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Modernity in the Margins:

*A study of the introduction of typographic
modernity in New Zealand, 1920 – 1940*

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A thesis submitted to The University of Waikato
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
Master of Computer Graphic Design

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Abstract

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Publications on New Zealand’s typographical history are few, particularly for the period of typographic Modernism. This study extends the knowledge of New Zealand’s typographic history through investigating typeface utilisation from 1920 to 1940, contextualising this use against developments from what are considered the metropolitan centres of the development of typographic Modernism. It examines the arrival and form of Modernism and modernity into twentieth century New Zealand through the medium of typography, and considers what the outcome reveals about conditions of New Zealand’s theoretical marginality, and the transfer of cultural forms. Focussing on type selection and use within the popular medium of New Zealand newspapers, this study aims to establish greater understanding of a critical period in type design.

This research serves an important role in defining a New Zealand typographic identity, through revealing the way typography was utilised as a vehicle to introduce modernity into New Zealand, establishing greater understanding of our type selection and use. Essentially, this study proposes an alternate way of examining the introduction of modernity in New Zealand, and through this knowledge supporting and inspiring New Zealand type design today.

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Introduction

{ CHAPTER ONE }

New Zealand's typographical history is progressively materialising, but is limited when compared with other areas of design such as architecture or fashion design¹, or related studies in print culture that focus on book production. The current scarcity of research in this area is perhaps a consequence of our country's short history, as well as the common notion that we existed solely as a colony of the British Empire and therefore shared her type traditions. But recent typographic studies – including this author Mary Faber's unpublished research of display faces utilized in New Zealand during 1880-1900² – have shown that despite our colonial background many typefaces used here were found to have originated from outside the imperial sphere, for example Germany, and particularly the United States of America. Although New Zealand imported all of its woodblock and metal typefaces from the arrival of the first printing press up until Joseph Churchwood's (1933–) first typeface designs in the 1960s, it can be argued that the selection and application of these are unique to our typographical identity. The objective of this study is to investigate the arrival and forms of Modernism and/or modernity in the medium

1 Some recent examples include: Peter Shaw, *A History of New Zealand Architecture*, 3rd edn (Auckland: Hodder Moe Beckett Publishers, 2003); Angela Lassig, *New Zealand Fashion Design* (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2010); Peter Shaw, *Art Deco Napier*, 6th edn (Napier: Art Deco Trust, 2008); Douglas Lloyd Jenkins, *At Home: a century of New Zealand design* (Auckland: Random House New Zealand, 2004)

2 Mary Faber, 'New Zealand Type on Display' (unpublished honour's dissertation, University of Waikato, 2009)

of typography in New Zealand, using the methodology of surveying, identifying, and recording modernist typefaces during a twenty-year period, 1920 to 1940. From this it may also be possible to extend the understanding of New Zealand as a society that, despite geographic marginality, adopted and adapted international typographic movements in design through print and popular culture. Ultimately this study is undertaken to contribute to the formation of our own historical typographic identity.

With the critical role of ‘Modernism’ in this study, it is essential to both denote and contextualise the term appropriately. That this term ‘Modernism’ can prove confusing is succinctly outlined by Christopher Wilk, who wrote of the term, “...its ubiquity hides a surprising vagueness and ambiguity of meaning. Vast numbers of articles – including very good ones – use the term Modernism without the authors ever explaining what they mean or how their use might differ from that of others...”³ Wilk defines Modernism as follows:

Modernism was not conceived as a style, but was a loose collection of ideas. It was a term that covered a range of movements and styles in many countries, especially those flourishing in key cities in Germany and Holland, as well as Moscow, Paris, Prague and, later, New York... All of these principles were frequently combined with social and political beliefs (largely left-leaning) which held that art could, and should, transform society... In the 1930s Modernism became a style, used to identify new and innovative design based on abstract, rectilinear geometry and the use of industrial forms and materials; it was gradually stripped of its previous social and political beliefs, especially as it became part of the American marketplace.⁴

Modernism’s reach extended throughout society, with production demands forcing industrial advance and commercialisation. Following the devastation of the First World War, renewal was sought, with utopian hopes spreading throughout all areas of society as awareness increased. The imagery, design and architectural productions that supported

³ Christopher Wilk, *Modernism 1914 – 1939: designing a new world* (London: V&A Publications, 2006) p. 12.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 14.

utopianism reflected the aspirations of modernist pioneers, and resulted in a powerful visual culture that was crucial in the development of the modern world.

Despite frequent reference to Modernism in both historic and recent typographic commentaries, many fail to distinctly identify letterform traits or determine the time-frames to which their use of 'Modernism' refers. One exception is Robert Bringhurst's scholarly study, *The Elements of Typographic Style*, in which Modernism within typography is sectioned into three main categories, as "Early modernism took many intriguing typographic forms".⁵ In chronological order, the first category "The Expressionist Letter" is defined as the following:

*In [one] of its aspects, typographic modernism is rough and concrete more than lyrical and abstract. Rudolf Koch, Vojtech Preissig and Oldrich Menhart are three designers who explored this path in the early part of the twentieth century. They are in some respect the typographic counterparts of expressionist painters such as Vincent van Gogh and Oscar Kokoschka.*⁶

The second category, which Bringhurst considers the most obvious, is "Geometric Modernism: The Distillation of Function":

...The sparest, most rigorous architecture of the early twentieth century had its counterpart in the equally geometric typefaces designed at the same time, often by the same people. These typefaces, like their Realist predecessors, make no distinction between main stroke and serif. Their serifs are equal in weight with the main strokes or are missing altogether. But most Geometric Modernist faces seek purity more than populism...their shapes owe more to pure mathematical forms – the circle and the line...⁷

The final category is "Lyrical Modernism: The Rediscovery of Humanist Form":

Another major phase of modernism in type design is closely allied with abstract expressionist painting...Designers of type during those years were equally busy rediscovering the pleasures of writing letterforms rather than drawing them. In rediscovering calligraphy, they rediscovered the broadnib pen, the humanist axis and humanist scale of Renaissance letters. Typographic

5 Robert Bringhurst, *The Elements of Typographic Style*, 3.1 (Vancouver: Hartley & Marks, 2005) p. 132.

6 *ibid.*, p. 134.

7 *ibid.*, p. 132.

*modernism is fundamentally the reassertion of Renaissance form...*⁸

From Bringhurst's categorisation we can assert that three distinct types of letterforms can represent typographic Modernism: expressionist, geometric, and lyrical. This study considers Bringhurst's definition of geometric Modernism in typography as encompassing two main strands: typographic *Modernism* (for example, the stark geometric forms of Futura) and typographic *modernity* (modified geometric forms, such as Art Deco style faces like Bifur). The difference between the term Modernism and modernity will be clarified further on in this introduction. When referencing Bringhurst's lyrical Modernism category, this study will use his same terminology. As his expressionist category is outside of the timeframe that this research considers, it will not be used as a guide. Focus will be placed on the "Geometric Modernism" typographic category due to the prominent associated typographic developments, and because of its strong representation of the pure, functionalist ideologies from the majority of modernist pioneers. Although providing exact dates of the timeframe of Modernism within typography would be an impossible task, Bringhurst suggests it began in the early twentieth century.

Beatrice Warde applies a more pragmatic approach in defining typographic Modernism. Warde (1900-69) was an American typographer, writer and scholar who spent much of her working life in England. Her reputation was established by a 1926 article in the *Fleuron* (then edited by Stanley Morrison), written under the pseudonym of 'Paul Beaujon', which traced types mistakenly attributed to Garamond back to Jean Jannon of Sedan. In 1927 she became editor of *The Monotype Recorder*, published in London.⁹ In her 1936 article, "What does 'Modern' mean in typography?", Warde asserts the term

⁸ Bringhurst, p. 134.

⁹ [author unknown], 'Beatrice Warde', in *Typography Online*, <<http://www.nenne.com/typography/bw1.html>> [accessed 11 January 2011].

Modernism is “confusing”¹⁰, however her theory of the “modern” is still valuable as the year her article was published fits within the timeframe of this study. Warde discusses how ‘modern’ signifies more than just contemporary, in that “it always implies that something has been superseded, and for a special reason – because the new thing *works* better. That is why it is such a fatal mistake to speak of ‘the modern style’ in any art to denote one particular style”.¹¹ Within the qualification that ‘modern’ signifies that an object or work is both new and functions better than its predecessors, Warde concludes:

It would be absurd to say that a job is modern because it is set in Sans Serif or Egyptian, but it is often true to say that one of those faces particularly Sans, has been chosen because the designer has a modern mind. That is for a special and technical reason. Changing conditions have produced the necessity to use two or even three weights of the same basic design for immediate distinction of categories...a development of catalogue and jobbing requirements...Sans survives the treatment most successfully, and has, therefore, become part of our permanent typographic repertory.¹²

Rather than categorising typefaces according to any theory or style, Warde’s claim is that Sans Serif faces are more representative of ‘modern’ typography due to their practicality, and many of these faces correlate to Robert Bringhurst’s typographical category of Geometric Modernism. Warde does not refer to particular timeframes when discussing modern typography, but does assert that the increasing utilisation of Sans Serif letterforms was a consequence of designers having a “modern mind” – which suggests that an increasing presence of Sans Serif’s would indicate modern typographic practise.

Lewis Blackwell in *20th Century Type* reinforces both the historicism and segregation within modernist typography, as well as providing a timeframe for its beginning:

The manifestos for much that has happened in graphic design this century [1900s] were written

10 Beatrice Warde, ‘What does “Modern” mean in typography?’, in *Penrose Annual*, 27 (Bradford: Lund Humphries, 1936) pp. 44-47.

11 *ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

12 *ibid.*, p. 47.

and visualised in 1920s. The decade saw a ferment of both radical and conservative typographic ideas. From the experimental came a sense of the Modern, that would soon filter into advertising and other commercial usage; meanwhile, the peaks of typographic history were revived by traditionalists as representing values that needed to be restored. The ideas and activities of these years reveal the emerging significance of typography, its position in the flux of creativity between fine art and architecture, and its value as a crucial political and commercial tool.¹³ [authors emphasis]

Supporting Bringhurst's suggestion that typographic Modernism began in the early twentieth century, Blackwell describes how the 1920s saw the formalisation of modernist theory. Graphic design theorists Stephen Heller and Louise Fili concur with this assertion:

Modernism developed early in the second decade of the twentieth century, a movement of kindred artists, designers, and writers throughout Europe who believed that... Art and design had to aggressively lead the culture into a new century... [Modernism was] a movement that addressed ethics and aesthetics [which] ultimately gave rise to a stylistic manifestation.¹⁴

The authors discuss how historic styles were overtaken by contemporary, reductive, geometric communication on an international scale, and of particular relevance is their account of when Modernism developed. There are numerous perspectives on when Modernism in graphic design began, but Heller and Fili's assessment that it was early in the 1910s reinforces Robert Bringhurst's suggestion that the related Modernism in typography began early in the twentieth century.

The decline of typographic Modernism is more indefinite than its beginning, as its pervasive influence can still be traced in recent typographic productions. But the decline of the strong Modernist ideologies behind the work could indicate the cessation of the pure, original Modernism, and works without this solid theoretical basis could only be considered as forms of modernity, not Modernism. Bringhurst states, "Modernism

13 Lewis Blackwell, *20th Century Type* (California: Gingko Press, 1998) p. 34.

14 Steven Heller and Louise Fili, *Stylepedia: a guide to graphic design mannerisms, quirks, and conceits* (California: Chronicle Books LLC, 2006) p. 207.

in design went from a radical idea to a liberal ideal only to stagnate as conservative dogma...”,¹⁵ suggesting that it was filtered out over time, or that it continued, but not in a symbolically important form. Heller and Fili consider the culmination of High-Modernism as concurrent with the outbreak of the Second World War: Nazi policies closed The Bauhaus “and laid waste to the wellsprings of Modernism”, but the aesthetic, ethic and passion continued after the war, culminating in the introduction of the Swiss Style or International Typographic Style, “the next generation of European Modernism”.¹⁶ Amalgamating these sources for the purposes of this research, typographic Modernism will be considered as developing in the early 1910s, attaining a more concrete status by the 1920s, and culminating around 1940 with the disruption of World War II, while acknowledging that its forms carried on to influence following decades, particularly the formation of the International Typographic Style.

It is also important to establish the differences between ‘Modernism’ and ‘modernity’, both significant but distinct terms in this study. Modernity can be classified as a filtered version of what is considered High-Modernism (extreme, reductive forms of modern expression) or the existence of adaptations or variations of Modernism and its ideologies within popular media (in publications, architecture, furniture, etc.), designed to attract wider audiences. It has been suggested that only extreme or abstract examples of modern production – or High-Modernism – should be considered as signifiers of Modernism, as these support the ideologies of modernist pioneers. As such, the role of signifiers will be discussed. Typographically, Modernism would encompass typeface designs that would be considered ‘pure’, in interpreting the ideology, such as (to follow Bringhurst) strictly

15 Bringhurst, p. 162.

16 Heller and Fili, p. 210.

geometric letterforms produced by The Bauhaus. Alternatively, the term *modernity* relative to typography would encompass humanist features applied to geometric sans serifs, softened to appeal to the public eye, or the existence of more decorative letterforms that were designed to satisfy aesthetically or to stand out through differentiation, without adhering to the strict mathematical guidelines of Modernist pioneers, such as Art Deco typefaces. Signifiers of modernity were more commonplace than signifiers of Modernism in the public sphere, as these adaptations of Modernism to meet fashionable or changing taste, rather than embody pure dogma, appealed to a wider public audience, and through mass production carried an increased commercial value, much as the case with Art Deco.

Chapter two of this study will contextualise typographic Modernism within broader artistic and theoretical movements that helped to form Modernism, and that influenced or theorised about typographic practise (such as Futurism, dada, de Stijl, Constructivism) and which in turn fed ideas into The Bauhaus – a significant leader in typographic developments of the period, particularly important in Bringhurst’s ‘Geometric Modernism’ typographic category. The more moderate typographic Modernism of the United Kingdom (and of type designers such as Stanley Morison, Eric Gill, and Edward Johnston) will also be considered, with United Kingdom practise representing forms of both lyrical and geometric typographic Modernism. Typographic practise of modernist forerunners will be discussed (such as Peter Behrens, El Lissitzky, Lazslo Moholy-Nagy, Herbert Bayer, Cassandre, and William Dwiggins), considering the countries that histories currently claim were the pioneers of Modernism – particularly Germany¹⁷

17 Christopher Wilk states movements and styles within Modernism “flourish[ed] in key cities in Germany and Holland”, (Wilk, p. 14.)

– outlining typography’s imperative role as a communicative and persuasive device and how its developments reflected the ideologies of Modernism.

The consideration of the developmental lifecycle of modernist typographic centres (from the 1910s to the outbreak of World War II) is important, as it will establish a global context with which to compare the New Zealand findings. To achieve the objective of determining the arrival of Modernism and modernity through the medium of typography in New Zealand, this study in chapter three will then focus on 1920-1940 for the typographical investigation of New Zealand. The limitation to this particular twenty-year period has been selected for three main reasons. Firstly, as from the 1920s onwards there was an increase in advertising due to commercial demand and technological advances in typesetting, typesetting and printing:

*The pace of technological change was quickening, particularly with the refinement of typesetting machines...Linotype’s developments were not a result of curiosity, but competition. And Monotype was not the only competitor; in 1912 Intertype launched a rival linecasting system following the expiry of the Mergenthaler patent on the basic system. In 1918 the New York Times ordered Intertype casters, firmly establishing the company.*¹⁸

These constant improvements made printing production ever faster, aiding the advertising demands, and consequently pushing typographic developments forward. Secondly, this twenty year timeframe fits within the parameters of Modernism in typography as determined by Bringhurst, Blackwell, and Heller and Fili. Lastly, 1920-1940 was selected as, culminating with New Zealand’s Centenary, it creates a definitive sampling range that is sufficiently broad to obtain an adequate understanding of the typographic trends in New Zealand.

