12. William M. Ivins, *Prints and Visual Communication* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953); Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). The social dimension of printing is more evident in the book that opened up this field of history: Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: the Impact of Printing 1450–1800* (London: New Left Books, 1976 [original French edition, 1958]).

13. This point was first made for me by Sebastiano Timpanaro in his essay "Structuralism and its successors," *On Materialism* (London: New Left Books, 1976 [original Italian edition, 1970]), 135–219. I tried to amplify it in two articles: "Semiotics and Designing," *Information Design Journal*, vol. 4, no. 3, (1986): 190–8; "Notes after the Text," *Information Design Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1986): 75–8.

14. Among more recent essays in this field, see: Ellen Lupton and J. Abbott Miller, "Type Writing: Structuralism and Writing," *Emigre*, no. 15, (1990). In their theoretical preamble, Lupton and Miller misread Saussure's "arbitrary," and then apply poststructuralist theory to typeface design—as if this is what constitutes typography. In a later essay on "structure" in typography, Miller does discuss whole passages of text and their configuration, but to less clear effect: in *Eye*, no. 10 (1993): 58–65. The first essay and material from the second have been republished, along with much else of relevance to these themes, in Lupton and Miller's *Design Writing Research* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996).

15. Paul Stiff succinctly takes apart the "designer-centred ideology" of deconstructionism in *Eye*, no. 11 (1993): 4–5. [This article is reprinted in this volume as "Look at Me! Look at Me! (What Designers Want)."]

16. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). The quotations that follow are from page 47.

17. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 39.

18. Here I am thinking especially of the art historian Michael Baxandall in his books *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972) and *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany* (London: Yale University Press, 1980). His book on method, *Patterns of Intention* (London: Yale University Press, 1985), discusses these and related themes in ways that design theorists could learn much from.

19. First performances took place in London in February 1993. The production was the initiative of the promoter, Ron Gonsalves, with the support of the conductor Paul Goodwin and the director Jonathan Miller.

20. Among recent works in this genre, Jay David Bolter's *Writing Space* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991) is of interest here in its deployment of poststructuralist theory to rationalize hypertext.

THE RULES OF TYPOGRAPHY
ACCORDING TO ~~CRACKPOTS~~ EXPERTS

Jeffery Keedy

The first thing one learns about typography and type design is that there are many rules and maxims. The second is that these rules are made to be broken. And the third is that "breaking the rules" has always been just another one of the rules. Although rules are meant to be broken, scrupulously followed, misunderstood, reassessed, retrofitted and subverted, the best rule of thumb is that rules should never be ignored. The typefaces discussed in this article are recent examples of rule-breaking/making in progress. I have taken some old rules to task and added some new ones of my own that I hope will be considered critically.

Imagine that you have before you a flagon of wine. You may choose your own favorite vintage for this imaginary demonstration, so that it be a deep shimmering crimson in colour. You have two goblets before you. One is of solid gold, wrought in the most exquisite patterns. The other is of crystal-clear glass, thin as a bubble, and as transparent. Pour and drink; and according to your choice of goblet, I shall know whether or not you are a connoisseur of wine. For if you have no feelings about wine one way or the other, you will want the sensation of drinking the

stuff out of a vessel that may have cost thousands of pounds; but if you are a member of that vanishing tribe, the amateurs of fine vintages, you will choose the crystal, because everything about it is calculated to reveal rather than to hide the beautiful thing which it was meant to contain. . . . Now the man who first chose glass instead of clay or metal to hold his wine was a "modernist" in the sense in which I am going to use the term. That is, the first thing he asked of this particular object was not "How should it look?" but "What must it do?" and to that extent all good typography is modernist.

> Beatrice Warde, from an address to the British Typographers' Guild at the St. Bride Institute, London, 1932. Published in *Monotype Recorder,* Vol. 44, No. 1 (Autumn 1970).

Beatrice Warde's address is favored by members of a vanishing tribe—typography connoisseurs who "reveal" beautiful things to the rest of us (modernists). Such connoisseurs are opposed to typographic sensationalists who have no feelings about the material they contain with their extravagance (postmodernist hacks). In short, the typographers with "taste" must rise above the crass fashion-mongers of the day. Connoisseurship will always have its place in a capitalist, class-conscious society and there is nothing like modernism for the creation of high and low consumer markets. The modernist typophile-connoisseur should rejoice in the typefaces shown here because they reaffirm his or her status as being above fleeting concerns. After all, if there was no innovation to evolve through refinement to tradition, then where would the connoisseur be?

