



# SHOUTS & MURMURS

## A NOTE ON THE TYPE

BY BRUCE MCCALL

**M**OST of the text of this book was set in Backslap Grotesque Italic Semi-Detached, a variant of Bangalore Torpedo Moribund adapted in 1867 from a matrice by the Danish chiseler Espy Sans, a character if ever there was one. In sharp contrast to Bangalora's racy, almost

louche taste and its weakness for the cheating side of town, Backslap is a solid citizen and a joiner: A.A., A.A.A., AARP, Christmas Club. Its close cousin Mediocre Flyweight Ultra Bold is almost too sickly-sweet for words, a semi-invalid given to tiresome late-afternoon vapourings. That part of the text not set in Backslap or Bangalora—the lowercase d's, k's, and alternate z's, except after c—is Jiffy-Lube Piscataway Light Narrow, based on a sixteenth-century face closely resembling the late Edward G. Robinson. The wise will cross to the other side of the street when this burly dock-walloper of a font comes galumphing into view.

### A NOTE ON THE WRITER OF THE NOTE ON THE TYPE

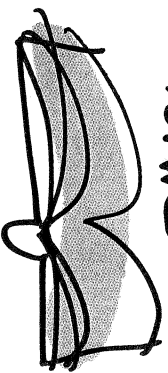
**C**ONTRARY to what the publisher would like you to think, these Notes on the Type don't just write themselves. The above note, for example, was written by yours truly, a freelance typographic blurbist who's occasionally thrown work by a brother-in-law in the production department for walking-around money while working toward my mason's degree. Such notes are by custom unsigned, as anonymous as a shop manual, so I can write any old damn thing I want, the above paragraph being a case in point: total baloney, utter nonsense, and one long leg-pull.

The information kit passed along by the book designer clearly states that the text of this book was actually set in Fish-

tail Equivocal Bold, a typeface favored for its way of leaning into the wind while keeping a straight back, designed in Flanders in 1916 by Siegfried Sassoon (no relation to Vidal), and related by marriage to Lydian Cursive.

### A FURTHER NOTE ON THE TYPE

**C**ORRECT! That was yet another of my frisky typo-lingo gags. Let me ask you: why are you even reading this? The book is over. Hanging around the back of the theatre after the movie to watch the credits roll, that would be understandable. Hanging around the back of a book when there's nothing to look at but a succession of blank pages—



that's pathetic. And dangerous: you could get the idea that the lawyer has forced the author to cut huge sections, or that there's been some production goof-up resulting in five or ten pages too many. But blank pages at the back of a book are a *publishing tradition*, not unlike the Note on the Type: dropped in to break up the blankness, innocuous yet classy.

### ADDED NOTE FROM THE WRITER OF THE NOTE ON THE TYPE

**M**AAYBE the insights of a ten-cent-a-word hack underwhelm you, but it has to be asked: who *cares* what typeface this book was set in except

for a handful of ink-stained, pica-crazed designers with floppy metal rulers? Why are they so special, anyway? Meanwhile, all that whining about rising costs, razor-thin margins, can't risk publishing first novels they're so pinched, and they throw away this precious space on a mindless convention.

Myself, I think they're missing a bet by not selling ads back here. Corns Treated at Home! Whiplash Lawyer Hates to Lose! Instant Vacation Cash from the Air Rights to Your House! Punched ads like the ones you see in the subway cars, because after all, back-page book browsers are just like one- or two-stop subway riders, strictly skimmers.

### A FINAL NOTE ON THE TYPE

**O**N the other hand, there's supposed to be dignity in labor. Those working typographic pros probably don't deserve to be ridiculed. So: the text of this book was set in Torpor Ultra Screwball, one of a family of faces designed by Cooper Black to be seen and not heard, and widely admired for a feel so contemporary—note the kerning, urgent as the final lap of the Paliolo—that it makes tomorrow seem like yesterday.

Wouldn't it be more practical—not to mention smart marketing—to print favorite author recipes as the-ins back here? Martha Stewart's Stock Split Pea Soup; Master of Horror Stephen King's Ghoulish Goulash. Tom Clancy's Hunt for Red Bell Peppers. Or, run classifieds.

*Have serifs, will travel. Burned-out wordsmith seeks assignment at next professional level, preferably nearer front of book. Content desirable but not necessary. No About the Type blocks, please.* ♦