¹⁸ Blackwell, p. 28.

While published material on New Zealand's typographical history is increasing, the focus remains on book publication rather than typography. New Zealand has much significant research and publication on literacy and print, however the attention of Print Culture is on the book, especially in scholarly works. Content of the widely referenced scholarly work, *A Book in the Hand: essays on the history of the book in New Zealand*¹⁹ – as its title suggests – focuses on the book, and *Book & Print in New Zealand: a guide to print culture in Aotearoa*²⁰ (which shares a common editor, Penny Griffith) provides valuable reference examples for the research of type but is limited in type commentary and investigation of origins.²¹ Keith Maslen, one of the three editors of *Book & Print in New Zealand*, must be praised for his specialist work on New Zealand's print culture, receiving the ONZM (Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit) honour for his "lifetime contribution to the study of books and their history".²² Maslen's work is exceptional, but except for his typographical study *Victorian Typefaces in Dunedin, New Zealand*,²³ (a short investigation into ornamental typefaces of the late 1800s) his focus definitely lies on the book. Related works in the field of graphic design give precedence to image over type, such as two popular publications by New Zealand Graphic Designer and Design Lecturer, Hamish Thompson. Despite the significant presence of typography in much of the showcased designs, both Thompson's books – *Paste Up: a century of New Zealand poster art*²⁴ and *Cover Up: the art of the book cover in New Zealand*²⁵ – fail to enter detailed discussion of

19 Penny Griffith, Peter Hughes, and Alan Loney, eds, *A Book in the Hand: essays on the history of the book in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2000).

20 Penny Griffith, Ross Harvey, and Keith Maslen, eds, *Book & Print in New Zealand: a guide to print culture in Aotearoa* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1997).

21 Mary Faber, p. 2.

22 John Gibb, '60-year History in Publishing Recognised', *Otago Daily Times: online edition*, 31 December 2010, <<http://www.odt.co.nz>> [accessed 3 February 2011].

23 Keith Maslen, *Victorian Typefaces in Dunedin, New Zealand* (Melbourne: Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand, 1981).

24 Hamish Thompson, *Paste Up: a century of New Zealand poster art* (Auckland: Godwit, 2003)

25 Hamish Thompson, *Cover Up: the art of the book cover in New Zealand* (Auckland: Godwit, 2007)

typographic origins or classification. The most relevant research into our typographic history is recent. Dr Sydney Shep, a Print Culture historian and the Printer at the Wai Te Ata Press is currently undertaking a Marsden research project entitled *The Printers' Web: typographical journals and global communication networks in the nineteenth century investigating nineteenth century typographic journals*, which began with the placement of *Typo*²⁶ by Robert Coupland Harding into an international context. Dr Noel Waite, a Senior Lecturer, researches areas that include design history, exhibition design and print culture, and in 2009 gave the unpublished presentation *New Worlds of Typography at Typeshed 11*.²⁷ Polly Cantlon is a Senior Lecturer and design historian whose current research into New Zealand's graphic design history acknowledges the role and importance of typography, and provides international contextualisation. These investigations discuss the significant individuals from our printing history and the technological advances New Zealand printing underwent, with Shep and Cantlon also examining letterforms and their origins, but as yet there is minimal discussion of *modernist* typography in New Zealand before 1940, or detailed consideration of the letterforms present during the era of Modernism. This said, one should not ignore the role of John C. Beaglehole, whose passion for typography, as discussed by Shep in her article, 'Touching the Mind of the Country': J. C. Beaglehole and the design of the government centennial publications',²⁸ lead to his appointment as the Typographical Advisor for New Zealand's 1940 Centennial Publications programme. Shep quotes Janet Paul, who received her typographical training from Beaglehole, with the following statement that Beaglehole and the

26 Robert Coupland Harding, *Typo: a monthly newspaper and literary review devoted to the advancement of the typographic art and the interests of the printing, publishing, bookselling, stationery, and kindred trades* (Napier: R. Coupland Harding, 1887-1897)

27 Noel Waite, *New worlds of typography*. Unpublished presentation at *Typeshed 11* (Wellington: 2009)

28 Sydney J. Shep, 'Touching the Mind of the Country': J. C. Beaglehold and the design of the centennial publications', in *Creating a National Spirit: celebrating New Zealand's centennial*, edited by W. Renwick (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2004) pp. 193-206.

publication's general editor Eric McCormick...

*...designed a group of books which showed New Zealanders that books written about their history and problems, and by their own writers, could be as well-produced and edited as the best from Britain. This helped to crack a barrier in the inverted snobbery of literate New Zealanders who denigrate the homegrown.*²⁹

Although Beaglehole was a significant influence in the new dialogue about New Zealand typography and publishing and, as Paul suggests, inspired an increasing faith in New Zealand's local publications, these works only began at the end of the timeframe of this research. It is also acknowledged that the trade journal, 'Imprint: official journal of the New Zealand Printing and Related Trades Industrial Union', first published in 1923, was a means of communicating what was happening in publishing throughout New Zealand, and did contribute to discussions on typographic practise.

The generalist nature of the publications and the specialist but numerically small research projects mentioned above, emphasises the potential significance of this research to New Zealand's typographic history. This study aims to discover what typeface styles the public were exposed to over this period of great change in design and how these related to international typographic developments.

The importance of such an investigation is articulated in a summary of the main argument by Tony Fry in his 1995 article, 'A Geography of Power: design history and marginality'.³⁰ Fry discusses how marginal design histories differ in agenda or rhetoric from the common, well published, central design histories of the large metropolitan centres. He asserts that 'nonuniversal' design histories are necessary, not just as

29 Janet Paul, 1966, as quoted in Shep, 2004, pp. 193-194.

30 Tony Fry, 'A Geography of Power: design history and marginality', in *The Idea of Design*, edited by V. Margolin (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1995) pp. 204-218.

supplemental studies (as they are often treated), but to fundamentally challenge “the nature and authority of the current Eurocentric models of history writing”.³¹ In order to comprehend the complexity of design, “we cannot have a reductive theory of design’s totality”.³² Fry provides an outline of design history’s potential to illustrate both marginal and metropolitan forms of the history of modernity. Writing of Australia, Fry concludes that although marginal regions have little to offer to design history as it is currently constituted, they have “a considerable amount to offer a design history that might be”³³ – a more inclusive history that extends beyond the major design centres. New Zealand’s parallels with Australia make Fry’s argument applicable to our own marginal status, and reinforces the necessity to establish our own distinctive design history.

This typographic research study originated after a *Summer Research Scholarship* at Waikato University, received for a ten-week period (November 2008 through February 2009). Supervised by Polly Cantlon, this research supplemented her existing study into New Zealand’s graphic design history. The research programme involved qualitative sampling of a vertical selection of advertisements from popular print between 1860 and 1950. Advertisements of the period were judged for selection by three categories: as (a) notably typical, (b) stylistically advanced, or (c) of larger size (therefore of greater cost and visual importance). These were extracted to create a visual record of the developments over the 90-year period. This research led to this author’s 2009 study, *New Zealand Type on Display*³⁴, which investigated display faces utilised within New Zealand through 1880-1900, aggregating the most commonly used faces to determine

31 Fry, p. 217.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Faber

typographical trends over an historical period. This process developed an understanding of New Zealand's typographic history, and its findings were utilised to inform the design of new, contemporary typeface, 'Mainline'.³⁵ The completion of *New Zealand Type on Display*, instigated a desire to further explore this area. While employing similar methodology, this current typographic study differs to the research above in two ways: firstly it investigates the timeframe 1920 – 1940, and secondly, due to the large increase in advertising during this period, typefaces will be classed according to their stylistic characteristics (extending Bringhurst's typeface classifications) rather than identifying specific typefaces and measuring exact repetitions of use.

This research seeks to identify stylistic repetitions within the research period, and to attribute and date typefaces discovered in the sampling and contextualise these against international developments in typographic Modernism wherever possible. The emergence of typefaces in New Zealand that signify Modernism or modernity may differ from appearances of Modernism within other design fields, such as architecture or furniture. Establishing this could consequently confirm what role type played in the introduction of Modernism, and modernity, into New Zealand.

It is hoped that the categorisation of typefaces from this era will perhaps reveal New Zealand's adoption and adaptation of Modernism, or lettering utilisation that reflects modernity, possibly uncovering nuances that differentiate our use of modernist typography from its presence elsewhere. Considering the current lack of related publications,

35 'Mainline' is a display face designed by the author, Mary Faber, in 2009. Its letterforms were designed through an amalgamation of what research revealed to be the two most-utilised metal display typefaces in New Zealand from 1880-1900, 'Copperplate', and 'Glyptic'. Both these typefaces were designed by Hermann Ihlenburg, an American type designer who was originally trained in Berlin.

this research could provide valuable reference for others investigating similar fields, and could stand as a comparative tool for other marginal studies, such as ‘From the Streets to the Screen: street signs as a source of inspiration for digital typefaces’³⁶. Most significantly, this research is undertaken as an initial step towards defining a new, specialist history that our country deserves, and perhaps to act as a tool to inform the creation of contemporary New Zealand typefaces. New Zealand’s short, 50-year-old type designing history began with Joseph Churchwood in the 1960s, and has since seen the rise of a number of key New Zealand type designers who are successful on an international level, such as designers Kris Sowersby, David Buck, and Sarah Maxey, as well as Catherine Griffiths who is acclaimed for her typographic use and commentary. As with the study, *New Zealand Type on Display*, this current research has a contemporary application, as for the Master’s Realisation it will inform the creation of a new typeface that reflects this era of New Zealand’s typographic history. Initiating greater awareness and appreciation of type use is crucial as the more knowledge we have of New Zealand’s typographic history, the less marginal it becomes.

36 Priscila L. Farias, Fátima Finizola, and Solange C. Continho, ‘From the Streets to the Screen: street signs as a source of inspiration for digital typefaces’, in *DesignCraft: a history of convergences and divergences*, edited by J. Gimeno-Martinez and F. Floré (Belguim: Universa Press, 2010) pp. 302-306.

Metropolitan Modernism & the Role of Type

{ CHAPTER TWO }

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It is difficult to pinpoint the beginnings of such a broad subject as Modernism, as the ideologies and practise of Modernist theory did not materialise simultaneously, but transpired over a number of years. However amidst the turbulence of political and social upheaval, and major technological and scientific advance, it seems inevitable that in the first two decades of the twentieth century practitioners would respond to initiate change within visual art and design.

The slaughter during the first of two global wars...shook the traditions and institutions of Western civilisation to their foundations...[which lead to] a series of creative revolutions that questioned long-held values and approaches to organising space as well as the role of art and design in society.¹

These “creative revolutions”, which encompassed strong modernist ideologies, stimulated immense changes within design practise and typographic developments.

It is important to cover these developments, and the theories behind them, as this will allow the findings on New Zealand typography to be located within the Metropolitan

¹ Philip B. Meggs and Alston W. Purvis, *Meggs' History of Graphic Design*, 4th edn (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2006) p. 248.

context of typographic Modernism.

Charting Modernism's origins and developments, the work of American Philip B. Meggs (1942-2002), author, designer, historian and professor, was the foundational and still reliable graphic design history, a bringing together of numerous strands to create a thorough, collective historical background. His debut edition in 1983 of *A History of Graphic Design* received praise from the Association of American Publishers as "a publishing landmark"², and the more recent fourth edition (published post-mortem in 2006 under the co-authorship of Altson Purvis), *Meggs' History of Graphic Design*³, "remains the only book of its kind worth having, and the best historical reference currently existing for the discipline".⁴ Its balanced insight into both the theory and practise of graphic design, from cave painting to the digital age, includes consideration of the role of typography, and thus must be credited as a primary source for the history of Modernism and typography.

Following the nineteenth century development of printing technology, Meggs credits the perfection of the rotary lithographic press by American inventor Richard M. Hoe in 1846 with giving force to the rise of lithography in printing.⁵ Chromolithographic technology gave artists and designers the ability to create economical, free-flowing, colourful letterforms and images in printing that were previously impossible with the standard letterpress. It was this freedom of expression and colour that boosted advertising:

...art reproductions for middle-class parlours to advertising graphics of every description, poured

2 As quoted in the publisher commentary concerning Meggs and Purvis, 2006.

3 Meggs and Purvis, 2006.

4 From graphic designer Samuel John Klein's book review, 'THE Book, Updated: Meggs' History of Graphic Design, 4th Edition', (2006) <<http://designorati.com>> [accessed 24 April, 2010].

5 Meggs and Purvis, p. 153.

*from the presses in millions of impressions each year.*⁶

Many fine printers of letterpress loathed the lack of constraint and of traditionalism, but the popularity of the bright chromolithographic productions was increasing. Despite the newfound freedom chromolithography permitted, the Arts and Crafts Movement saw a return to crafted handiwork (namely in bookwork) and a reform of traditional practice. Beginning in the 1880s in England, articulating, and later practicing these ideologies was William Morris, “social reformer, poet, philosopher, and furniture, textile, wallpaper, stained-glass, and type designer”.⁷ Inspired by Morris – who soon became the Arts and Crafts movement’s de facto leader – a number of printing groups “fought to return enfeebled British craftsmanship, as they saw it, to a state of excellence in the world”.⁸ In their summary of the Arts and Crafts movement Steven Heller and Louise Fili extend Meggs’ commentary by discussing how, approaching the 1900s, the movement gradually divided in numerous directions:

*In England, some Arts and Craft members eventually veered toward Art Nouveau, others embraced a purist Gothic aesthetic. In the United States...a movement began among printers and designers to proffer higher standards.*⁹

This free expression was not only evident in the imagery, but very much in the liberated letterforms that were now possible to produce and reproduce with ease. The graphic design and artistic movement Art Nouveau (fully established in the 1890s) embraced this newfound freedom, expressing the ideals of liberty and abolition of tradition. The threat of lithography forced letterpress printers to acquire new letterpress fonts that could compete with curvaceous hand-lettered freeforms, as did the accelerating demands of

6 Meggs and Purvis, p. 153.

7 Heller and Fili, p. 43.

8 *ibid.*, p. 44.

9 *ibid.*, p. 44.

advertising¹⁰: factors which stimulated type foundries to design an increasing range of ornamental display types and consequently fashioned a steep increase in the production of new metal fonts leading into the 20th century.

Late in the 19th Century, Art Nouveau evolved from curvilinear formations “toward a rectilinear approach to spatial organisation”¹¹ with the help of the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) who rejected historicism and whose “repetition of rectangular zones and use of asymmetrical spatial organisation were adopted by other designers”.¹² Wright also practised in the field of Graphic Design at points throughout his career, and later collaborated with William H. Winslow to produce *The House Beautiful*¹³ by Rev. William C. Gannett at the Auvergne Press. This and his other publications, which included reproductions of Beardsley and Toorop designs, became highly influential for The Glasgow Four, four Scottish artists whose mature designs are renowned for their “verticality and integration of flowing curves with rectangular structure”.¹⁴ As with their illustration, the typographic work of the Glasgow Four combined the curvy forms evident in Art Nouveau with a geometric aesthetic. Although their recognition in Britain was minimal, through publicity the group gained popularity throughout Western Europe, particularly in Vienna, Austria. This popularity influenced work of The Vienna Secession (1897-1905), whose works also had definitive geometry that would stimulate further experimentation of structure and spatial relationships within design.

10 Faber, p. 8.

11 Meggs and Purvis, p. 221.

12 *ibid.*, p. 221.

