

Episode 6 / Goudy Oldstyle

Recording Date: Sunday, March 13

Recording Time: 10am

Release Date: Sunday, April 17

Producer: Inger

Designated Designer for this week: Jason

Non-Designated Designer for this week: Anitra

Episode Summary

Jason offers to go back into the 'Oxford University Press days' because he has spent less time in therapy about this than Anitra. We initially invited our OUP boss Deb to join in the sharing circle and then decided she needs her own special episode. So we are treating this episode as part one of two. Listen to this episode to hear about Frederic (no 'K') Goudy, one of the most prolific typeface designers who has ever been dismissed by the Modernists.

You can find the show notes and transcript set in Goudy Oldstyle at: <https://www.anitraland.com/podcast>

If you'd like to share your own views on Goudy Oldstyle, or the pod, email us on

designsleuth@yahoo.com or leave us a message on speakpipe.com/thesiswhisperer

You can find us on Twitter: @type_pod and on Insta: @the_type_pod

Our producer Inger is on twitter as @thesiswhisperer

Anitra: Welcome to The Type Pod!

I'm Anitra Nottingham, a former book designer, former typography teacher, former co-chair of a graphic design school. I'm now a learning experience designer—but I'm a type nerd and I always will be.

Jason: I'm Jason Phillips, formerly a book designer and typography teacher. I'm a sometime illustrator and artist. In my career I've never strayed far from type and it will always have a place in my heart.

Anitra: We are whipped into shape by our producer Inger Mewburn, professor at the Australian National University and editor of the Thesis Whisperer blog.

Jason: We are designers who went to the same design school, a couple of years apart. But it wasn't until we worked together at Oxford University Press, where we honed our type skills, that we became friends and developed a mutual hatred of the typeface Goudy, all of which still burns strong 25 years later.

Anitra: Each episode we deep dive into one typeface, finding out the sometimes surprising history behind the design and the designer, we admire (or not) its anatomy, ponder its uses and cultural impact.

Then we ignore all of that and talk about our feelings.

This episode we are going to talk about Goudy. And given our hashtag on the socials is #wehategoudy, fair warning—we (or at least I) still have Feelings.

A transcript is available set in Goudy Oldstyle (Jason had to do it, I just couldn't face it) which you can download from the show notes. Okay, Jason, you'd better give us some background before we start sticking the boot in.

I believe we are finally coming to America, my adopted homeland, this episode, so tell us, Jason, who designed Goudy, when, and why?

Jason: Goudy Oldstyle was designed by Frederic W. Goudy. No 'K', people—apparently he once said, “Someday I'll design a typeface without a K in it, and then let's see the bastards misspell my name”. Fredric with a 'C' was an American, born in 1865 in Bloomington, Illinois. In his 30s, after working as a book-keeper and advertising designer, he basically reinvented himself as a freelance type designer. He founded his own Chicago-based print company, Booklet Press, and also taught at the short-lived but influential Frank Holme School of Illustration, an institute that prided itself on the practical application of art and design, preparing students for the “real world”—so I guess, a kind of TAFE college?

Anitra: More like a private design college, akin to Shillington, if you are familiar with it? Schools like this popped up often in America in the 20th century, usually starting as an illustration school because there was still a lot of hand lettering and hand work. AAU, where we used to work, started this way. Often these schools are started by a designer who wants to get back to “practical tool training”—often I suspect because they are *very tired* of having to teach the juniors how to do everything. Anyway, we were talking about Goudy...

Jason: Yes, we were. In 1903, Goudy co-founded the Village Press, which burned to the ground five years later, so he started over with the Village Letter Foundry, and was commissioned by the American Typefounders Company (ATC) to design Goudy Oldstyle around 1915. Several variations followed, some created by other designers, and although these were quite lucrative for ATC, Goudy himself received no royalties, having sold his original design for \$1500, and this was one reason his relationship with ATC soured.

Anitra: Damn, he got ripped off!

