Monotype Plantin, was used by Victor Lardent, as well as a list of instructions. His worked up alphabets from the model were revised by Stanley Morison (Haley 93; Lawson 273–274).

In Times New Roman, the serifs were sharpened compared to those of Monotype Plantin’s. Stroke width contrast was increased, and character curves were refined (Haley 93) (figure 17).
### Plantin Old Style

36 pt. Man, as the reader and interpreter of nature, understands as much as the observed on the order RSTUWXYZABCDEI.

24 pt. either with regard to thin mind, permit him, and neither KLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZABC.

18 pt. capable of more. The unassisted hand standing left to itself possess but little power produced by the means of instruments & his understanding requires no less than the hand instruments either promote or regulate the motion.

---

18 Monotype Plantin Old Style type specimen. Initially, Monotype Plantin 110 was called Plantin Old style.

---

19 Monotype Plantin 110 type specimen.
Design Decisions and Reasons

Scanning and Analysis
Due to the nature of the letterpress printing technology, every character on a book page looks, at any moment, different in position, colour, and details. Therefore, I had to find out the average shape of each character. In the first step, I scanned about 5–7 letter form samples of each character. In the next step, I auto-traced them with the help of a drawing application, in this case Illustrator, overlaid them, and then drew an average (figure 20).

I digitized key characters, such as h a m b u r g e o v s k i l f r h, using a rather rough method: I drew Bezier curves without, at this point, getting into details of achieving the right serif shapes.

By drawing one version with a lighter, and one with more, colour (figure 21), I tried to define the ideal colour for the typeface. Eventually, I chose the lighter version. I made it slightly heavier to match the original typeface in its colour.

20 Overlaid Bezier curves of five different a’s that determine the average shape of the character.

21 (above) Rapid testing of Monotype Plantin revival light and (below) heavy by using only a variation of the key letters h a m b u r g e.
Design Decisions and Reasons

Lettershape Details
At this stage, I was able to concentrate more on details. I created two different serif shapes, one more roundish, the other one more angular, and tested them in the context of the book text after completing the characters, which appeared on this page. By comparing and analysing the serifs in the text, I opted for the more angular version, as it matched the original type more accurately (figure 22).

Letterspacing
At the same time, I also worked on the letter spacing. I started spacing the characters u and n. From there, I continued using the spacing test (figure 23) method of placing the letter combinations 'nin, oo' between each lowercase character. Between uppercase characters, I would set the characters H and O.

Using a text setting application, in this case InDesign, I also looked at the characters in different sizes, including, 9, 10, 12, 14 pt. As a font file can only contain one metrics, I went with the size that best matched the original size of the type, which is 8.7 pt.

At this time, the proportions of Monotype Plantin have purposely been refined for the Monotype machine (figures 5—8), and therefore use no kerning. Spacing works exclusively with metrics. I did not apply any kerning, because the letterspacing adequately matched the typeface on the original book page (figure 29).
Extended Character Set

I completed the alphabet based on the decisions I had taken in the previous steps. **Inferior lining figures** introduced a line out of five on the left side of the text, **superior lining figures** were used inside the textblock, whereas **old-style figures** where used for folios. It turned out that the book used **superior lining figures** from a typeface different than Monotype Plantin. I ignored this fact and went on designing Monotype Plantin **superior lining figures** (see Monotype Plantin Revival Specimen, figures 26–27).

Because of their small size, the quality and perception of details of the original figures turned out to be inadequate (figure 24). To be able to still reproduce detailed figures, I referred to external specimens (figure 25) as a source for the design. I needed to adjust the colour of the letters for extra small size, which meant I had to exaggerate certain features. For instance, I augmented the stroke thickness of the figures compared to the reading text.

The character set suplements the basic characters with a set of diacritics (figure 26). For Monotype Plantin cursive revival, I merely created the characters that are represented on the original book page (figure 27).
Monotype Plantin revival, 33/43 pt.

Examples of Running Text


Monotype Plantin revival set in different sizes to judge the typeface in its whole.
A nul des deux ne convenait :
Jamais le juge ne tenait
A leur gré la balance égale.