13 Frank Lloyd Wright, designer for *The House Beautiful*, W. C. Gannett (Chicago: Auvergne Press, 1989)

14 Meggs and Purvis, p. 222.

Parallel to the formation of The Vienna Secession, in 1897 German architect and artist Peter Behrens (the founder of the Munich Secession¹⁵) left his background in painting for applied art, and “embraced the 1890s Art Nouveau movement”.¹⁶ At the turn of the century, Behrens’ interest in typographic reform was increasing, and in 1901 he released his first typeface, *BehrensSchrift* (Figure 2.1) which is described by Alan Windsor, the author of article ‘Peter Behrens as a Typographer’, as “a fusion of Roman and gothic lettering...its forms were derived from the quill pen not the brush, a point the Behrens himself stressed very strongly. It marks a turning away from the Art Nouveau”,¹⁷ and the strong verticals and sharp angles of the letterforms certainly verify this.

BehrensSchrift type design.

Figure 2.1, Peter Behrens, *BehrensSchrift* typeface, 1901

Behrens’ gradual shift away from the organic, curvilinear Art Nouveau is noted by Stephen Eskilson, an associate professor of art history and frequent publisher of work on contemporary art and design. Eskilson asserts that Behrens was moving towards a style “marked by greater simplification and geometric forms”,¹⁸ and that not long after his appointment in 1903 as the director of *Kunstgewerbeschule* (the School of Arts) in

15 The Munich Secession, formed in 1892, was an organisation of kindred artists who broke from academic tradition and were “excited by new developments such as Impressionism and Post-Impressionism”, P. Meggs as quoted in Carter, Meggs, and Wheeler, p. 170.

16 Philip Meggs, ‘Peter Behrens: Design’s Man of the Century?’, in *Meggs: making graphic design history*, Rob Carter, Libby Meggs, and Sandra Wheeler, eds (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2008) pp. 170-174.

17 Alan Windsor, ‘Peter Behrens as a Typographer’, in *Typographic Writing*, edited by D. Jury (Gloucestershire: International Society of Type Designers, 2001) p. 303.

18 Stephen Eskilson, *Graphic Design: a new history* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2007) pp.101-102.

Düsseldorf, “Behrens restructured the curriculum in order to place greater emphasis on design for industry”.¹⁹ The addition in 1904 of a staff member to Düsseldorf – Dutch architect Johannes L. M. Lauweriks, who “was fascinated by geometric form and had developed an approach to teaching design based on geometric composition”²⁰ through the utilisation of a structured grid system – inspired Behrens, whose...

*...application of this theory proved catalytic in pushing 20th-century architecture and design toward rational geometry as an underlying system for visual organisation. His work from this period reveals the tentative beginnings in Constructivism in graphic design.*²¹

In the same year (1907) that Behrens was appointed as the artistic advisor of Allgemeine Elektrizitäts Gesellschaft (AEG), the Deutscher Werkbund (German Association of Craftsmen) was also formed. The Werkbund advocated “a marriage of art with technology”,²² with Behrens playing a significant role alongside the other group leaders, Hermann Muthesius and Henry van de Velde. This synthesis of art and technology was to become the ideology at the forefront of Modernism in graphic design with the embrace of geometry certainly carrying through to future typographic developments. And although Behrens typeface designs referenced older styles, Behrenschrift and a number of his other designs portrayed a distinct move towards geometric letterforms. Perhaps Behrens’s greatest typographical insight, as translated from his German writings, was his statement that the letterform “gives the most characteristic picture of an age”.²³

The new practise of ‘graphic design’ was originally a term used for type arrangement, but with the emergence of imagery within printing, ‘graphic design’ soon encompassed

19 Eskilson, p. 102.

20 Meggs, p.171.

21 *ibid.*, p.171.

22 *ibid.*, p.171.

23 Peter Behrens as quoted in Windsor, p. 305.

both text and image. Early pictorial modernism certainly exemplified this merger, particularly in posters which embodied simplified, flattened imagery, usually accompanied with Sans Serif block lettering. Lucien Bernhard's poster from 1905, *Priester Matches* (restyled, circa 1910 version in figure 2.2 below), is credited as establishing this style, and also for simplifying brand recognition through the combination of solely the product image and bold brand name.

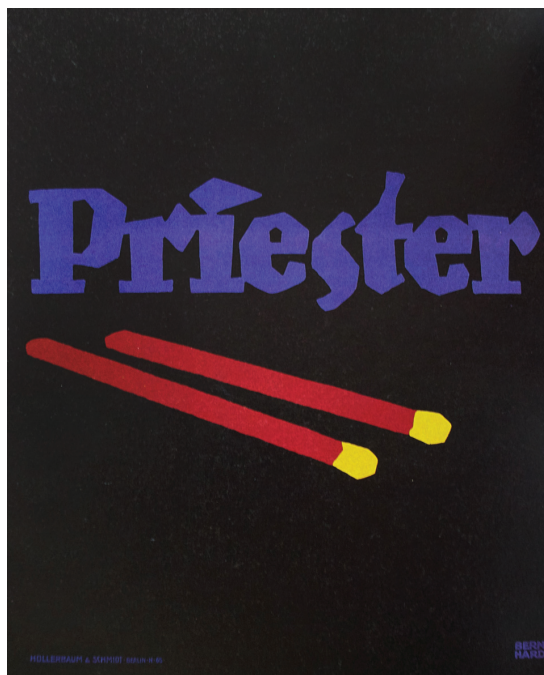


Figure 2.2, Lucien Bernhard, *Priester Matches*, c.1910 (Restyled version of his original poster from 1905)

The abolition of tradition that is associated with modernist movements gained popularity from the revolutionary impulse and public desire for change following the First World War. However, even before World War I, Modernism, as we have seen, had already started taking shape. The first two decades of the twentieth century accelerated radical change: social, political, cultural, economical, technological, and scientific developments

were transforming the world at an increasingly rapid, to some extent chaotic, rate.²⁴ Artistically, Cubism represented this fragmentation of the world. Cubism’s visual experimentation and distinct geometric approach to spatial order and organisation acted as a catalyst for future experimentations that informed the development of Futurism within Graphic Design. Italian poet and philosopher (and later graphic designer) Filippo Marinetti’s publication in 1909 of ‘The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism’²⁵ on the front page of the prestigious Parisian newspaper *Le Figaro* marked the beginning of a revolution that saw all areas of the arts re-evaluating their practice against a backdrop of innovations in science and industry.

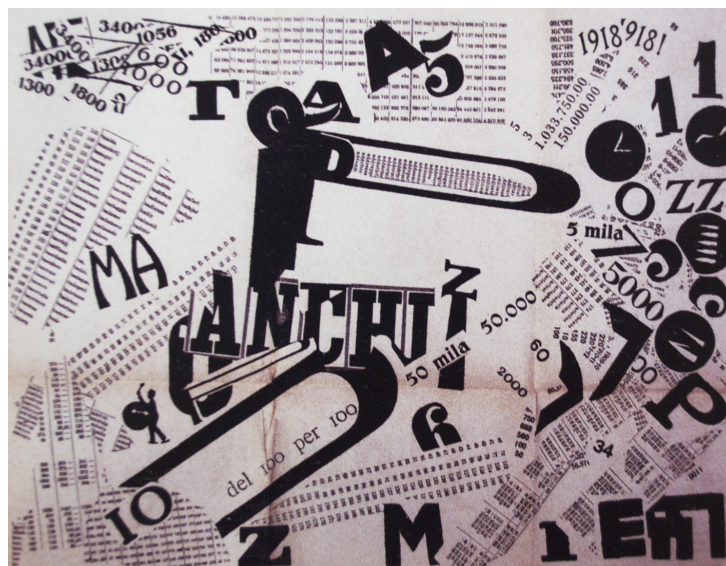


Figure 2.3, Filippo Marinetti, *Une Assemblée Tumultueuse*
(A Tumultuous Assembly), 1919

Marinetti’s typographic expressions of his poetry were highly experimental for their time (see figure 2.3 above), with Futurists’ work and controversial ideologies linked to that of

²⁴ Meggs and Purvis, p. 248.

²⁵ Filippo Marinetti, ‘The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism’ (Manifeste du futurisme), *Le Figaro*, 20 February 1909, p. 1.

dada (also initiated by a poet and philosopher, Hugo Ball, around 1916). This link was recognised by one of the dada movement founders, the painter, designer, film-maker, and author, Hans Richter (1888-1976). In his book, *Dada: art and anti-art*, first published in English in 1965, he states, “the free use of typography, in which the compositor moves over the page vertically, horizontally and diagonally, jumbles his type faces and makes liberal use of his stock of pictorial blocks – all of this can be found in Futurism years before dada”.²⁶ But where dada differed from Futurism was in its abolishing of order and programmes, and the full embrace of freedom. Where Futurism produced works to “fulfil its programme”, dada’s only “programme” was to have no programme.²⁷

It was this complete freedom from conventions and restraint that set dada apart from any previous artistic movement, and consequently saw the production of experimental, surreal, controversial work that broke all tradition. The introduction of photomontage proved popular and rose to the forefront of many graphic design works, which often exhibited experimental type in a range of typefaces, both serif and sans serif. “Large and small letters joined in new combinations and danced up and down; vertical and horizontal words arranged themselves to carry the new freedom to the reader, but allowed him to see and feel it for himself”.²⁸

The typographic application in dada collage was sporadic and bold – using cutouts of already selected, printed letterforms that were used in popular culture, as shown in figure 2.4. In these, text was integrated with often disparate images to create unified works that

²⁶ Hans Richter’s, *Dada: art and anti-art* was first published in German in 1964, then in English in 1965. The most recent release of the English edition in 1997 has been used as the reference for this study: Hans Richter, *Dada: art and anti-art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997) p. 33.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 34.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 116.



Figure 2.4, Raoul Hausmann, *Le tableau*, 1920

reflected “the chaos of an age of war and revolution. And the dadaists were aware that their method possessed a power for propaganda purposes which their contemporaries had not the courage to exploit”.²⁹ According to Steven Heller and Elinor Pettit in *Graphic Design Timeline*, dada ended in Europe around 1922 with the advent of surrealism.³⁰

At a similar time to the introduction of dada was the formation of de Stijl: an avant-garde movement, formed by the Dutch painter, architect and poet Theo van Doesburg, based around his magazine of the same name. Much of its international recognition came from paintings by Piet Mondrian, who employed rectilinear forms with primary colours creating striking, geometric, bold compositions. The *de Stijl* magazine (1917-1931) introduced the experimental type that represented the movement. In his history of Modernism, Design Historian Jeremy Aynsley emphasises the interconnectivity of the

29 Raoul Hausmann as quoted in Richter, p. 116.

30 Steven Heller and Elinor Pettit, *Graphic Design Timeline: a century of design milestones* (New York: Allworth Press, 2000) p. 65.

movements of this period:

At first the typographic style of the interior of the magazine was conventional. It became more adventurous with the experiments of Van Doesburg, who explored visual typography in the arrangement of poetry. Working under the dadaist pseudonym of I.K. Bonset, he organised page layouts in which emphasis was given to words through bold type, increased sizes and a loosening of syntax.³¹

Furthermore (as with dada), de Stijl reflected the typographic experimentation begun with Italian Futurism. Although de Stijl did make experimental use of type, unlike The Bauhaus later, it rarely undertook the creation of new faces. Nonetheless their manifesto poster (figure 2.5) experimented with the creation of block letters, and although hand-constructed, the composition heading did introduce radical new letterforms, while the text below the graphic reinforces the association between bold, block Sans Serif lettering with radical modernist movements.



Figure 2.5, Vilmos Huszar and Theo Van Doesburg, “De Stijl” poster, 1917

31 Jeremy Aynsley, *Pioneers of Modern Graphic Design: a complete history* (London: Mitchell Beazley/Octopus Publishing Group, 2004) p. 54.

A parallel movement to dada and de Stijl was Constructivism. The Russian Revolution of 1917 in Russia led directly to the founding of the Soviet Union, which gave force to a movement that had been stirring since 1913. Many commentators, such as Heller, Aynsley, and Meggs, agree on the critical role of Constructivism in taking newly-forming theories of Modernism forward. Inspired by Cubism, Futurism and non-figurative art, designers architects and artists collaborated to “develop a new visual style for this progressive society”,³² with graphic design embracing the machine aesthetic within typography and photography, as exemplified in designs from El Lissitzky and Rodchenko. The constructivist colour palette was minimal, in part due to financial limitations, but it was also symbolic, with productions in red and black being the most common. “Russian Constructivists believed that a designed object should not have any discernable style but rather be a pure product of industrial creation”.³³ They zealously pursued what they considered a utilitarian design approach that supported the proletariat through art forms that embraced propaganda and promoted communism. A leading pioneer of the movement, the Russian Constructivist El Lissitzky was, according to Alston Purvis, Visual Arts Director at Boston University, “one of the first to fully exploit photomontage as a communication medium,” and was also a hugely influential typographer.³⁴ Lissitzky did not design typefaces, but is renowned for his typographical treatment that applied Sans Serif (or on occasion geometric, mechanical Slab Serif) lettering in red and black in a variety of sizes and at ranging angles. He would greatly influence significant figures of The Bauhaus and de Stijl through his travels to Europe. During his career he met and befriended Kurt Schwitters, László Moholy-Nagy, and Theo van Doesburg.

32 Aynsley, 2004, p. 249.

33 Heller and Fili, p. 90.

34 Alston Purvis and Martijn Le Coultre, *Graphic Design 20th Century* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2003) p. 19.

The demise of Constructivism with the rise of Stalinism around the mid 1930s, was marked in the Soviet Union by an increasing rejection of the avant-garde radicalism in favour of socialist realism, but Sans Serif type remained popular.

Imagery within advertising was common from the late 1800s, surging in the 1900s, until challenged by the arrival of High-Modernism, where the image was rejected unless absolutely necessary, and then if used it should be mechanistic: that is, abstract, geometric, or machine processed in the form of photography. This rejection arose from the rise of abstraction in art, the ideas forming on functionality and reductivism, and notably following the conflict within the Deutche Werkbund in 1914, where one strand advocated the “standardisation and the application of scientifically inspired rules to design”,³⁵ which included the rejection of the image. From the early 1920s, El Lissitzky definitively placed the focus on type – its selection, form, and architecture on the page, which became a key signifier in the practise of modern graphic design. This typographic prominence confirms the importance of type within modernity, its progression to the foreground playing a key role in the representation of modernist ideals.

When discussing the development of Modernism within Graphic Design, The Bauhaus was unquestionably a dominant and crucial influence, particularly in giving typography prominence over imagery. The Bauhaus reinforced geometric, bold, simplified layouts and accompanied these with Sans Serif typefaces, and instigated a modern approach to design education. As with all stylistic developments, The Bauhaus’ beginnings and influences can be difficult to ascertain, but this study considers the movement towards geometric form from The Glasgow Four, The Vienna Succession, and Peter Behrens,

35 Jeremy Aynsley, *Graphic Design in Germany 1819-1945* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000) p. 40.

as a strong indication of developments to come. Futurism, dadaism, de Stijl and Constructivism all contributed to the birth of The Bauhaus.

THE BAUHAUS AND SANS SERIF

Although The Bauhaus is renowned for its influence on modern art, its beginnings appear far from radical. Walter Gropius' manifesto in 1919, 'The Bauhaus Proclamation', was the foundation of The Bauhaus, and influenced by Arts and Crafts philosophy it called for a return to craft and the integration of art and architecture.³⁶ A seemingly unlikely declaration for pioneering modernists, however this call, in the words of Johanna Drucker in one of the most recent historical surveys of graphic design, initiated a "14-year curricular evolution aimed at involving art in production and thus, in a sense, inaugurated design as we know it".³⁷ The deviation from Arts and Crafts to art and industry was marked by the move from Weimar to Dessau in 1925 (the increasingly conservative Weimar government imposed unacceptable restrictions on the school), and also by The Bauhaus school's new motto: 'Art and Technology – a New Unity!' The application of this motto to graphic design instigated the production of highly influential modernist work and Sans Serif typographic developments. These Bauhaus productions are considered High-Modernism – radical, extreme forms that were not widely embraced by the public – but were hugely influential in the history of graphic design.