Jason: Yes! Goudy was appointed art advisor to Lanston Monotype in 1920, and then in 1927 he became vice-president of the Continental Type Founders Association, which distributed most of his typefaces. He died at home in 1947—sad, but said home was a converted watermill on the Hudson River in New York, which sounds amazing.

Anitra: Googled it. There are worse places to shuffle off this mortal coil, for sure.

Jason: In the book, *Just My Type*, Simon Garfield claims that Goudy had a reputation for fast cars and girls. I haven't been able to corroborate the fast cars and girls thing...

Anitra: I believe it though, I think he was one of the fun designers. Aside from Tibor Kalman I think he had the best one liners. My fav is “all the old fellows stole our best ideas” which I stole and used heavily when I was a teacher. He also came up with the famous aphorism about the type crime: “a man that would letterspace lowercase would steal sheep”. LOL.

Jason: Anitra, didn't you tell me once that "steal" is the family friendly word? But his choice was a little more NSFW.

Anitra: Yes, that's the rumour. Eric Gill vibes. Shudder. This saying was of course the basis of Erik Spierkman's useful type handbook *Stop Stealing Sheep*. Which Bringhurst said, this should be updated to say that "women who would letterspace lowercase would steal sheep too".

Jason: Speaking of women, it must be said that Goudy relied heavily on, and collaborated with, his wife Bertha, who was an accomplished typesetter in her own right—but everyone seems to agree that the short, plump exterior of the man didn't match the person within. Make of that what you will.

Anitra: I have literally never heard of Bertha! *Shocking!* A woman who has been left out of a graphic design "great man history"? Excuse me while I Google her.

Jason: I mentioned the fire that destroyed his first workshop in 1908, but there was another, equally devastating fire that ruined his second workshop in 1939—clearly Goudy was someone determined to bounce back from adversity and I think he deserves kudos for that.

His output of type designs was pretty phenomenal—123 typefaces by his own reckoning—and he also found time to publish 59 works.

Anitra: Surfacing from Google, surprisingly there is a Wikipedia page about Bertha Matilda Sprinks Goudy: she was "quite a talented composer" and worked in, then ran the village press for a sneaky 32 years. So maybe we should say *they* bounced back? *Time* magazine called her "the world's ablest woman printer". I am starting to see how "he" designed 123 typefaces, Jason...

Jason: Can't we just say printer? We don't say "man printer". So can we say, he and Bertha—and probably all their lowly paid apprentices too, while we are at it—published 59 works?

Anitra: Agreed. Thank you, ally. Although it's okay, because apparently Fred named his 100th typeface after her: Bertham. She may need her own episode, Jason.

Jason: Yes, but back to Goudy! He rarely turned down a speaking engagement or opportunity to share his love of the letterform—fair enough, when you're a freelancer who relies on self-promotion. He also, often unsuccessfully and at great personal cost, sued to protect the licensing of his type designs.

Now, this seems an appropriate point to talk briefly about font piracy and theft.

Anitra: I deny everything. I would never have a computer full of pirated typefaces.

Jason: As we've mentioned in previous episodes, when type foundries operated with cast metal type, outright theft was less of a problem—you'd be lugging around cases of metal pieces, for starters—although the practice of taking someone else's designs once they'd become public, and refashioning and redeveloping them more or less according to the individual, was a common practice. I'm sure I've read a quotable quote about innovation being 10% inspiration and 90% imitation?

Anitra: Plenty of type designs developed as a "revival"—like the way Stanley Morison based his Times New Roman on the existing typeface Plantin. Fun fact, apparently Stanley Morrison didn't like Fred Goudy all that much and wrote to a friend that he was glad TNR didn't look "as if it has been designed by somebody in particular—Mr. Goudy, for instance". Ouch!

Jason: *Anyway*, back to piracy. Once typefaces became digitized, and desktop publishing took hold, things got really complicated. Part of the problem, I think, is that typefaces are such a utilitarian form of design. They come preloaded onto every computer, and most people probably figure, well, I bought the device so I get to do what I want with the typefaces as well.

Anitra: Or that idea that, hey, it's on the Internet, it should be free, right?