Beatrice Warde did not imagine her crystal goblet would contain Pepsi-Cola, but some vessel has to do it. Of course, she was talking in terms of ideals, but what is the ideal typeface to say: "Uh-Huh, Uh-Huh, You got the right one baby"? There is no reason why all typefaces should be designed to last forever, and in any case, how would we know if they did?

The art of lettering has all but disappeared today, surviving at best through sign painters and logotype specialists. Lettering is being incorporated into type design and the distinction between the two is no longer clear. Today, special or custom letterforms designed in earlier times by a letterer are developed into whole typefaces. Calligraphy will also be added to the mix as more calligraphic tools are incorporated into type-design software. Marshall McLuhan said that all new technologies incorporate the previous ones, and this certainly seems to be the case with type. The technological integration of calligraphy, lettering, and type has expanded the conceptual and aesthetic possibilities of letterforms.

The rigid categories applied to type design in the past do not make much sense in the digital era. Previous distinctions such as serif and sans serif are challenged by the new "semi serif" and "pseudo serif." The designation of type as text or display is also too simplistic. Whereas type used to exist only in books (text faces) or occasionally on a building or sign (display), today's typographer is most frequently working with in-between amounts of type—more than a word or two but much less than one hundred pages. The categories of text and display should not be taken too literally in a multimedia and interactive environment where type is also read on television, computers, clothing, even tattoos.

Good taste and perfect typography are suprapersonal. Today, good taste is often erroneously rejected as old-fashioned because the ordinary man, seeking approval

of his so-called personality, prefers to follow the dictates of his own peculiar style rather than submit to any objective criterion of taste.

> Jan Tschichold, 1948, published in *Ausgewählte Aufsatze über Fragen der Gestalt des Buches und der Typographie* (1975).

"Criteria of taste" are anything but objective. Theories of typography are mostly a matter of proclaiming one's own "tastes" as universal truths. The typographic tradition is one of constant change due to technological, functional, and cultural advancement (I use the word "advancement" as I am unfashionably optimistic about the future).

In typographic circles it is common to refer to traditional values as though they were permanently fixed and definitely not open to interpretation. This is the source of the misguided fear of new developments in type design. The fear is that new technology, with its democratization of design, is the beginning of the end of traditional typographic standards. In fact, just the opposite is true, for though typographic standards are being challenged by more designers and applications than ever before, this challenge can only reaffirm what works and modify what is outdated.

The desktop computer and related software have empowered designers and nonspecialists to design and use their own typefaces. And with more type designers and consumers, there will obviously be more amateurish and ill-conceived letterforms. But there will also be an abundance of new ideas that will add to the richness of the tradition. Too much has been made of the proliferation of "bad" typefaces, as if a few poorly drawn letterforms could bring Western civilization to its knees. Major creative breakthroughs often come from outside a discipline, because the "experts" all approach the discipline with a similar obedient point of view. The most important contribution of computer technology, like the printing press before it, lies in its democratization of information. This is why the digital era will be the most innovative in the history of type design.

> The more uninteresting the letter, the more useful it is to the typographer.
> Piet Zwart, *A History of Lettering, Creative Experiment and Letter Identity* (1986).

Back in Piet Zwart's day most typographers relied on "fancy type" to be expressive. I don't think Zwart was *against* expression in type design as much as he was *for* expression (an architectonic one) in composition. Zwart's statement epitomizes the typographic fundamentalists' credo. The irony is that the essentially radical and liberal manifestos of the early modernists are with us today as fundamentally conservative dogma.

I suspect that what is most appealing about this rhetoric is the way the typographer's ego supersedes that of the type designer. By using uninteresting "neutral" typefaces (created by anonymous or dead designers), typographers are assured that they alone will be credited for their creations. I have often heard designers say they would never use so-and-so's typefaces because that would make their work look like so-and-so's, though they are apparently unafraid of looking like Eric Gill or Giovanni Battista Bodoni. Wolfgang Weingart told me after a lecture at CalArts in which he included my typeface Keedy Sans as an example of "what we do not do at Basel" that he likes the typeface, but believes it should be used only by me. Missing from this statement is an explanation of how Weingart can use a typeface such as Akzidenz Grotesk so innovatively and expertly.

New typefaces designed by living designers should not be perceived as incompatible

with the typographer's ego. Rudy VanderLans's use of Keedy Sans for *Emigre* and B. W. Honeycutt's use of Hard Times and Skelter in *Details* magazine are better treatments of my typefaces than I could conceive. Much of the pleasure in designing a typeface is seeing what people do with it. If you are lucky, the uses of your typeface will transcend your expectations; if you are not so fortunate, your type will sink into oblivion. Typefaces have a life of their own and only time will determine their fate.