36 Johanna Drucker and Emily McVarish, *Graphic Design History: a critical guide* (New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2009) p. 202.

37 *ibid.*, p. 202.

Typographically, the role of Laszlo Maholy-Nagy within The Bauhaus was of great importance. Originally studying law, the “restless experimenter”³⁸ then became an avant-garde artist, and was one of the first to move from painting to design for communication.³⁹ Following World War I, Maholy-Nagy was strongly influenced by Soviet Constructivism, which likely contributed to the Hungarian’s move from painting to graphic design. Moving from Budapest to Berlin in 1923, he was soon invited by Walter Gropius to join The Bauhaus as a professor in the metal workshop. He shortly became head of the preliminary course, and “had a marked influence on the evolution of Bauhaus instruction and philosophy, and he became Gropius’s ‘prime minister’ at The Bauhaus”.⁴⁰ Lazlo Maholy-Nagy outlined his typographic ambitions in *Straatliches Bauhaus in Weimar, 1919–1923*, The Bauhaus’ 1923 exhibition catalogue:

*We want to create a new language of typography whose elasticity, variability, and freshness of typographical composition [are] exclusively dictated by the inner law of expression and the optical effect.*⁴¹

Although not a type designer, Maholy-Nagy was teacher to key individuals in modernist type development, particularly Herbert Bayer (who later became a Bauhaus teacher). Within The Bauhaus, Maholy-Nagy was the first to adamantly reject Blackletter, followed by Bayer, “who in an effort to present information clearly and in the most forcible form first proposed the use of sans serifed alphabets and then a rejection even of uppercase letters as being extraneous”.⁴² This vision led to Bayer’s design of a Sans Serif alphabet that combined both upper and lower case into one alphabet titled Universal

38 Meggs and Purvis, p. 312.

39 Jeremy Aynsley, *Pioneers of Modern Graphic Design: a complete history* (London: Mitchell Beazley/Octopus Publishing Group, 2004) p. 64.

40 Meggs and Purvis, p. 313.

41 Walter Gropius and Laszlo Maholy-Nagy, *Straatliches Bauhaus in Weimar, 1919–1923* (Munich: Kraus Reprint, 1980) unpaginated.

42 Nadine Monem, ed., *Font. The sourcebook*. (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2008) p. 148.

(figure 2.6). Bayer's reasoning was, "why should we write and print with two alphabets? Both a large and a small sign are not necessary to indicate on single sound... we need only a single alphabet".⁴³ Although this was an interesting development, it proved to be a typographic distraction that did not achieve universal appreciation.

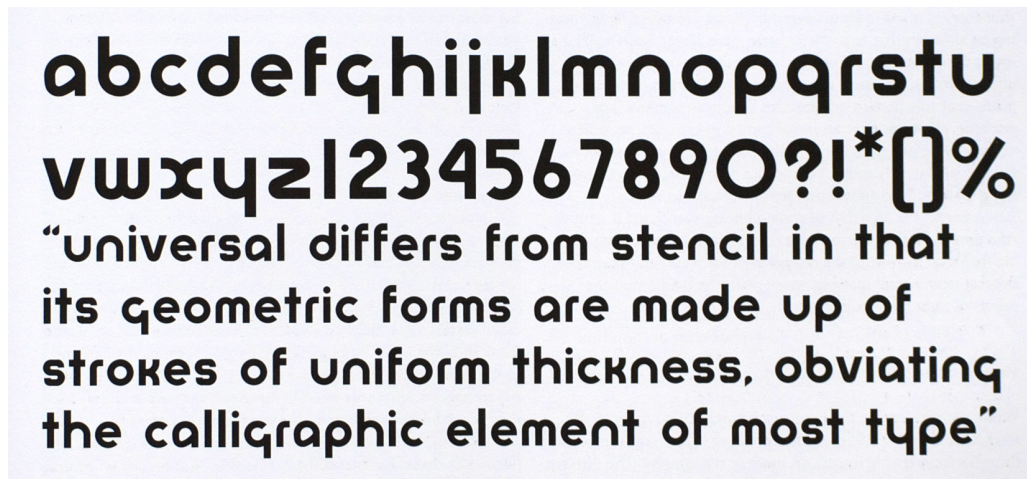


Figure 2.6, Herbert Bayer, *Universal* typeface, 1925

Despite Universal not having the popularity its name may suggest, save for use within Bauhaus exhibitions, it did contribute to a rapidly increasing congregation of Sans Serif typefaces.

While the first Modern Roman faces, Didot and Bodoni, were designed in the late 1700s, the first commercial Sans Serif is attributed by Eskilson to William Caslon IV (1780-1869) in 1816.⁴⁴ The first professionally designed Sans Serifs, such as Akzidenz Grotesk (1896) from the German foundry Berthold, were introduced in the last decade of the nineteenth century. They "found a home in advertising, where the letters worked very well in large sizes...as a vehicle for bold statements".⁴⁵ The innovative new versions of the letterform

43 Herbert Bayer in the *Museum of Modern Art Catalogue*, 1938, as quoted in Monem, p. 148.

44 Eskilson, pp. 23-24.

45 *ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

associated with Modernism and modernity, like Universal, became ascendant in the 1920s.

Simon Loxley, London typographer, designer and teacher, in *Type: the secret history of letters*, states of other important Sans Serif type design developments that occurred during the 1920s:

Jakob Erbar (1878-1935) designed Erbar, a geometrically based sans serif released in 1926, for the Frankfurt foundry Ludwig and Mayer. In 1927 Rudolf Koch (1876-1934) produced the distinctive Kabel (Cable), with large ascender to x-height ratio, a traditional Roman shape to the lower case a, a tail to the t, a Venetian e,⁴⁶ and oblique endings to many of the strokes. But both these faces, excellent though they are, were to be eclipsed in popularity by the most famous German typeface of the period – Futura.⁴⁷

German Paul Renner (1878-1956) designed Futura, which was originally commissioned by Jakob Hegner who had praised Renner's skills as a painter. Hegner desired new Roman typefaces, and believed that "only painters had the necessary fresh, left-field approach to the problem of designing lettering, unhindered by a type designer's preconceptions".⁴⁸ The owner of Frankfurt foundry Bauer (Georg Hartmann) had the initial trial-cut of Futura made in 1924. After its first release in 1927 it was released in a second, popular edition in 1928 that was "an immediate success...and has remained so ever since".⁴⁹ Renner attributed Futura's success to the purity of its ideology and aesthetic subtleties that softened the geometry of the letterforms, but perhaps its diverse range of weights also appealed to printers and designers adopting the new typography. It was a conscious move, following Bodoni and Didot, away from the evidence of the hand in type design and towards pure geometry and mathematical proportion, a true exemplar of Modernism.

46 The Venetian-style 'e' has a sloping crossbar.

47 Simon Loxley, *The Secret History of Letters* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006) p. 142.

48 *ibid.*, p. 144.

49 *ibid.*, p. 145.

Perhaps the German Futura's main competitor was the British designed Gill Sans by Eric Gill, which he modelled off the 1916 Johnston's Railway Type, by Edward Johnston. Railway Type was commissioned by the Underground Electric Railways Company of London to strengthen their corporate identity: its letterforms were confident, monoline, bold Sans Serifs that structurally encapsulated modernist geometry, yet with a slight humanistic approach to some lowercase letterforms, such as curves applied to the 'l' and 'y'. Originally titled 'Underground', it was later coined Johnston's Railway Type, and an almost exact version is still used for the Underground signage today. Johnston was briefly assisted in its development by former student Eric Gill, who later utilised the forms of Johnston's Railway Type to inform his own design, Gill Sans.

*In his Essay on Typography in 1931, Gill claimed that Johnston's letters were not entirely satisfactory or 'fool-proof', and that his new Monotype Sans Serif, the prototype of Gill Sans, was superior... Gill Sans achieved its pre-eminence because of the mighty marketing clout of the Monotype Corporation and the self-serving iconoclasm of its author. Thus, rather than Johnston's lettering, it was Gill Sans that became the English national style of the mid-century.*⁵⁰

Gill Sans, a less mechanical Sans Serif design, was released in its first series as capitals in 1928 with the lowercase not appearing until 1933. Gill Sans was originally designed as a titling display face, and despite the development of the lower-case was less commonly used as a book type. Possibly due to its more humanistic approach to Sans Serif lettering (through the employment of varying line thickness), Gill Sans was more popular than the stark geometry of Futura, and even today it continues to be a very popular face internationally.

Other important geometric modernist typographic developments are highlighted by Richard Hollis, a British author and graphic designer who has also worked as a printer,

⁵⁰ Ben Archer, 'Eric Gill Got It Wrong; a re-evaluation of Gill Sans', updated 2007, <www.typotheque.com/articles> [accessed 23 November 2010] unpaginated.

magazine editor, print–production manager, and a teacher. In his chapter on Germany in *Graphic Design: a concise history*,⁵¹ Hollis first discusses how the introduction of a strict geometric base shunned “Renaissance designs, Fraktur and the Germanic craft tradition of heavy calligraphic typefaces”.⁵² This rejection is clearly evident in Erbar (designed by Jakob Erbar in 1923), which inspired Rudolf Koch’s Kabel that appeared “at the same time as the most popular of the new Sans Serif types, Futura, in 1927”,⁵³ yet despite their structural similarities, Kabel did not share Futura’s popularity. Max Burchartz’s ‘alphabet design’ of 1924 was another lesser-known Sans Serif development, but his integration of both upper and lowercase to create one form for each letter shares this characteristic with Bayer’s Universal released in 1925. A slightly different approach to the geometric letterform came from Josef Albers in 1926, who created a ‘stencil letter design’ using a combination of simple geometric forms.

An American development, that was not hugely popular but still worthy of praise, was Metro: a bold, geometric-inspired Sans Serif. Designed in response to the European foundry developments, Linotype commissioned American designer William Addison Dwiggins to design Metro, which was released in 1930. Another geometric Sans Serif from America was Twentieth Century, and was perhaps the typeface that could be considered America’s equivalent to the German Futura and the British Gill Sans. Sol Hess drew Twentieth Century between 1937 and 1947 for the Lanston Monotype Company, although it was not as widely used as Futura and Gill Sans. Although America was not at the forefront of typographic developments with geometric Modernism, it was arguably the world leader in Art Deco typeface design (which will be further discussed),

51 Richard Hollis, *Graphic Design: a concise history* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001)

52 Hollis, p. 54.

53 Hollis, p. 54.

and consequently the leader in typographic modernity.

These developments showcase the internationalism of Sans Serif typographic Modernism developments in countries with foundries, an internationalism that is highlighted by

David Consuegra in reference to America:

The immigration of people [to America], including illustrators, typographers, punch-cutters, engravers, photographers, inventors, and others, had taken place since the late eighteenth century...This immigration continued during the nineteenth century...[and] was especially important in the twentieth century between World War I and World War II. Great type designers, art directors, photographers, and architects appeared, such as Lucien Bernhard, Mehemed Fehmy Agha, Alexei Brodovitch, Herbert Bayer, Leo Lionni, George Guiŝti, Ladislav Sutnar, and Gyorgy Kepes. Also, Geŝtalt psychologists, such as Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, Rudolf Arnheim, and others, had a great influence on applied typography and imagery.⁵⁴

The 1923 Bauhaus exhibition left a significant impression on calligrapher and typographer Jan Tschichold (1902-74). Moholy-Nagy's use of the phrase 'New Typography' and Herbert Bayer's compositions in the exhibition catalogue inspired Tschichold to construct typographic guidelines, which ultimately led to his most acclaimed publication, *Die Neue Typographie* (The New Typography) in 1928, initially published only in German. It proved hugely influential in Germany, but despite Tschichold's visits to England just before World War II, only four of his articles had been translated into English by 1945. Robin Dodd, specialist design historian and typographic theorist, comments that Tschichold's monumental work "consolidate[d] the theory and practise of modern typography",⁵⁵ with Meggs's asserting that it explained the new design approaches as seen in The Bauhaus to "a wide audience of printers, typesetters, and designers",⁵⁶

54 David Consuegra, *American Type Design and Designers* (New York: Allworth Press, 2004) p. xi.

55 Robin Dodd, *From Gutenberg to Opentype* (East Sussex, UK: The Ilex Press, 2006)

56 Meggs and Purvis, p. 319.

consequently initiating the wave of new Sans Serif type designs in the 1920s, which were mostly German.

The Bauhaus was forced by the Nazi government to close in 1933, but over its lifespan its members “helped to engender a revolution in typography”⁵⁷ and influenced other designers who brought major changes to typographic style and developed typefaces that are still popular today. Despite political pressures, avant-garde artists, The Bauhaus and associated typographers and graphic designers were a profound and long-lasting influence within Modernism and on future developments, with Drucker and McVarish concluding that, “The International Typographic Style arose from [their] roots, as did [new] approaches to corporate identity and branding campaigns”.⁵⁸

DIE SCHULE REIMANN / REIMANN SCHOOL

The Reimann school in Berlin, as documented by German graphic design history specialist Jeremy Aynsley, provides an interesting contrast to other art and design schools of the period, in that it advocated a more commercial approach, exemplifying modernity as opposed to High-Modernism. Growing under the direction of Jewish couple Albert and Klara Reimann, the school gradually established itself at the start of the 1900s, with a nominal 14 students in 1902, which grew to nearly 1000 students annually in the 1920s

57 Purvis and Le Coultre, p. 23.

58 Drucker and McVarish, p. 206.

(including evening and part-time courses), as opposed to the 200 enrolled at The Bauhaus.⁵⁹

[The Reimann school] distinguished itself from the established, subsidised Arts and Crafts schools by teaching the most recent and fashionable subjects, as well as those well rooted in German education. Unlike The Bauhaus, where the model of activity was architectural, the emphasis at the Reimann school was on area which might be considered traditionally to be more feminine.⁶⁰

This “feminine” influence was perhaps more evident in the earlier years, but later works still possessed a slightly more gentle approach than other constructivist-inspired contemporaries.

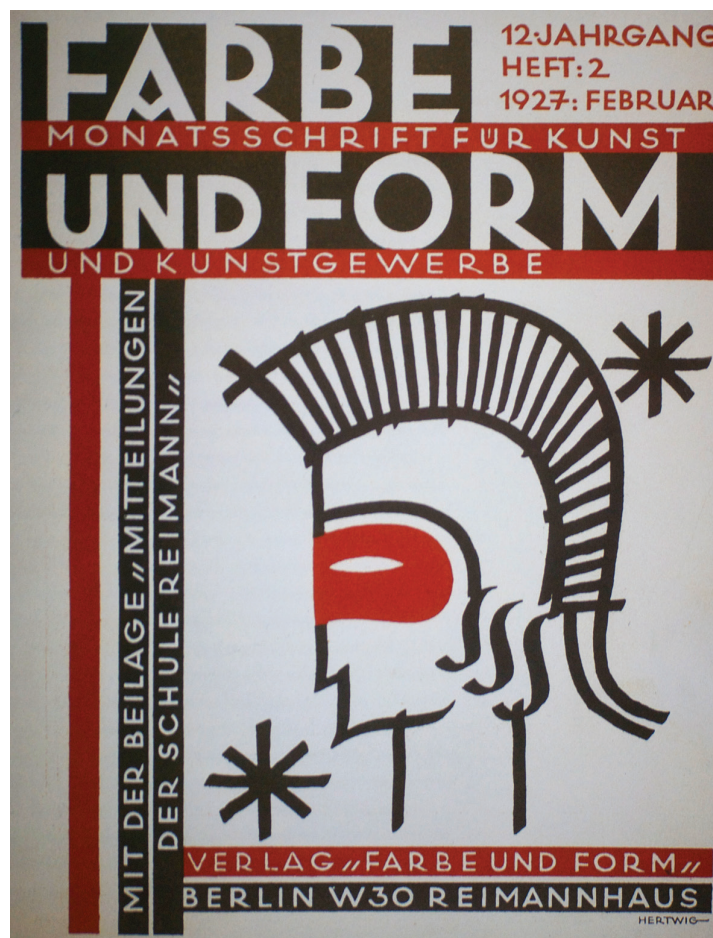


Figure 2.7, Max Hertwig, *Farbe und Form – Monatsschrift für Kunst und Kunstwerke*, Magazine cover, 1927

59 Aynsley, 2000, p. 113.

60 *ibid.*, p. 111.