Jason: Exactly. But every one of those typefaces was designed by someone, or someone holds the distribution rights to them, so they are governed by laws regarding their use and misuse, the same as any other product.

To get technical legally-speaking for a moment, a typeface is a set of letters, numbers and symbols that share a consistent look. A font is the software or part of the program that sends a signal to your keyboard to display each character in a certain way. Or, if you like, a typeface is subject to copyright, whereas a font is protected by licensing. Which is an interesting distinction. Licensing generally covers issues such as how many users have access to the font and under what circumstances.

I remember when the small studio I worked for, after I left Oxford University Press, decided to ditch all their old fonts and invest in a proper font library with all the attached licensing. This was in the nineties, when people just accumulated digital typefaces from all sorts of sources, without really thinking too much about it.

Anitra: Except me, I would never have done that.

Jason: Which was poor policy in many ways, not the least being the number of times you came up against software conflicts from differently named versions of the same fonts. I'd like to think things are better policed now, but design firms and filmhouses and even printers around that time began to purge their font suitcases *en masse* to avoid potential prosecution from type foundries who were beginning to crack down on licensing regulations.

And there have been some expensive lawsuits. NBCUniversal, the film and television network, has been sued 3 times since 2009 for amounts ranging from 1.5 to 3.5 million dollars over licensing breaches—such as when fonts used on *Harry Potter* merchandising were determined to have been supported only for digital use.

However, contrast that with the fact that Microsoft famously created Arial, a typeface found on every PC and identical to Helvetica in every way, because they didn't want to pay the licensing fees for Helvetica. And they got away with it!

Anitra: And when you are a big organization, say I don't know, a large institute of technology for instance, and you decree that Helvetica Neue is your brand typeface, then you should have a full version of that typeface so all employees can use it. They shouldn't have to use, say, Arial for instance, because they for some reason haven't been given the full set of Helvetica Neue.

Of course this is totally theoretical.

Jason: Returning to who designed Goudy Oldstyle, and linking back to our episode on Times New Roman, F.W. Goudy's life spans roughly the same timeframe as Stanley Morison, but 20 years in advance—so covering an incredible amount of change on many levels. When you live to 82, you

see a lot of shit thrown down. When you think about it, so much that we take for granted – cars, aeroplanes, the concept of skyscrapers, or medical innovations like antibiotics – were inventions that Frederic Goudy witnessed for the first time.

Anitra: I can see why he complained he was left behind at the end of his career actually because he was around a long time and the sensibility of his work wasn't ever "modern". As Dwiggins, who was his student, said, his work did lack "a certain snap and acidity"—so it didn't age as well in the century of sans serifs.

Jason: Yes, well we talked about hot metal typesetting in that episode as well, but another technological advancement that Goudy took advantage of was pantograph engraving, which basically made cutting the matrices for letters easier and quicker, and produced a cleaner result.

Anitra: A pantograph is one of those wooden things where you put a pen in one bit and trace over something and there was a pen on a longer arm that scales up what you trace or draw. God, I loved those when I was a kid. That's probably why I wanted to be a designer honestly, not just my dad's off-hand comment that I seemed to like doing the cover pages on my school assignments more than writing my school assignments.

Jason: At the time of Goudy the typeface's release, 1915, Europe was enduring the upheaval of World War I, but on Goudy the man's home soil, the US Coastguard became a branch of the military, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics – the predecessor of NASA – was founded, and, in an incident that now sounds all too familiar, in New York a woman was arrested and imprisoned for ignoring health orders in the middle of a disease outbreak. She wasn't called Karen, but she has gone down in history as "Typhoid Mary".

Anitra: That seems like a good segue into our next section, Anatomy, where we briefly check out the body of our typeface for this episode. Just to remind our listeners, we refer to type anatomy because various strokes of different letters are named after body parts. For example, the upward diagonal stroke of a 'K' is called the arm, and the downward diagonal stroke is called the leg. Jason, what do we need to know about Goudy's body?