De semblables discours rebutaient l’apporteur :
Il court aux hôpitaux, va voir leur directeur :
Tous deux ne recueillant que plainte et que murmure,
Affligés, et contraints de quitter ces emplois,
Vont confier leur peine au silence des bois.
Là, sous d’après rochers, près d’une source pure,
Lieu respecté des vents, ignoré du soleil,
Ils trouvent l’autre Saint, lui demandent conseil.
Il faut, dit leur ami, le prendre de soi-même.
Qui mieux que vous sait vos besoins ?
Apprendre à se connaître est le premier des soins
Qu’impose à tout mortel la Majesté suprême.
Vous êtes-vous connus dans le monde habité ?
L’on ne le peut qu’aux lieux pleins de tranquillité :
Chercher ailleurs ce bien est une erreur extrême.
Troublez l’eau : vous y voyez-vous ?

Agitez celle-ci. — Comment nous verrions-nous ?
La vase est un épais nuage
Qu’aux effets du cristal nous venons d’opposer.
— Mes frères, dit le Saint, laissez-la reposer,
Vous verrez alors votre image.

Pour vous mieux contempler demeurez au désert.
Ainsi parla le Solitaire.
Il fut cru; l’on suivit ce conseil salutaire.
Ce n’est pas qu’un emploi ne doive être souffert.
Puisqu’on plaide, et qu’on meurt, et qu’on devient malade,
Il faut des médecins, il faut des avocats.
Ces secours, grâce à Dieu, ne nous manqueront pas :
Les honneurs et le gain, tout me le persuade.
Cependant on s’oublie en ces communs besoins.
O vous dont le public emporte tous les soins,
Magistrats, princes et ministres,
Vous que doivent troubler mille accidents sinistres,
J’ai du moins ouvert le chemin :
D’autres pourront y mettre une dernière main.
Favoris des neuf Sœurs, achèvez l’entreprise :
Donnez mainte leçon que j’ai sans doute oublié;
Sous ces inventions il faut l’envelopper.

— LA FONTAINE

A nul des deux ne convenait :
Jamais le juge ne tenait
A leur gré la balance égale.

De semblables discours rebutaient l’apporteur :
Il court aux hôpitaux, va voir leur directeur :
Tous deux ne recueillant que plainte et que murmure,
Affligés, et contraints de quitter ces emplois,
Vont confier leur peine au silence des bois.
Là, sous d’après rochers, près d’une source pure,
Lieu respecté des vents, ignoré du soleil,
Ils trouvent l’autre Saint, lui demandent conseil.
Il faut, dit leur ami, le prendre de soi-même.
Qui mieux que vous sait vos besoins ?
Apprendre à se connaître est le premier des soins
Qu’impose à tout mortel la Majesté suprême.
Vous êtes-vous connus dans le monde habité ?
L’on ne le peut qu’aux lieux pleins de tranquillité :
Chercher ailleurs ce bien est une erreur extrême.
Troublez l’eau : vous y voyez-vous ?

Agitez celle-ci. — Comment nous verrions-nous ?
La vase est un épais nuage
Qu’aux effets du cristal nous venons d’opposer.
— Mes frères, dit le Saint, laissez-la reposer,
Vous verrez alors votre image.

Pour vous mieux contempler demeurez au désert.
Ainsi parla le Solitaire.
Il fut cru; l’on suivit ce conseil salutaire.
Ce n’est pas qu’un emploi ne doive être souffert.
Puisqu’on plaide, et qu’on meurt, et qu’on devient malade,
Il faut des médecins, il faut des avocats.
Ces secours, grâce à Dieu, ne nous manqueront pas :
Les honneurs et le gain, tout me le persuade.
Cependant on s’oublie en ces communs besoins.
O vous dont le public emporte tous les soins,
Magistrats, princes et ministres,
Vous que doivent troubler mille accidents sinistres,
J’ai du moins ouvert le chemin :
D’autres pourront y mettre une dernière main.
Favoris des neuf Sœurs, achèvez l’entreprise :
Donnez mainte leçon que j’ai sans doute oublié;
Sous ces inventions il faut l’envelopper.
Use of a transparent foil containing the photocopy of the book page on top of the reproduced page to be able to judge the right measurements.
Monotype Plantin Revival and existing Revivals

Whereas the original design from 1913 is officially attributed to Pierpont, Monotype (see the chapter The Design of Monotype Plantin), the designs of revivals are owned by different foundries. The following revival versions feature slight differences with the original Monotype Plantin specimen (figure 31).