Students of the class 'Lettering, Commercial Graphics and Surface Art' were initially instructed on calligraphy, which later led to the composition of small press adverts, business printing, and packaging. Although this class was more focused on small-scale jobbing typography, other classes taught commercial graphics and poster design that allowed more freedom in lettering design and at larger scales.

The school magazine, *Farbe und Form*, cover (figure 2.7) was designed by Max Hertwig in 1927, and shows a definite constructivist influence through its colour scheme and distinctly geometric typography, but is perhaps softened by the freeform curves of the hand-styled central image. The directness and clarity of the typographic message insinuates the idea of functionality, demonstrating the Reimann school's more commercial focus.

Although the Reimann school educated significant numbers, it did not achieve the fame associated with The Bauhaus, perhaps due to its less radical approach. But they did demonstrate the filtering of High-Modernism, as described by Blackwell, that advertising of the period utilised to appeal to a broad audience. Their adapted modernist ideologies, and pragmatism as opposed to radicalism, was reflected in their practical, business focussed training "that led to the application of design in a wider range of contexts than [had] usually been recognised. It was in this world that the interests, tastes and aspirations...of the modern consumer would be fulfilled".⁶¹

Design magazines and journals of the period, like the Reimann school's *Farbe und Form*, were specialist in their contents: "it was only when *Gebrauchsgraphik* began publication

61 Aynsley, 2000, p. 117.

in 1924 that an all-embracing coverage began. In many ways it formed an international model for other for other graphic design magazines for much of the century”.⁶² This magazine showcased a range of typography and advertising from North America and Western Europe, which at that time was considered ‘international’,⁶³ and it was exported throughout the world, including to New Zealand in the 1930s. It is another confirmation of Germany’s leading role throughout Modernism in graphic design.

UTOPIA AND ART DECO

One of the key specialist writings on the strand of modernity known as Art Deco, is that of Charlotte Benton, Tim Benton and Ghislain Wood, *Art Deco 1910-1939*. Christina Lodder also provides valuable insight on the Utopian vision of modernity in her chapter, ‘Searching for Utopia’ within Wilk (2006).⁶⁴ Following the destruction of World War I, there was a social desire for change around the 1920s that arose internationally. The public embraced the modernistic view of Utopianism⁶⁵: a desire for social perfection and idealistic living conditions. This “galvanised artists and architects, and stimulated their visions for building a new world, which was materially, spiritually, politically, socially and visually a better place”.⁶⁶ Widespread desire for a fresh start catalysed the

62 Aynsley, 2000, p. 120.

63 *ibid.*, p. 129.

64 Christina Lodder, ‘Searching for Utopia’ in Wilk, pp. 23–70.

65 Utopianism is described by *Webster’s New World College Dictionary* (2008) as “the ideas, doctrines, aims, etc. of a utopian; visionary schemes for producing perfection in social or political conditions”, p. 1583. Utopianism is also described in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th edn (2000) as “The ideals or principles of a utopian; idealistic and impractical social theory”.

66 Lodder, p. 24.

development of a new era within design that we now distinguish as Art Deco.⁶⁷ Charlotte Benton and Tim Benton in their introduction to *Art Deco 1910-1939*, succinctly describe Art Deco as the following:

*Art Deco is the name given to the “modern”, but not Modernist, twentieth-century style that came to prominence in the inter-war years and left its mark on nearly every visual medium, from fine art, architecture and interior design, to fashion and textiles, film and photography.*⁶⁸

Although many consider it a major definitive style within Modernism, it is difficult to characterise work from this period due to the nature of its origins. Art Deco was born out of an amalgamation of numerous design influences combined with popular culture to create fashionable, accessible items and architecture, and clearly illustrates the term modernistic. As Wilk commented in reference to Modernism, American editor and author Martin Greif considers how slippery the term Art Deco can also be:

*I suspect that the term “Art Deco” should really be “Art Decos” (accent on the plural) and that the term embraces at least ten to fifteen mutually exclusive “styles”... We have allowed the term to embrace virtually everything that was produced between the two world wars, from the finest French furniture of Pierre Legrain to the tubes of Tangee lipstick purchased at the local five and dime...surely there’s a world of difference.*⁶⁹

There are differing views on the plurality of Art Deco, both positive and negative, but perhaps the fault in Greif’s view is his generalisation that all inter-war productions were categorised as Art Deco, when during and following World War I there was work being produced by The Bauhaus and other design schools that was quite distinct from Deco fabrications. And although Art Deco does encompass an assortment of styles, the new range of typeface designs appearing on posters, billboards and buildings at the time had distinct features that can unambiguously be categorised as to Art Deco. Bold Sans Serif

67 ‘Art Deco’ was retrospectively coined in the 1960s through shortening the words *Arts Décoratifs* from the 1925 Parisian World fair, *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* (The International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts)

68 Charlotte Benton, Tim Benton, and Ghislain Wood, eds, *Art Deco 1910–1939* (London: V&A Publications, 2003) p. 13.

69 Martin Greif, ‘Defining Art Deco’, *Art Deco Society of New York News*, 2.1, January-February, 1982, p. 2.

faces with hairline crossbars, geometric faces with streamlined curvature or inline details, as well as Egyptian Slab Serifs began to infiltrate advertising. Stephen Eskilson highlights some of the key typographic developments associated with Art Deco, beginning with one from the Ukrainian immigrant Adolphe Jean-Marie Mouron (1901-1968), better known by his pseudonym, Cassandre. Eskilson describes Cassandre as “perhaps the most well-known Art Deco graphic designer in Paris...[who] designed a number of display faces throughout his career”.⁷⁰ His first was Bifur in 1928 (figure 2.8), which truly exemplified the ‘stylised geometry’ aesthetic strand of Art Deco typefaces.

Bifur is another example of the stylised reductive geometric abstraction characteristic of Art Deco...with smaller details indicated by shaded areas. While geometric Art Deco types such as Bifur are never austere in their geometry, Cassandre designed the sweeping streamlined curves of the letters with attention to decorative flourishes...⁷¹



Figure 2.8, Cassandre, *Bifur* typeface, 1928

Although Cassandre professed it was to be classed as a display face, like many Art Deco faces, its strong visual statement “was very seldom used for unassuming general purpose text”⁷². Eskilson’s next acknowledgement is another typeface of 1928, Broadway (figure 2.9), which was titled as such to connote the link between stylised letterforms and the famous entertainment industry of New York City. Described as “one of the most familiar typefaces of this era”,⁷³ its design came from the esteemed American typographer, Morris

70 Eskilson, p. 172, 177.

71 *ibid.*, p. 177.

72 *ibid.*, p. 177.

73 *ibid.*, p. 177.

Fuller Benton (1872-1948).

Essentially a revival of the early nineteenth century “fat faces” fused with a sleek geometric sense of form, Broadway became instantly indicative of the glamour of the ultimate modern city, New York. During this period, European graphic designers idealised New York City as the pinnacle of urban modernism...Benton’s type uses dramatic contrasts in order to call immediate attention to itself. In one of the few instances in which an Art Deco typeface has been able to transcend its dated style, Broadway has become established in a niche of its own as the preferred lettering for twenty-first-century nightclubs and restaurants that want to project an aura of sophistication.⁷⁴

Figure 2.9, Morris Benton, *Broadway* typeface, 1928

Benton also released three other popular typefaces in 1928, Modernique, Parisian, and Ultra Bodoni. The aptly-named Modernique (figure 2.10), almost sits between both geometric typographic Modernism and the stylised geometry characteristic of Art Deco typographic modernism. Yet certain quirks, like the curves of the lowercase ‘f’ and uppercase ‘Q’, high-crossbars of the uppercase ‘E’ and ‘F’, and the “use of semicircles instead of dots for letters j and i”,⁷⁵ clarify this typeface within the stylised geometry attributed to Art Deco.

Figure 2.10, Morris Benton, *Modernique* typeface, 1928

74 Eskilson, p. 177.

75 Consuegra, p. 69.

With Parisian (figure 2.11), there is no ambiguity in categorisation: a distinctly Art Deco typeface, whose name suggests it was inspired by French Art Deco. Consuegra asserts it was, “a very typical typeface of the 1920s”.⁷⁶



Figure 2.11, Morris Benton, *Parisian* typeface, 1928

The last 1928 typeface design from Benton was Ultra Bodoni, perhaps the first modern version of a ‘fat-face’, which was first presented by Firmin Didot in 1819. It is characterised by a strong contrast between thick and thin strokes, but perhaps the most distinct feature is its triangular serifs.



Figure 2.12, Morris Benton, *Ultra Bodoni* typeface, 1928

The final significant development to be covered is the Art Deco typeface, Peignot (figure 2.13), which Eskilson describes as Cassandre’s greatest typographical success. A later development, introduced in 1937, the all-purpose Peignot “was destined to become an icon of the Art Deco era”.⁷⁷ Its debut year was truly marked by its presence at the last

⁷⁶ Consuegra, p. 69.

⁷⁷ Eskilson, p. 177.

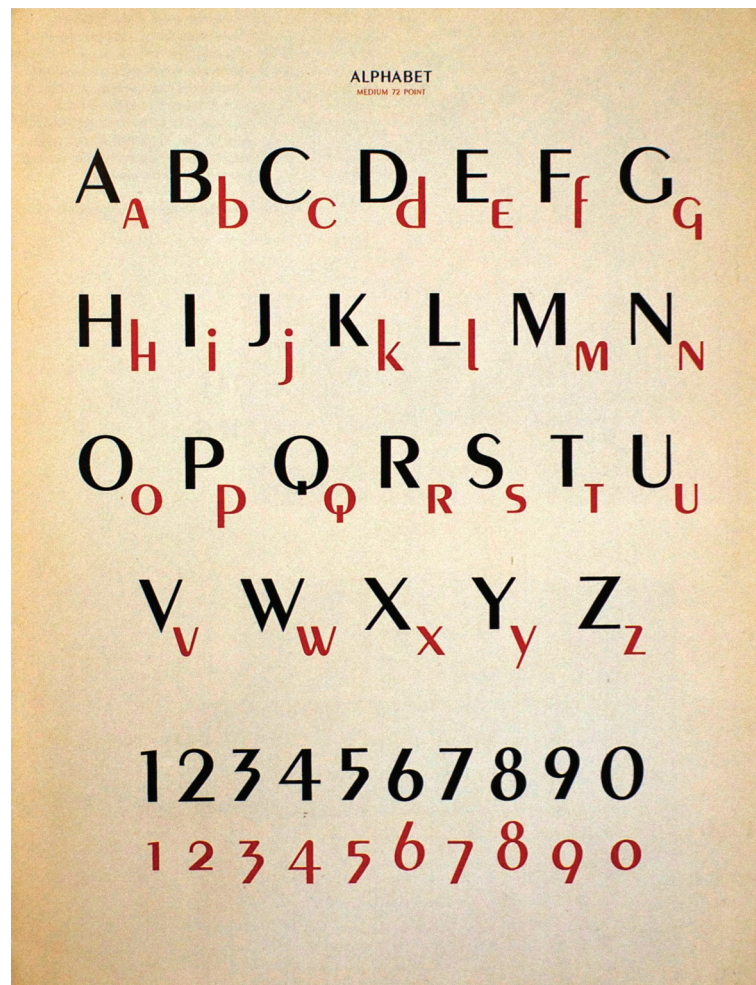


Figure 2.13, Cassandre, *Peignot* typeface, 1937

great world fair before the Second World War, the 1937 Paris exhibition. It was “carved into the side of the fair’s major architectural landmark, the Palais de Chaillot”,⁷⁸ and from there its popularity continued to grow. “This Sans Serif alphabet was intended by Cassandre to be both legible and readable while retaining some of the unique geometric styling of Art Deco”.⁷⁹ What is particularly interesting about this face is that most of the lowercase letterforms are simply small capitals, which is somewhat reminiscent of the 1925 High-Modernism typeface design from Herbert Bayer, Universal.

78 Eskilson, p. 177.

79 *ibid.*, p. 177.

The Art Deco style(s) achieved success on a world-wide scale, proving particularly successful throughout America. Nearing the end of the 1920s, expanding corporate manufacturers in America were increasingly seeking employment of industrial designers, with patents for “styling” of machines and products booming.⁸⁰ According to the Smith, the 1930s saw streamlining take to America by storm;

*...pseudoscience of increased speed and decreased fuel consumption [which] filled advertising for cars, trains, air travel; [which] spread rapidly through product design to fashion, to office organisation; until it entered the language as an expression for all relations which were revised to become “fast”, “bright”, and “sharply defined” – in a word, modern.*⁸¹

In essence, rather than altering the function of the existing technology, the role of industrial designers was to modernise appearances by applying streamlining. Thus “the ‘new world order’ projected by the dazzling array of an ensemble of these streamlined products was one in which everything would look different, but everything would stay the same”.⁸² At a time when the Depression had a tight grasp over people’s purses, it is only logical that successful sales would not result from the release of any drastically new products. The effects of streamlining ultimately meant consumers felt not only fashionable, but also safe purchasing these modern productions, as most were cosmetic upgrades of familiar technologies. Typeface developments incorporated streamlined curves into the geometric Modernism framework, while other Art Deco faces included decorative or inline elements. Either way, through the appropriation of the forms of Modernism and rejection of its underlying theories, these Art Deco typefaces demonstrated modernity rather than Modernism.

80 Eskilson, p. 363.

81 *ibid.*, p. 376.

82 *ibid.*, p. 382.

FRIDAY NEXT
— AT THE —

CIVIC

(Direction: Thomas A. O'Brien)

Can Beauty and Wealth Get Away with **MURDER!**

So lovely, so beautiful, so rich, so spoiled!

Demanding Everything — giving nothing! — Until the Law demands the best ten years of her life — she must pay for one reckless crime! — Sent to prison by the man she loves, who loves her too! — Can Sex, Wealth, Beauty, Social Position, Save Her?

**IT'S
DRAMATIC
DYNAMITE**

MANSLAUGHTER

WITH
CLAUDETTE
COLBERT
FREDRIC
MARCH

Box Plan
Now Open at Civic.
Reservations: Phone
40-266 - 43-266

A

B

C — See this Dramatic Struggle of Beauty and Wealth against the Law!