Jason: Goudy the typeface is classified as Old Style. Listeners, you may remember from the last episode about Baskerville, we talked about the Vox Classification system at length, but briefly, it's just a means of categorizing typefaces based on shared characteristics, just as in botany and zoology we arrange similar plants and animals within species and families. As the name suggests, Goudy the typeface is classified as Old Style, but within that broader grouping it is identified as a Galalde—another one of those type design portmanteaus, this time commemorating Claude Garamond and Aldus Manutius. (Sometimes also called 'Aldines', for only Manutius fans.) Galaldes feature a lowercase 'e' with a horizontal crossbar, and slightly more contrast between the thick and thin strokes than their Humanist cousins (which also tend to have an angled crossbar on the 'e').

Goudy was heavily influenced by the Art and Crafts movement—that hark back to a medieval aesthetic and honest hand-craftsmanship championed by William Morris and others—which is pretty clear in his work. Sidebar, also from his choice of business names. I mean, does it get much more 'ye olde worlde' than adding the word 'village' to everything? Village Press, Village Letter Foundry...

Anitra: Well exactly, his work is "old fashioned". I read a bio on howold.co that quoted type designer Walter Tracy describing Goudy as "over-fond" of the 'e' with a tilted centre common in

fifteenth-century printing, which he felt added an “unwanted restlessness” to many of his type designs. And can I just say that “unwanted restlessness” is a great phrase—useful for so many situations—and I am stealing it.

Jason: Supposedly all Goudy’s designs were drawn freehand, without a straight edge or a pair of compasses or French curves, which is both kind of hard to believe and totally amaze-balls. In the capitals the thin strokes vary in weight between letters, and some of the serifs have this appearance of a slight curve or dip in the middle, which adds to the hand-drawn feel. Goudy Oldstyle is one of those type designs we say has a true italic face—not just the roman letters forced on a slant, which are called ‘obliques’—because, as Goudy himself put it, “some of the outstanding italics of the sixteenth century had little or no inclination and yet preserved their italic character.” That sense of calligraphy is evoked by the tail of the capital ‘Q’ and the almost diamond dots on the lowercase ‘i’ and ‘j’.

Anitra: Those dots incidentally are called ‘tittles’. A fun type-nerd fact.

Jason: And a word that can use up some low point tiles in Scrabble.

Anitra: Don’t say you never get anything useful out of listening to this podcast.

Look, I can see why OUP used Goudy as the corporate typeface. It’s got that real hand crafted/italy feel, it’s almost bouncy and that ‘e’ is too tilted! Also... I mean.... do you think he is bragging about not using a French curve or any other mechanical help to make the letterforms? Because wow, talk about being about to do a “lean and hard line”. That’s fucking difficult. I’m serious, you need hands as steady as a brain surgeon to do that kind of work. Mad respect. Also, thank God for computers or I would never have made it anywhere in the biz.

Jason: Also a shout-out to the Goudy italic ampersand, which is one of the most riotous examples you are ever likely to see.

Anitra: It is wild! And despite my Goudy induced trauma, I am here for it.

Jason: I should explain that an ampersand is that character which often looks like the Arabic numeral ‘8’ with a little ‘x’ growing out of the lower right side. It’s actually a ligature, which in typographic terms is when frequently recurring letter pairings, like ‘st’ or ‘fl’, are combined in a single glyph or character. It’s a way of smoothing the letterforms to avoid overlapping terminals or serifs. So the ampersand is a ligature of the letters ‘e’ and ‘t’, the Latin word for ‘and’.

Because we like to dazzle our listeners with nerdy type facts, the reason it is called an ampersand and not the ‘et symbol’, is that apparently it used to be the custom, when reciting the alphabet, to follow those letters which were also a word (‘A’, ‘I’ and ‘O’) with another Latin term *per se*, which means ‘in and of itself’. For some reason it was common practice to include that et ligature as a sort of 27th letter, so the alphabet would end with “X, Y, Z and per se and”, which gradually morphed into ‘ampersand’.

Anitra: A useful factoid for your next dinner party, people.

Now to our feelings. Overall impression and best/worst features of Goudy Oldstyle, Jason.