Compared to the revivals listed below, the Monotype Plantin revival (figure 32) is rather condensed in proportions. The contrast between thick and thin strokes is less pronounced, and as a result certain letter details are less evident, as for instance the connection of the r upstroke. In addition, the serifs are less pronounced than in the compared revivals, as they have a more roundish appearance.

Linotype’s Monotype Plantin compared to Monotype Imaging’s Plantin Infant represents subtle differences in proportions, as evidenced by the superimposing of both (figure 33). The later contains single-storey versions of the lowercase a and g.

Berthold’s Plantin is has a slightly bolder weight than the complete versions shown above (figure 34). Figure 35 represents corrections on Plantin normal by Günter Gerhard Lange in 1973. Berthold Plantin was discontinued in the mid-nineties, and there are no current plans for a future release (Berthold Direct Sales).
Every type designer who has worked on a revival has worked more or less under the same conditions, using as a base a metal version of the typeface printed on paper. Various factors, such as paper quality and colour, the pressure of the inking machine, the amount of ink, or the type of ink, influence the printing result.

The look of a revival has therefore to be considered as a modern version of the typeface, having in mind that the perfect reproduction of the model from the past is impossible. Personal decisions make the typeface, created on the same base, look different. My objective was to create a Monotype Plantin revival that is different from existing ones. I succeeded in doing so by taking subjective decisions on letter contrast amount or serif shapes.

The revival version is far from having perfectly drawn letter shapes, and is admittedly rather raw and unrefined. Some letters even differ slightly in their height or contrast. Seeing it as a deliberate feature is in keeping with the spirit of hot-metal type. On a page printed in this old technology, no letter looks the same.

This revival is unlikely to ever be published. This is due to the fact that Monotype owns the rights and would not be interested having another version on the market unless it is more complete or sophisticated than their current version. Therefore, the version of my Monotype Plantin revival can be seen as an academic exercise.

For those reasons, I do not intend to work further on my Monotype Plantin revival. However, it would be interesting to work on the revival of Monotype Plantin’s historical typeface named Gros Cicero, which rights are owned by the Moretus-Plantin Museum in Antwerp. Proportions and relations between ascenders and descenders are more harmonic than in the adapted Monotype Plantin version (Vervliet). The typeface’s use, however, would need to be rethought, as economic typesetting is not granted any more.

Throughout the process, I have become more familiar with analyzing, drawing and judging letter shapes, and the process of making a font in itself. I have also deepened my knowledge about a certain period in the history of type.
Sources


—. Personal interview. 10 Oct. 2009.


Figures


3 Photography by author of verso of original pencil drawing of Monotype Plantin at Monotype Imaging, Salsford, UK.

4 Photography by author. Original pencil drawing featuring the characters e and f of Monotype Plantin at Monotype Imaging, Salsford, UK.

5 Photography by author. Original pencil drawing featuring the character P of Monotype Plantin at Monotype Imaging, Salsford, UK.

6 Photography by author of Monotype ‘D’ keyboard at University of Reading, UK, Department of Typography and Graphic Communication.

7 Photography by author of Monotype hot-metal composition caster at University of Reading, UK, Department of Typography and Graphic Communication.

8 Monotype perforated tape on the keyboard and in the composition caster at University of Reading, UK, Department of Typography and Graphic Communication.

9 Monotype matrices in matrix case at University of Reading, UK, Department of Typography and Graphic Communication.


Figure 33 (top) Linotype’s Plantin Roman, (underneath) Monotype Imaging’s Plantin Infant containing a single-story versions of the lowercase a and g, and (below) the superimposition of both featuring the subtle differences in proportions.


La Fontaine, Jean de. *Fables Choisies II Livres 7 à 12.* Paris: Classiques Larousse, 1934. 84.


Monotype Plantin revival by author
inside cover) Monotype archives at Monotype Imaging, Salsford, in January 2010. The metal boxes contain Monotype Plantin original drawings of 35 x 35 cm in size.