Figure 2.14, *Manslaughter* movie advertisement,
The New Zealand Herald, 6 December 1930

Hollywood also played a significant role in the portrayal of a manufactured utopia, including films directed by Busby Berkeley in which the forefront was Art Deco with a maritime focus, combining straight lines with curves to create large backdrops for

mechanistic synchronised swimmers. Similarly, Charlie Chaplin films, namely *Modern Times*⁸³ (1936), displayed themes of Modernism and the machine age to an international public audience, creating a heightened awareness of societal change. From the 1920s to the 1940s, the spread of Hollywood movies throughout the World strengthened America's international cultural presence, and of Art Deco through the accompanying publicity posters and billboards showcasing Sans Serif and Art Deco fonts which flaunted American modernity. As seen in figure 2.14, this advertisement in *The New Zealand Herald* in 1930 for the American movie *Manslaughter*, is an example of the American Art Deco style that was reaching our shores. It would have likely arrived as a printers block or a partially printed poster that was designed and manufactured in America, with the text sections marked 'A', 'B' and 'C' added to the advertisement by the local printer. The prominent size and placement of this advertisement also highlights the American presence in advertising in New Zealand; this particular advert took centre stage, occupying about one third of the page, with significantly smaller advertisements framing it on either side and below. It should also be noted that this movie was released in America in July 1930, and the advertisement seen here came only five months after that release.

83 *Modern Times*, directed by Charlie Chaplin, (United Artists, 1936).

In contrast, yet parallel to the Sans Serif typography of The Bauhaus and decorative Art Deco lettering was an equally important Roman serif development during this period, the renowned Times New Roman, attributed to English type historian and designer, Stanley Morison. Morison joined the Monotype Corporation in England in 1922, and in 1930 published *First principles of Typography*⁸⁴ which is still referred to as a source of typographical insight. This book was highly influential in the 1930s, particularly in Britain, as were his numerous text type revivals that included Baskerville and Bembo. Meggs relates how Morison was the typographical consultant to *The Times* newspaper from 1929 to 1960, and after he publically criticised the poor quality printing of *The Times*, he was commissioned to oversee the design of a new typeface. Supervising graphic artist Victor Lardent, Morison designed Times New Roman in 1931. It was first used in 1932 by the newspaper, and with its “short ascenders and descenders and sharp, small serifs... the typographic appearance of one of the world’s preeminent newspapers was radically changed overnight, and the traditionally conservative readers warmly applauded the legibility and clarity of the new typeface”.⁸⁵ It was one of the most widely used typefaces of the twentieth century, albeit mainly for book printing, with its success a derivation of its legibility, aesthetically pleasing visual qualities, and moderately condensed forms that promoted economy.⁸⁶

84 Stanley Morison, *First Principles of Typography* (New York: Macmillan, 1936)

85 Meggs and Purvis, p. 324, 326.

86 *ibid.*, p. 326.

NAZI GERMANY

When considering the importance of typography and its ability to embody the ideas and ideals of Modernism at this time, Germany under the Nazi regime is a prime example of the power of typographic form. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, typography and image developed as a vehicle for both commerce and governments to communicate with their audience, and was increasingly utilised as a tool of persuasion that eventuated in the marriage of graphic design and politics. The first major signs were seen in Russian Constructivism (as previously discussed) where artists' collaborated to create a new aesthetic that promoted patriotism and supported the Bolshevik government. Symbolically represented from 1933, the National Socialist Government in Germany also realised the crucial role of graphic design in forming a strong identity, employing artists and designers to create work that promoted Nazi ideology and suppressing any that opposed or defied the Nazi Regime standards. Other countries involved in World War II also utilised design for positive nationalist representation to promote patriotism, and later to create psychological messages to evoke guilt and shame in those who hadn't signed up to the army.

While The Bauhaus and other practitioners of Modernism in Germany were abolished, the Nazi utilisation of artistic expression throughout their campaigns was paramount to their success, and to some extent they extracted the regulation and quest for reform from modernist ideology to create their powerful propaganda. A strong indication of the celebrated stance of the Arts in Germany approaching World War II is outlined by Alan Steinweis, specialist researcher of Nazi Germany and modern Europe: "By 1933... In the Weimer Republic, the number of Germans officially designated as artists or entertainers

exceeded the combined figures for those designated as doctors and lawyers”.⁸⁷ Steinweis’s publication, *Art, Ideology, & Economics in Nazi Germany*, includes three tables outlining the membership numbers of the Reich Chamber of Music, Theatre and Visual Arts. Table 2.1 below details the numbers of the Visual Arts Chamber.

Table 2.1⁸⁸

Membership of the Reich Chamber of the Visual Arts, c. 1937

Professional Groups	Members
Architects	13 750
Landscapers	520
Interior designers	500
Sculptors	3 200
Painters and graphic artists	10 500
Commercial graphic artists	3 500
Pattern designers	1 000
Copyists	230
Art and antique dealers	1 500
Art print dealers	360
Total	35 060

This illustrates the significant number of graphic artists operating under the rule of the Third Reich, but also that the influential figures operating within the Nazi government recognised that “the aspirations of German artists toward collective organisation could be exploited to the regime’s advantage”.⁸⁹ This comes as no surprise considering that following 1933 almost all of the economic activity within Germany “became subject to an increasingly intrusive and complex system of regulation”.⁹⁰ The Reich Chamber of Culture (under which all the Chambers were collectively classified) was initiated as a means of reconciling “the totalitarian impulse of the National Socialist movement with the neocorporatist aspirations of Germany’s professional artists”.⁹¹

87 Alan E. Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, & Economics in Nazi Germany: The Reich Chambers of music, theatre, and the visual arts* 2nd edn (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996) p. 7.

88 *ibid.*, p. 4.

89 *ibid.*, p. 10.

90 *ibid.*, p. 79.

91 *ibid.*, p. 174.

Members from the Arts Chamber, which included Herbert Bayer, would have contributed significantly toward the propaganda that played a major role in the social influence necessary for the Nazi Regime to gain and maintain governmental rule. Posters and brochures combined strong, imperious imagery with bold letterforms to create directed, succinct messages aimed to shape the minds of their audience. What is of particular interest to this study is the selection of typefaces used for these posters, which Christopher Wilk notes was contradictory:

*Within the general vilification of Modernist culture...the 'new typography' had been identified as alien, proto-communist and un-German. By contrast, Nazis celebrated and encouraged the use of black-letter Gothic forms, which were declared to be an historical expression of Germanness...[however] there was not an absolute hegemony of Gothic type in Germany after 1933. Futura, the Modernist typeface par excellence, continued to be widely used because of its simple clarity. And in 1941 official attitudes vis-à-vis typography reversed; the Gothic was suddenly disparaged as a 'Jewish' letterform and Roman faces found favour, as a graphic analogue of Hitler's favoured neo-classical architecture.*⁹²

This conscious typeface selection proved there was obvious recognition of the symbolic form of certain typefaces and that they could be used as a tool to establish identity and influence public audiences. In early Nazi posters, type was used as a way of portraying strength and demanding patriotism, and later to brand the regime as modern; in either use, typefaces were a device for national cohesion and identity.

92 Wilk, p. 357.

SIGNS OF MODERNITY

When considering type as an indicator of Modernism and modernity, its ability to symbolise national identity, and to connote meaning, it is timely at this point to consider crucial theories of visual semiotics: the meaning of signs, signifiers, and the signified. Analogies made by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), a Swiss linguist and philosopher, introduced the ideology that two constituents (the ‘signifier’ and the ‘signified’) combine to create the linguistic sign.

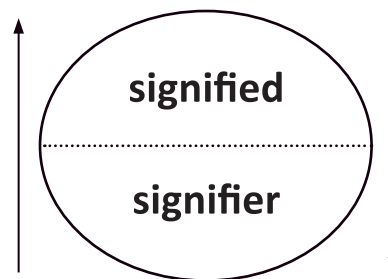


Figure 2.15, *The Sign*, Based on Ferdinand Saussure’s model, 1967

Figure 2.15 is a visual representation of Saussure’s model of the sign, demonstrating its two elements.⁹³ If we substitute the idea of ‘Modernism’ as the ‘signified’ concept, then linguistic signifiers of this could be ‘streamlined’, ‘advancement’, ‘mechanised’, et cetera – which all pertain to Modernism – creating different signs that represent the original, signified concept. In 1976, Umberto Eco defined the signified as somewhere between “a mental image, a concept and a psychological reality”.⁹⁴ However the ‘signified’ according to Saussure is not a thing but the notion of a thing⁹⁵: a theory that may be more aptly

93 From the post-humous publication of Ferdinand de Saussure’s, *Cours de linguistique générale*, edited by R. Engler (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1967).

94 Umberto Eco, 1976, as quoted in D. Chandler, *Semiotics: the basics*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2007) p. 16.

95 Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: the basics*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2007) p. 16.

suited to Modernism, as Modernism itself is not an actual object or visible ‘thing’ but a collective concept to which multiple signifiers can adhere themselves.

Saussure’s theories on signs were in relation to literacy – language-based semiotics. The contemporary application of his theories, as discussed by Sean Hall, a leader in contextual studies, is to the visual world in visual semiotics. Considering that a signifier delivers a message then we can investigate the transmission of messages through different mediums. “The medium carries the message from the sender to the receiver”.⁹⁶ In Hall’s text on visual semiotics, he suggests that the medium can be categorised into three areas: Presentational – through the voice face or body; Representational – through paintings, books, photographs, drawings, writings and buildings; and/or Mechanical – through telephones, the internet, television, radio or cinema. These three categories are distinct, but not mutually exclusive (for example, a painting seen on the internet is both a representational and mechanical medium). Considering Hall’s different mediums for messages, letterforms would be classified as representational: they are abstract forms that are used to deliver a message. Of course if these letterforms are on screen, then they are also mechanical, but when discussing the letterforms as seen in printed media between 1920 and 1940, then they are a representational medium that carry the message. The signs of typography are complex, as the literal translation of the word represented carries meaning, as do the letterforms in which they are presented. The cohesion of a range of letterforms is used to deliver a literal message. Sole letterforms may be representative of sounds, but it is the collaboration of letterforms to form words that create the intended message. But while literal meaning is denoted through the collective word, the actual

96 Sean Hall, *This Means This, This Means That: a user’s guide to semiotics* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2007) p. 26

form, the construction of the letter itself, connotes meaning.

As previously discussed, the case of the symbolic values of Fraktur lettering in the early years of the Nazi regime in Germany, and their later embrace of Sans Serif forms can be used as a model of the power of typographic forms as signifiers. The letterforms employed for National and political identity were selected specifically because of the connotations of their form. The style in which something is implemented can influence how a message is received, which is demonstrated in figure 2.16 below.



Figure 2.16, Sean Hall, 'I am not a criminal', 2007

This example demonstrates the effect of stylistic influence, using letterforms as the representational medium, and of this image, Hall comments:

The elegant typeface in which the sentence "I am not a criminal" is written seems to make it more believable. When it comes to message-making we should not forget that the form of the message matters as much as the content... What is remarkable here is just how much the style of typeface can influence how we feel about the sentence.⁹⁷

If the same information were represented in a distressed, rugged typeface, the denotation of the words would remain the same but the letterforms themselves would connote a negative message, evoking a sense of disbelief in the sentence. Response to letterforms and style may differ depending on the individual, but certain styles due to their distinct form or historical background, will be interpreted in the same or a similar way. The increasingly popular Sans Serif typefaces in the 1920s were not just associated with, but deliberately identified by modernists as symbolically appropriate for modernist use.

⁹⁷ Hall, p. 140.

Stark geometric forms represented the ideologies of High-Modernism, and likewise the more decorative geometric typefaces of Art Deco, due to their structure based on appeal and public acceptance, were representations of modernity. Moholy-Nagy, Bayer, and Tschichold, to name a few, selected or designed type specifically as signifiers, as did Cassandre in his creation of Art Deco typefaces, and Morison in his representation of lyrical Modernism with Roman letterforms.

For the purpose of this research, Modernism and modernity will stand as the signified concepts, and the signifiers will be typographic forms associated with these concepts, creating overall signs of Modernism or modernity. Typographically, geometric Sans Serif typefaces will be treated as signifiers of Modernism, the more decorative Art Deco styles will be treated as signifiers of modernity, and Old-Style Roman typefaces will signify lyrical modernity.

S U M M A R Y

A general background to the development of Modernism and typographic Modernism has been established to identify the metropolitan activities with which to contextualise the study of New Zealand typographic Modernism. The pioneers of typographic Modernism and modernity shaped the forms that were used in peripheral countries, such as New Zealand, that did not have their own type foundries.

As the Nazi government rejected or adapted aspects of Modernism to suit their own agendas, so too other countries adopted Modernism and applied humanistic approaches that appealed to their own sense of nationalism. As Modernism spread internationally there were inevitable domestic nuances – adaptations and modifications – to the style, resulting in the representation of modernity rather than Modernism. This is partly due to contrasting or restricted local resources (for example, financial problems for struggling printers would have resulted in fewer typeface purchases) and practise (as certain countries' design histories would have affected national stylistic preferences), but also as High-Modernism became adapted to appeal to a wider, as well as a more local, audience, such as New Zealand.

Global Modernism in Typography, Regional & Marginal: the case of New Zealand

{ CHAPTER THREE }

REGIONAL MODERNISM

An exemplary discussion of regional Modernism can be found in chapter ten, ‘National Modernisms’,¹ of Wilk’s *Modernism 1914-1939: designing a new world*. It is authored by British professor David Crowley, who states:

Revision of ‘narrow, materialistic utilitarianism’ was inevitable. The core principles of Modernist design were tested and modified as it spread around the world. The proliferation of the style was remarkably rapid...²

A number of countries, such as Sweden and Italy, appropriated Modernism to demonstrate a more ‘humanistic’ feel by applying styles from their own cultural heritage. Sweden’s creditable international reputation as “a centre of inter-war Modernist design is, in part, due to identification of a regionalist aesthetic there”.³ Swedish Modernism introduced “softer corners”, and modified forms that embraced human qualities and

1 David Crowley, ‘National Modernisms’ in Wilk, pp. 341-374.

2 *ibid.*, p. 347.

3 *ibid.*, p. 348.

a practical, localised aesthetic through utilising regional materials and handiwork. The Stockholm Exhibition (1930) “...poured fuel on a debate about the extent to which Modernism (or Functionalism, as it was known there) was suited to the national setting...For Modernism to thrive here it had to demonstrate its local bona fides”.⁴ Sweden was not renowned for its typographic developments during this time, but its architectural and product representation of modernity was widespread.

Similarly, Italy cultivated its heritage and appropriated Modernism accordingly. Much like that of Sweden, Italy’s modern design and architecture were also praised. “While Swedish Modernism accommodated local materials and craftsmanship, modern Italian architecture and design were applauded for their deep historical reserves”.⁵ Again, Italian typographic development was not well known, but modernity with nationalist nuances was throughout Italian product design and architecture.

These regions (Sweden, Italy) outside of the major modernist metropolises mentioned demonstrate how the international spread of Modernism resulted in unique national ‘modernities’. This filtering and appropriation of Modernism is important to establish, as it demonstrates how countries outside of the typographic centres were creating their own modernity, and this may be the case of what occurred with the arrival of Modernism in New Zealand.

4 Crowley, p. 349.

5 *ibid.*, p. 351.

MARGINALITY IN DESIGN HISTORY

Looking closer than Europe, one can consider the role of Modernism within Australia as a comparison to New Zealand. Although by no means a modernist pioneer, the role of Modernism and modernity in Australia is relevant due to our geographical proximity and sharing of a similar colonial experience, but is still distinct in its own right. Australia's size and location would seemingly create greater exposure to international trends, but New Zealand's advantage was its direct trade routes with America which began with the sealing and whaling trade in the late 18th century.