Jason: One notable aspect is the comparatively short descenders, which give the typeface a bit of a stumpy look. But in fairness, this was an alteration made to the design by the foundry ATC to allow for a tighter line setting—Goudy hated it, and that was another reason they parted ways.

Anitra: I mean, who among us has not left a relationship for stunting us?

Jason: Overall most characters are quite broad, but the stroke weights in the roman face are relatively fine, so Goudy Oldstyle is probably a good choice if you need to save space with a slab of text—it won't look too dense on the page.

It's basically your all-round American. Like Tom Hanks. Not the young, skinny, slightly adorkable Tom Hanks of *Big*, or *Splash*—the later Tom Hanks, after he began to pick up awards left, right and centre, and became Hollywood's go-to guy for box-office appeal in everyman roles. More dad-bod and jowly. Relatable. Dependable. You know you're going to get a good performance from him, but does anyone *really* get excited anymore at the prospect of a new Tom Hanks film?

Anitra: No, not really. That latest movie of his on Apple TV looks terrible. But I'm going to go another way to anthropomorphize Goudy: Heath Ledger in that terrible medieval movie, what was it? *A Knight's Tale*. It's medieval, but totally not. It is supposed to be old-fashioned and hark back to the renaissance, but it's not and it's got an "unwanted restlessness" type of energy—just like the jousting scenes set to Queen's 'We Will Rock You'. Not as good looking as Heath, though. What a loss. Sigh.

Anyway, let's talk about the sort of relationship designers should or shouldn't have with this typeface. Jason, what's your advice?

Jason: Can I just say, tertiary institutions *love* Goudy Oldstyle. It's the corporate typeface of universities from all over the US.

Anitra: There is something fitting about it being used by OUP: they did start in 1498 and it looks like it was designed in the olden days. Back again to the dodgily titled howold.co website, how is this for symmetry when it comes to Goudy and university-corporated typefaces?

William T. LaMoy, a curator at Syracuse University, discovered two sets of matrices (metal moulds) and associated paperwork in Syracuse University Library's archives for a font known as Sherman, which the publisher Frederic Fairchild Sherman had commissioned from Goudy in 1910. LaMoy published an article about this discovery in 2013, explaining how, in the 1960s, Sherman's niece bequeathed the font to Syracuse University because she was aware of Goudy's connection to the university. Indeed, in 1934, Syracuse University had awarded Goudy an honorary degree and, from the journalism school, a typographic medal for excellence. Recently Syracuse University adopted and digitized the Sherman typeface and is now using it for official publications. Called the Sherman Serif Book, it is a proprietary font for Syracuse University.

Jason: But lest you think only dry academics appreciate Goudy Oldstyle, intriguingly Simon Garfield suggests that the Beatles band insignia drew inspiration from the typeface. I can't see it myself, but there you go.

Anitra: I cannot tell you how much my eldest child dislikes the Beatles, I find his disdain very amusing—here for the boomer pile on—so I have to say, this is yet another reason they can add to that pile. Yuck.

Jason: The American apparel company J. Crew used it in their company logo.

Anitra: Get the hell out of here! No way! I should have noticed that, the 'W' is very distinctive. What is that 'W' called Jason??

Jason: I don't know. But if any of our listeners know, please educate us. And Goudy Oldstyle has even had its Hollywood moments: Ripley Scott combined it with the typeface Impact for the opening credits of his sci-fi noir classic, *Blade Runner*.

Anitra: Wow that is a contrast isn't it? I love that *Blade Runner* logo—it's so NASA logo gone wrong meets *Logan's Run*...

And for all our Australian listeners, Goudy Sans Bold Italic is used for a famous Australian icecream treat, the caramelly delicious and yes-they-did-really-name-it-that Golden Gaytime. It's real, international listeners, look it up. Jason, as one of the gays, do with that what you will!