> In the new computer age, the proliferation of typefaces and type manipulations represents a new level of visual pollution threatening our culture. Out of thousands of typefaces, all we need are a few basic ones, and trash the rest.
>
> Massimo Vignelli, from a poster announcing the exhibition "The Masters Series: Massimo Vignelli," (February/March 1991).

In an age of hundreds of television channels, thousands of magazines, books, and newspapers, and inconceivable amounts of information via telecommunications, could just a few basic typefaces keep the information net moving? Given the value placed on expressing one's individual point of view, there would have to be only a handful of people on the planet for this to work.

Everything should be permitted, as long as context is rigorously and critically scrutinized. Diversity and excellence are not mutually exclusive; if everything is allowed it does not necessarily follow that everything is of equal value. Variety is much more than just the "spice of life." At a time when cultural diversity and empowering other voices are critical issues in society, the last thing designers should be doing is retrenching into a mythical canon of "good taste."

> There is no such thing as a bad typeface . . . just bad typography.
>
> Jeffery Keedy

Typographers are always quick to criticize, but it is rare to hear them admit that it is a typeface that makes their typography look good. Good typographers can make good use of almost anything. The typeface is a point of departure, not a destination. In using new typefaces the essential ingredient is imagination, because unlike with old faces, the possibilities have not been exhausted.

Typographers need to lighten up, to recognize that change is good (and inevitable), to jump into the multicultural, poststructural, postmodern, electronic flow. Rejection or ignorance of the rich and varied history and traditions of typography are inexcusable; however, adherence to traditional concepts without regard to contemporary context is intellectually lazy and a threat to typography today.

You cannot do new typography with old typefaces. This statement riles typographers, probably because they equate "new" with "good," which I do not. My statement is simply a statement of fact, not a value judgement. The recent proliferation of new typefaces should have anyone interested in advancing the tradition of typography in a state of ecstasy. It is always possible to do *good* typography with old typefaces. But why are so many typographers insistent on trying to do the impossible—*new* typography with old faces?

Inherent in the new typefaces are possibilities for the (imaginative) typographer that were unavailable ten years ago. So besides merely titillating typophiles with fresh new

faces, it is my intention to encourage typographers and type designers to look optimistically forward. You may find some of the typefaces formally and functionally repugnant, but you must admit that type design is becoming very interesting again.

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THE NEW TYPOGRAPHER MUTTERING IN YOUR EAR
Kevin Fenton

Writers who attempt to discuss typography are in an awkward position: we are simultaneously interested and incompetent. Every published word is filtered through the sensibility of a typographer or a designer acting as a typographer. Writers have a great deal to lose or gain from the choices thus made. Yet even in those places which most actively encourage collaboration between writers and art directors, the specifics of typography remain inaccessible to us. We lack the technical vocabulary or the design aptitude to engage in discussions about many aspects of the craft. When we turn our attention to what might be called the new typography, this feeling, this mix of passion and humility, is particularly strong.

In his introduction to *Typography 15*, Dirk Rowntree of the Type Directors Club provides a useful sketch of the origins of the new typography. He describes an upheaval where, given the new freedom allowed by the computer, "monolithic, centralized authorities that dispense standards of practice are shown to be inadequate, if not entirely irrelevant." The judges of *Typography 15* extended the revolutionary rhetoric. They praised design which "participates in the meaningful dialectic of deconstructionism," "challenges the way we read," and refuses to breathe "the [impoverished] air of consumerism and technology"— thereby "subverting messages and creating alternative readings of a text" and ensuring that "the usual hierarchy of text and design is subverted by its message." Although forms of the word "subvert" were used twice in the passages quoted above, I could not identify what was being subverted other than "the traditional hierarchy of image and text." This, of course, begs the question: what was wrong with the traditional hierarchy? What are typographers subverting and why? You almost get the sense that corrosiveness has become a value in and of itself. But subversion without a discernable purpose seems little more than vandalism.

Ultimately, I believe that what has happened is something more than vandalism and less than revolution. I believe it is a reaction to staleness, a return to a kind of expressionism, an insertion of ghosts into the machine. By introducing more emotion and irony, the new type corrects a tradition dominated by soullessness. The embrace of ugliness and playfulness suggests an openness of spirit. Some pieces make me a little sick to my stomach, which is an appropriate reaction to much of the twentieth century. The displacement of