Tony Fry's theories of marginality as discussed in his 1995 article, 'A Geography of Power: design history and marginality',⁶ form a strong basis for the theory supporting this research. Although his discussions use Australia as their example, many of his assertions can be extrapolated to New Zealand due to our similar heritage;

Marginality has most commonly been configured in a binary model in which it is the "other" of centrality. Two ways of viewing this configuration dominate. One poses marginality on the geographic edge of a metropolitan centre, in either national or international terms. The second view has, as its basis, power, rather than location. Being on the edge of centres of political or economic power thus becomes defined as powerlessness, irrespective of physical distance from any centre of power.⁷

Here Fry identifies two forms of marginality – the first being geographic, and the second relative to power. Following Fry's definition, and as a condition of colonisation, New Zealand's small size and peripheral geographic status far from the centres of Britain, Western Europe and the United States qualify New Zealand as a marginal country (as New Zealand is thus categorised under both distance and powerlessness of Fry's

6 Tony Fry, 'A Geography of Power: design history and marginality', in *The Idea of Design*, edited by V. Margolin (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1995) pp. 204-218.

7 *ibid.*, p. 204.

conditions of marginality). Fry elaborates that “marginality is a condition of isolation, inbetweenness, and ineffectuality”.⁸ By this definition, marginality is a condition of exclusion. Fry disusses Australia’s status within these parameters:

*In many ways, Australia has had a history of marginality to the dominant forces that have shaped the world economic and cultural order, both in political and economic terms...Australia is on the edge of the “developed” world. What was happening here in design terms...is largely unknown beyond its shores. Internationally, Australia has, as yet, no significance in any of the currently recognised paradigms of the historical study of design or its literature.*⁹

One can easily substitute “New Zealand” for “Australia” in the above quote, but New Zealand can be considered marginal to an even greater degree due to its smaller size and population, and more distant geographic location from the centres of design and typographic activity, and paradigms of design.

In the introduction to Emily King’s doctoral thesis under the heading of ‘Typographic History in the Context of Broader Design Historical Models’, reductive design histories are said to be increasingly challenged by practitioners:

*The move away from canons within academic design history is a reflection of the fact that its practitioners, like those of most disciplines, have shied away from the task of establishing absolute value. Now design history has the apparently more neutral goal of uncovering the meanings embodied or created by designed form, a pursuit which has involved the adoption of the methods pioneered within cultural studies.*¹⁰

This statement suggests that cultural studies, or marginal studies if substitute Fry’s vocabulary, are effectively deconstructing the totalitarianism that has dominated design and typography. Again, this highlights the significance of this current research into New Zealand’s typographic history, as it will contribute to the construction of another history

8 Fry, p. 204.

9 *ibid.*, p. 204-205.

10 Emily King, Kingston University Doctoral Thesis, ‘New Faces: type design in the first decade of device-independent digital typesetting (1987-1999)’ (1999) <www.typotheque.com/articles> [accessed 23 September 2010] unpaginated.

that challenges centrist design histories as they are currently constituted.

NEW ZEALAND'S PRINTING HISTORY

New Zealand's printing history began with William Colenso, a missionary printer from England who arrived at the Bay of Islands in December 1834. Colenso played a crucial role in the introduction of printing to New Zealand, and also in the transcription of Maori, a language in which he quickly became fluent.

*The first pamphlet printed in New Zealand was a 16-page translation into Maori of the Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to the Ephesians, which appeared on 17 February 1835. More ambitious was the production of 5,000 copies of William Colenso's Maori New Testament. The first of these 356 page books were produced in December 1837.*¹¹

By chance, William Colenso met with a young Robert Coupland Harding, a meeting that developed into a lifelong friendship between the two. This is significant as whilst William Colenso was New Zealand's first printer, Robert Coupland Harding (1849-1916) has been described as New Zealand's first and most eminent typographer¹², and was certainly the most passionate of his time. It was this passion that led him to collect, collate, and critically comment on typography in his journal 'Typo'. Beginning in New Zealand in 1887, the popularity of 'Typo' soon became international, as acknowledged in an article by Don McKenzie:

It received instant praise internationally. In Paris, London and St Louis its judicious ornamen-

11 David Mackay, 'Colenso, William – Biography', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, updated 2010 <<http://www.dnzb.govt.nz>> [accessed 2 August 2010].

12 Don F. McKenzie, 'Harding, Robert Coupland – Biography', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, updated 2010 <<http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2h13/1>> [accessed 11 May 2010].

*ration in headings and initials was noted with pleasure, and the originality and sprightliness of its contents were paid the compliment of frequent reprinting in English and German trade papers.*¹³

Harding not only devised the contents, but also set and printed every issue “often composing his articles directly at case, a method which he was said to have used with perfect ease”.¹⁴ Not only were his writings and layout internationally acclaimed, they were held internationally, as Harding himself sent out complimentary copies all over the world to gain recognition and promote his own typographic ideas and observations:

*Typo was distributed widely overseas, and particular articles were internationally syndicated via a network of global print trade publications. Here I’m interested in how – whether it was his immediate intention or not – Harding was able to use a publication as a vehicle around which to develop a much broader and more complex community of practice than what was immediately available to him at the time.*¹⁵

This internationalism is again highlighted in Noel Waite’s unpublished presentation ‘New Worlds of Typography’:

*What is remarkable about Harding’s Journal is its cosmopolitan detachment from linear colonial models of design and its pluralistic accommodation of developments from America, Germany, Holland and France, amongst others. This unique perspective was then fed back and replicated through a remarkable network of almost 70 print trade publications in more than 15 countries.*¹⁶

Lastly, in Dr Sydney Shep’s article entitled ‘Introduction to Typo: a monthly newspaper and literary review [1887-1897]’, the significant role of typographic journals of the nineteenth century is asserted, acknowledging that no matter where they were published, they were...

...far more than vehicles for the latest in domestic and international trade news, technical information or wrinkles...Typographic journals...linked memory to place and familiarized the new by evoking nostalgia and continuity. At the same time, the habit of exchanging, reprinting,

13 Don F. McKenzie, ‘Harding, Robert Coupland 1849-1916’, in *The National Grid: #4*, Luke Wood, and Jonty Valentine, eds, (Auckland, New Zealand: The National Grid, 2007) p. 13.

14 *ibid.*, p. 13.

15 Luke Wood, ‘Typo. Introductory’, in *The National Grid: #4*, Wood, Luke and Valentine, Jonty, eds, (Auckland, New Zealand: The National Grid, 2007) p. 6.

16 Waite, unpaginated

*and circulating repurposed textual material created a distributed network of nodes and links which erased the distinction between centres and margins and fostered a new kind of “globalizing sensibility”.*¹⁷ *Robert Coupland Harding was a key player in this global communication network, putting New Zealand on the international map, and bringing the world beyond our shores into the printing houses, libraries, and homes of this country.*¹⁸

All of these sources suggest that New Zealand typography, by way of Harding who promoted it internationally through *Typo*, no longer conforms to Fry’s second requisite of marginality, that of being outside an exchange of power. Harding and *Typo*, and by this representation, New Zealand printing, was involved in international typographic dialogue, the judgement of quality and the forming of taste and style. While Harding’s publications are still valuable when researching the year and the source of a typeface, (usefully providing the date, often origins and occasionally the designer of a face), the last edition of *Typo* was in 1897, which means Harding made no commentary on twentieth century typefaces in New Zealand. His death in 1916 means he never witnessed the true force of typographic Modernism, but his internationalist approach in the 1890’s unquestionably had an impact on New Zealand’s adoption of typefaces, and, even if short-lived, contributed to a de-marginalisation of New Zealand typographic practise in the early years of its foundation.

17 Here Shep references Alan Lester, from ‘British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire’, *History Workshop Journal* 54 (2002) p. 24.

18 Sydney J. Shep, ‘Introduction to *Typo*: a monthly newspaper and literary review [1887-1897]’, (Wellington: New Zealand Electronic Text Centre, 2009) < <http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-SheTypo.html> > [accessed 14 April 2010], unpaginated.

Confirming the notion that New Zealand’s typography history should not be treated as derivative of the British, the following excerpt is from this author’s previous typographical research into display faces utilised between 1880 and 1900 in New Zealand. Although this research is earlier than the defined period of typographic Modernism, its conclusions attest to the internationalist culture of our type adoption well before the introduction of modernity:

The literary research clarified that type used within New Zealand was from international sources, and suggested that regardless of whether the type was directly imported from England in the late 1800s, the internationalist type culture of the period means the typefaces used in New Zealand undoubtedly had a global influence.

This was reinforced by the research into Robert Coupland Harding, with further support of this argument provided from the interview with Sydney Shep. Analysis of the vertical research sample into display faces indicated a strong American influence on uppercase metal display faces used in New Zealand, with a particularly prevalent source being the MacKellar, Smiths & Jordan foundry of Philadelphia. German born and trained, Herman Ihlenburg was the designer of the two most popular [display] faces used within New Zealand [between 1880 and 1900], his German training adding to the proven type internationalism. Sydney Shep highlights America’s interest in display faces, an interest that explains the heightened experimentation that came from the American specimen books from the period. The research also clarified the importance of the period 1880–1900 in the development of display faces worldwide, and reinforced that New Zealand was fully involved in the typographic trade and kept up with developments, both mechanical and with trends of type.

The tally from the New Zealand ephemera sample proved that some faces were more commonly used than others, suggesting that either some faces were in higher circulation...or possibly that one certain printing house used it often and other printers followed, allowing the faces to become popular. There are many possible explanations, but what is certain is that there were definitive trends in circulation during this period. ‘Copperplate’ was the most popular, with ‘Glyptic’ in very close second. ‘Caxtonian’, ‘Grecian’, and an unknown typeface follow in commonality respectively.¹⁹

Considering that typography, in origin and use, was internationalist in New Zealand from the 1880s, it could be predicted that with the advance of transport, globalising

¹⁹ Faber, p. 41.

technology and trade, typography might be even more internationalist during the period of Modernism. Or alternatively, perhaps the advance of technology – especially typesetting machinery – and the amalgamation of many smaller, local foundries into larger firms with greater global reach (such as the American Type Founders) means that New Zealand had less opportunities to hybridise its type practise. It could also be the case that with the benefits of economies of scale, larger foundries were able to provide cheaper typeface options, which were consequently selected more commonly for importation.

MODERNISM IN RELATED TRADES IN NEW ZEALAND

Although there is little literature on the introduction of modernist typefaces in New Zealand, there is a significant contribution in the fields of art, architecture and product design. In Douglas Lloyd Jenkins book *At Home: a century of New Zealand design* (2004), valuable insight is provided of New Zealand's adoption of international styles in furniture and architecture.

The first area of interest in Jenkins' publication describes how New Zealand furniture companies, Tonson Garlick, and Scoullar & Chisholm, were aware of changing fashions in the early 1900s, and attempted to keep up with these (despite difficulties that marginal nations can face):

A page of one of Tonson Garlick's 'artistically illustrated catalogues' of 1910 shows a range of hat stands, some of which must have been in production for more than a decade. Others show the clear influence of more recent thinking about design. Some examples were clearly commercialised versions of Arts and Crafts movement thinking, similar to the type of work Liberty's of London

*had introduced to the English market.*²⁰

This asserts that the Arts and Crafts movement was recognised by one of the major furniture companies at that time, and that stylistically, New Zealand furniture from this period can be seen as derivative of styles in London. An obvious contributing factor to this influence was that owner of Tonson Garlick (Mr. Johnathon Tonson Garlick) was born and educated in London before arriving in New Zealand at the age of twenty.²¹ Jenkins continues that “by 1910, New Zealanders had come to expect small echoes of innovation rather than the real thing from any of the mainstream manufacturers”, which conforms to Fry’s definition of marginalisation.

But London was not the only influential player in New Zealand’s furniture style of the period. Jenkins goes on to discuss how New Zealand was beginning to reflect American furniture modes:

*By 1910, an American fashion for what was called Mission furniture was beginning to appear in New Zealand. American influence on New Zealand house building and decoration had been increasing steadily for some time. Trading links between New Zealand and California had been established early, and many houses in Los Angeles and San Francisco have rimu framing and kauri floors.*²²

This American influence in furniture arrived later than the influence within type, as ‘New Zealand Type on Display’²³ revealed that American metal-display typefaces were the most commonly used in New Zealand from 1880 to 1900. From this, it could be theorised that the arrival of Modernism or modernity in New Zealand will perhaps arrive through

20 Douglas Lloyd Jenkins, *At Home: a century of New Zealand design* (Auckland: Random House New Zealand, 2004) p. 36.

21 Cyclopedia Company Limited, ‘Mr Jonathan Tonson Garlick’, in *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand* [Auckland Provincial District] (Christchurch: The Cyclopedia Company, 1902) p. 359., obtained from The New Zealand Electronic Text Centre, < <http://www.nzetc.org> > [accessed 10 September 2010].

22 Jenkins, p. 37.

23 Faber, p. 28, 41.

type before it emerged in furniture.

As the twentieth century developed, American manufacturers increasingly exported their products to New Zealand, including design publications from American publishing houses. “There was now a growing aesthetic awareness of all things American among both design professionals and the New Zealand public”.²⁴ The trade link with California influenced New Zealand materials and architecture, particularly housing, which was showcased by the appearance in 1910 of “a large bungalow...that went by the name of Los Angeles. It was one of the first, and most impressive, of the Californian-style homes to appear that decade”.²⁵ As well as sharing the same climate, California shared ideological similarities with New Zealand, wanting to establish some form of unique characteristic that might create distinction from the wider, and older, world. Trade continued into the 1920s and 30s, with Peter Shaw in his recent 2008 edition of *Art Deco Napier*, confirming that the architectural forms of the Art Deco style originated from California.

But yet again, as with the arrival of the American influence in New Zealand furniture production, the California-styled Art Deco architecture of Napier came significantly later than the American influence evident in typography. Before the great Napier earthquake on 3 February 1931, much of Napier’s town architecture was “Victorian” and “Edwardian”, with Shaw stating “by 1880 [Napier] presented to the world the perfect image of an English seaside resort”.²⁶ The 1931 earthquake laid waste to the majority of the English-inspired buildings, but from this sprung the opportunity to implement new

24 Lloyd Jenkins, p. 37.

25 *ibid.*, p. 38.

26 Shaw, 2008, p. 9.

architecture. The hardship of the Great Depression was beginning to take its toll on New Zealand when the earthquake hit, and consequently the Government contribution for rebuilding “only amounted to one fifth of the estimated losses”.²⁷ But nevertheless, rebuilding eventuated, with Shaw noting...

*...one thing is certain – the rebuilders of Napier in 1931, offered a clean slate, turned not to England for their inspiration but to America...Napier, the Victorian town, had gone forever. England offered no inspiration in 1931, but the architectural journals from America were full of new and interesting ideas which Napier’s architects were keen to adopt in the challenge of reconstructing their city...The city was to be modern in the American way, and that meant what is now known as Art Deco.*²⁸



Figure 3.1, Edward Williams,
The Daily Telegraph building in Napier, 1932

The Daily Telegraph building in figure 3.1 demonstrates that typography also featured in the rebuilding of Napier, with the high-contrast, geometric, inline letterforms, a quintessential example of an Art Deco typeface, used on the facade. Considering the attitude of

²⁷ Shaw, 2008, p. 12.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 12.

the Napier architects that America was to be the guiding source of inspiration, the logical suggestion is that the typographic forms utilised on building fronts would have also had American origins.

THE INFLUENCE OF JOURNALS

Journals for printing, arts, and typography, most originating from England or America, were widespread amongst New Zealand's printing trade during 1920-40, and titles included *Art & Industry*, *The Fleuron*, *The Penrose Annual*, *Typography*, *The British Printer*, *The Inland Printer*, and *The American Printer*. They exhibited what were considered popular trends and were full of discussions of typographical and graphic design issues, voiced by prominent figures within their respective fields. Additionally to their contents, the layout of the journals were executed to demonstrate certain stylistic ideals. Some of these journals were seen regularly by New Zealand printers, particularly *The Penrose Annual* that was widely distributed, but type specimen books also played a crucial role of showcasing typeface options and layouts to local printers.