Jason: It's a typeface that has also appeared in a lot of advertising copy and packaging, enjoying a heyday in the 70s and 80s, particularly—which is fitting when you think of F.W. Goudy's advertising roots. But you know, looking at those old magazine and newspaper ads, it struck me that Goudy Oldstyle suited that period. When the higher the hair the closer you were to God, or an unbuttoned shirt on a man meant a hairy chest. So maybe part of the problem for me is that Goudy Oldstyle looks dated. Some serif typefaces are timeless, but Goudy Oldstyle feels like it belongs to a particular period.

Anitra: You know it really does, which is probably partly why we hated using it back then at OUP. It was 1996! Modern times!

OK. Time for our final section: Kiss, date, kill or marry? When we talk about why we would want to be with this typeface (or not). Is this typeface a one time thing, or do you just go out with it occasionally. Do you never use it, or do you use it so much you worry about yourself? 'Fess up, Jason.

Jason: I guess, courtesy of our OUP experience, you and I both had the equivalent of an arranged marriage with Goudy Oldstyle. Separately, I hasten to add. No bigamy here. And then a quickie divorce in tandem with clearing out our respective desks. I've never experienced couple's counseling, but presenting this episode has helped me make peace with Goudy Oldstyle, I guess. I can safely say that I haven't used it since leaving OUP, and I doubt that I'll feel the need to use it in the future. I mean, the name will always have that association for me, and with it a tic-inducing reaction—it came up in conversation only a few weeks back and I'm sure I felt my right eyelid start to twitch. But at least now I can make a distinction between Goudy the man and Goudy the typeface. So...fewer hard feelings in that regard. We're both free to move on with our lives, as it were.

Anitra: No Jason, I'm not over it, I choose *kill*. As I was studying the top and bottom of the serifs again for this episode I was remembering how much I hated that little jaunty curve. I was right back at OUP, sitting and staring at that curve and thinking "fuck you, Goudy Oldstyle, why?"

You know what's really annoying? It's actually a pretty nice typeface, I mean, objectively. It's good-looking. But I feel the same loathing for it now that I feel when I look at pictures of my ex-boyfriend. Looking at Goudy again for this episode was like when I Googled him a while back and he still looked good, I mean he has aged well—the bastard. At 50 that just is not fair, and when I tried to get Inger to back me up that he hasn't aged well she couldn't even pretend for me! So, anyway. Stop being good-looking, Goudy! I hate you.

Thanks for listening! These are our feelings and opinions about typefaces, we're interested in yours!

You can email us on the address in the show notes or leave a review on Apple Podcasts—where you can also rate us and make the pod easier to find.

If you want to join us with a question or opinion, a great way to do that is to record it via our speakpipe page. You can find it at <https://www.speakpipe.com/>

We have heard from some people, Jason!

Our friends Deb and Nick have both messaged me to tell me that they like the pod—and emphasized this is not just because they are friends. High praise as they are both people of extraordinary taste. Deb, you particular texted me a couple of times to prod me for more episodes—sorry about the wait—and thanks for the support both you and Nick! It means a lot.

Siobhan emailed me from the form on my anitraland website to let me know she liked the pod, and the other useful stuff I share on the website too (thanks Siobhan!) She told me that I had a problematic link (again, thank you!) and how she recently attended a lecture where they said TNR can get you a whole grade more for your thesis. And I believe that. She told me that in this lecture TNR was described as a “dead white man’s” font and it totally is! I am stealing that. Stanley Morrison once said that “type design moves at the pace of the most conservative reader”—so there’s that. For real we need to do that uni tour, Jase! Good luck with the thesis, Siobhan. And you will like the TNR episode, we finally recorded it with David’s help, and it will be released on Feb 2nd.

We have a 5-star rating on Apple podcasts! From someone we don’t know! Thanks, Cate Erin, and sorry we disappeared for a bit; we promise not to do that again! And can we suggest Baskerville for your next grant app? We will explain why in that episode, which will be released after Times New Roman.

We love love *love* hearing from you! And even more now that we have. You can find us on...

Jason: You can email me at designsleuth@yahoo.com

Anitra: @anitranot on all the things and anitraland.com

Our producer Inger is @thesiswhisperer on Twitter

Thanks for listening!

Jason: Thanks for your company!

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