In the April 1925 edition of *Art & Industry* – a British journal that was circulated in New Zealand – the article titled 'This Lettering: The Onlooker Hits Back', by E. Hodgkin, considers the connection between type arrangement and selection in advertisements with trustworthiness:

Certain advertisements...are illegible or a pain to read; others insist on being read and we hate them for it. Yet others...create a good impression whether you read them or not... One knows

*instinctively that these slabs of dignified, well-arranged type clothe reliable statements about reputable goods, and we acquire, in connection with such names as Barratt and McDougall, a sense of trust and security which contrasts sharply with the feeling of irritated disgust that is induced by, for example, the advertisement in this morning's paper for a cheap, woman's magazine.*²⁹

Undoubtedly by 1925 the awareness that type projects meaning already existed amongst a number of businesses worldwide, and within government advertising, but the local presence of this article informs us that New Zealand was also being educated by an English approach to typography. Hodgkin's view highlights a hierarchy of taste and value, of reasoned or filtered British attitudes on Modernism, with an advocacy of 'good design' against mass culture.

Hodgkin continues that the fear of monotony often results in "the frenzied variation of lettering, which characterises nine-tenths of advertising. I would rather see the whole thing in one bad type than in a dozen good ones". As opposed to the forceful advocates of the modern Sans Serif, Hodgkin suggests that regardless of the type being Sans Serif or not, successful advertising will stand out for its "bold simple design with a minimum of bold simple lettering", with type that compliments the character of the drawing and commodity advertised. "Most posters fail because the lettering and the design are uncoordinated".³⁰ These statements are fundamentally modernist, as they are advocating functionality, clarity, and unity, but they have a strong overlay of values of taste.

Hodgkin concludes with:

*New types, new ideas seem to me less important than good taste in using them...I like simplicity and economy, the effect that is produced with the minimum of fuss and effort. For me, the best advertisement is the one which uses one type only, no matter which...*³¹

29 E. Hodgkin, 'This Lettering: The Onlooker Hits Back' in *Art & Industry*, April 1925, (London: The Studio, 1925) p. 145.

30 *ibid.*, p. 146.

31 *ibid.*, p. 149.

This statement indicates Hodgkin's concern was the current *use* of typography, and that the majority of advertising was applying it badly. Although his viewpoint that layout is more important than type selection contradicts the then-current theorists of Modernism advocacy of the stark geometric San Serif, the unity he is suggesting does coincide with modernist ideals. His viewpoint that typeface choice is secondary to its utilisation exemplifies that British was not one of the centres of Modernism.

The Fleuron was another important British journal that reached New Zealand shores, although was much less widely distributed than trade journals, having a small print run and high cost. Published across seven lavish volumes from 1923-1930, influential essays from leading writers on typography and the book arts graced its pages, as well as a sumptuous array of illustrations, papers, type specimens, facsimiles and inserts. The first four issues were edited by Oliver Simon; the last three by Stanley Morison. Notable contributions were 'On Decorative Printing in America' by Beatrice Warde (under the male pseudonym Paul Beaujon) and 'Decorated Types' by Stanley Morison from volume 6.³² Volume 7 included specimens of Perpetua, Centaur Roman, Monotype Bembo and Lutetia. It also contained a Beatrice Warde essay, 'Eric Gill: Sculptor of Letters', a complete reprinting of 'The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity' with type and illustrations by Eric Gill, and the famous essay by Stanley Morison, 'First Principles of Typography'.³³ The presence of such writings in New Zealand at that time may have exposed some local printers and advertising agencies (which increasingly dictated type selection and layout to printers) to the British stance on typographic practise, and more

32 Stanley Morison, ed., *The Fleuron: a journal of typography*, volume 6, (Cambridge: The University Press, New York: Doubleday Page, 1928).

33 Stanley Morison, ed., *The Fleuron: a journal of typography*, volume 7, (Cambridge: The University Press, New York: Doubleday Page, 1930).

prominently in the case of *The Fleuron*, the views of editor and contributor, Stanley Morison. His publication could have influenced not only the typographic layout of New Zealand printing in the late 1920s and early 1930s, but may also have impacted on typographic selection.

Another important periodical that came from Britain was *Typography*. Under the editor Robert Harling, *Typography* first appeared in 1936, and was described by Grant Shipcott in 1980 as the following:

*Typography looks to the future rather than into the past, seeing potential in experiment rather than triviality. Visually, the change is even more marked; the bulky clothbound volumes of The Fleuron could scarcely be more different from the forty-eight page, paper-covered, plastic-comb-bound editions of Typography... Each article was designed individually, making the journal visually appealing to those who might otherwise find little interest in it.*³⁴

Although not directly, the constituents shared much the same ideological foundation as E. Hodgkins view of moderation and 'good taste'. Rather than extreme traditionalism or avant-gardism, *Typography's* focus was on appropriate application and progression, which is perhaps a product of its later publication date, beginning in 1936, close to the decline of Modernism. In his introductory note to issue one, Robert Harling comments of the publication:

*We are neither atavistic nor avantgarde, neither traditionalists nor traducers of tradition. We are, quite simply, contemporary... It is our hope and belief that Typography will prove to be the most stimulating and welcome journal of typography in England; acknowledging sound traditions; welcoming adventurous use of new materials and new forms; not afraid to accuse the stagnant traditionalist or to condemn the spurious modernist.*³⁵

This statement implies an advocacy of modernity, perhaps reflecting the British typographical stance in the later years of Modernism. Issue one contained a number of type

34 Grant Shipcott, *Typographical Periodicals Between the Wars: a critique of The Fleuron, Signature and Typography* (Oxford: Oxford Polytechnic Press, 1980) p. 57.

35 Robert Harling, section from the introduction of *Typography* No.1, 1936, as quoted in Shipcott, p. 57.

specimens, articles on newspaper typography, and two appreciations of Stanley Morison's work.³⁶

Typographic journals known to be within New Zealand during this time would have provided local printers and layout artists with educated viewpoints on typography. Of particular interest is the reoccurring favouritism towards practical application as opposed to radicalism, which seemed a common theme of the journals with English origins. This perspective may have had an influence on printers' typeface purchasing and client demand, particularly from advertising agencies, and could have influenced font selection and design decisions that exemplified modernity as opposed to Modernism. Unlike Harding's *Typo*, however, New Zealand rarely contributed to these international discussions. New Zealand's typographical associations produced journals that circulated locally, but there were no equivalent journals published nationally during the period of Modernism. Perhaps this is indicative of a return to typographic marginality following the last issue of *Typo* in 1897.

³⁶ Shipcott, p. 63.

NEW ZEALAND'S NATIONAL IDENTITY

It must be acknowledged that historically we were a colony of Great Britain until 1880, but these links remained well into the 1900s. This influence was reinforced throughout World War I by New Zealand's involvement in support of Britain, which actually reinstated a public desire to remain loyal to the Empire, despite its disintegration.

Douglas Lloyd Jenkins comments that the First World War not only strengthened our trade ties with Britain, but also our loyalty. As opposed to "New Zealand needs you", recruitment posters campaigned "England needs you", emphasising the needs of England and stability of the Empire.³⁷ The War's end in late 1918 meant many New Zealand soldiers did not arrive home until 1920, and "those who might have encouraged New Zealanders to forge an alternative direction were quite simply missing".³⁸

Despite shorter haircuts, hemlines, and the influx of Jazz music and American dance crazes following World War I, New Zealand did not experience the economic boom that many experienced overseas in the early 1920s. Wages in 1919 were the lowest they had been since the turn of the century,³⁹ prompting a lack of confidence in New Zealand's positive, progressive destiny. Jenkins highlights the worsening state of affairs:

When the 'Britain Will Buy Everything' schemes ended in 1921 there was a recession. Bankruptcies rose dramatically, as did unemployment. Because the concerns of urban, wage-earning New Zealanders took second place to those of farmers, wages were cut and the civil service was reduced in size. This put in place the pattern of the decade. In New Zealand, the 1920s would prove a period of disillusionment, political instability and economic insecurity. All of this helped strengthen Labour party support, but it did little for the development of an

37 Jenkins, p. 44.

38 *ibid.*, p. 44.

39 *ibid.*, p. 43.

*effervescent culture.*⁴⁰

The Depression also hit hard in the early 1930s, but increased the influence of America through popular culture, and certainly this influence was obvious in the Art Deco rebuilding of Napier. With the election of the first Labour Government in 1935, New Zealand began officially re-adopting a progressive ideology, and the imagery and architecture supporting the 1939-1940 Wellington Centennial Exhibition embraced modernist styles in combination with national motifs. This localised modernity is portrayed effectively in figures 3.2 and 3.3, both advertising the Exhibition. Figure 3.2 is a poster produced by the New Zealand Tourism and Publicity Department circa 1939. It demonstrates the bold, flat, simplified style of pictorial Modernism, and the integrated geometric typography with alternating cross-bar heights displays unequivocal Art Deco influence, and bears similarities to posters from the French Art Deco artist, Cassandre.



Figure 3.2, New Zealand Tourism and Publicity Department, 'Centennial Exhibition' poster, c. 1939



Figure 3.3, New Zealand Tourism and Publicity Department, 'Centennial Exhibition' sticker, 1939

40 Jenkins, p. 44.

The presence of the New Zealand flag and the decorative Maori kowhaiwhai pattern is a distinct, national application of the modernist aesthetic, proving that New Zealand embraced and appropriated the international style to suit its own agenda. In this way, it is comparable to the national modernities of Sweden and Italy, and crucially used here by the Government. The projection of New Zealand as an independent, modern society reveals that the country was actively moving away from its colonial heritage. This poster was designed to attract an international audience, so perhaps the employment of Art Deco type and the flat planes of pictorial modernity was specifically to appeal to visitors tastes, and to showcase that New Zealand was in tune with metropolitan trends.

The Exhibition sticker in figure 3.3, which is slightly less sophisticated, also indicates the local appropriation of Modernism. The geometric, symmetrical building and sky lights demonstrate the Art Deco pictorial style, though the more complicated imagery of the Maori female and silhouetted crowd does not advocate modernist simplicity. The typographic application is not distinctly Art Deco, although the round 'O' of 'Nov' and the curve on the '4' at the top of the page are suggestive of geometry and curves of typical Art Deco typefaces. Yet, as with the Centennial poster, this sticker of 1939 comes late in the lifecycle of international Art Deco.

It is clear that the government's preoccupation with creating a national identity saw an appropriation of international trends in graphic design and typography for the advertising of the Centennial Exhibition of 1939 and 1940, perhaps defining its own visual national modernity, but this embodiment was dampened by the Second World War. The Government's embrace of modernity also sits at the end of the 1920-1940 timeframe that this research is considering. What will be significant for this research will be to see

whether Art Deco typefaces, or even forms representing geometric High-Modernism, are evident in the typography of the sample advertising *before* the decisive embrace of modernity from the newly elected Labour government in 1935, or whether these forms also arrive before the construction of Art Deco architecture in Napier began in 1931.

S U M M A R Y

Considering the British influence in New Zealand – particularly during the two World Wars – and with the probable majority of typographic journals present originating from Britain, it could be inferred that between 1920 and 1940 New Zealand followed the British typographic influence. It can be hypothesised that, because the two World Wars sandwich this research period, and New Zealand's Government was conservative and British focussed until 1935, that despite the influence of North America through commerce and popular culture and less so of Germany, British attitudes dominated New Zealand typographic use at this period. To test this British influence, a comparison to research from Britain by W. Harold Butler (further discussed in chapter four) will be made. If there is no correlation, then there are two conclusions that could be made: (1) New Zealand individualistically adapted or modified the forms of British Modernism, or (2) Other international influences swayed our typographic use, but these can only be conjectured due to the lack of other comparative studies.

Through revealing typographic trends within the set timeframe, what will also be significant – and relevant to the purpose of this investigation in revealing typography's

role in the introduction of Modernism or modernity into New Zealand – will be what is revealed about New Zealand’s uptake of typographic trends when contextualised against international developments, and a national comparison with the presence of modernity in the related field of architecture.

About Face: primary research

{ CHAPTER FOUR }

Against the model of international typographic Modernism developing in the early 1910s, attaining a more concrete status by the 1920s, and declining with the disruption of World War II, New Zealand's typographic progression will be measured. If the 2009 study *New Zealand Type on Display*¹ is used as indicative research, (or the research of Dr Sydney Shep² that has uncovered an internationalist type culture within New Zealand before the 1900s through the study of *Typo*) the typefaces used in advertising in popular print may have American origins, or that of metropolitan centres other than Britain.

We could infer from the background of metropolitan Modernism provided in chapter two, that if New Zealand reflects trends of the centres of typographic Modernism during 1920-40, a progression within advertising will occur from the use of nineteenth century display faces and Roman fonts into an increased utilisation of mechanistic Sans Serif and Art Deco faces. Or conversely, an increase in the use of Roman fonts in the 1930s would reflect the return to traditionalism from British theorists and type designers, like Stanley Morison, and would suggest the influence of British typographic modernity. Softer, more

1 Faber, 2009

2 Shep, 2009

humanist Sans Serifs might also indicate a British influence. Alternatively, the growing influence of America through Hollywood, advertising, and commerce, which had become global, might suggest the popular media surveyed in New Zealand will reveal typefaces in the Art Deco style(s) that America popularised.

If typefaces in New Zealand advertising showcase an abundance of geometric Sans Serif typefaces, this could represent two different influences. The first, an influence of German Modernism could be inferred through the presence of stark geometric faces. The second, where typefaces could be considered streamlined (geometric but complemented by curves) or other decorative geometric forms, and are consequently categorised as Art Deco typefaces, could be indicative of ascendance from America or France (and would suggest typographic modernity as opposed to Modernism). Of course, it cannot be assumed that these forms derive exclusively from these sources, as the international development of typographic Modernism is complex and interspersed, but these metropolitan centres were considered at the forefront of type design for the latin alphabet during the period of typographic Modernism.

METHODOLOGY

This primary research utilises newspaper advertising for its sample, as these exhibited a large amount of advertising in one place, and had extensive public exposure. Also, when compared to magazines of the time, newspapers appealed to a wider audience and their cheaper cost meant they were more accessible. Because of the quantity of material to be

surveyed, the survey was limited to three popular newspapers. The first two were the most popular newspapers of New Zealand's largest metropolitan centre, Auckland, *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Auckland Weekly News*, and both these papers cover the entire timeframe period that this research is investigating. The daily *New Zealand Herald* has been in publication since 1863 and continues to this day, and *The Auckland Weekly News* also started in 1863, as a weekly publication, but concluded publication after 100 years, in 1963. The third newspaper was the shorter-lived *Otago Witness*, which has also been included in the sample as an established weekly from the South Island, however the last issues available were from 1922.

To ensure that the sampling creates an accurate account of the trends at each end of the timeframe parameters (1920 and 1940), the sampling began in 1918 and ended in 1942. Samples were taken every four years, with extra sampling taken at the turn of each decade to mark any trends that may occur. To clarify, the following years form the selection data: 1918, 1922, 1926, 1930, 1934, 1938, 1942, with years 1920 and 1940 added to avoid assumptions of the trends at these pivotal points in the set research timeframe. Within each of these years, samples were taken from one week for each of four distinct months – data was collected from four separate months to obtain a more accurate overview of typographic presence in any given year. Every year, December was always one out of the four months due to the increase in advertising over the Christmas period. With *The Auckland Weekly News* and the *Otago Witness* both published as one large issue weekly, the sample was taken from one day over each of the four months, whilst with *The New Zealand Herald*, the sample obtained advertising from over one week. A sound range of advertisements were selected from each day or week, judged for selection through three categories: (a) notably typical, (b) of larger size and therefore of greater cost and

hierarchical importance, or (c) notably atypical by being indicative of new typographic or design developments. Only display advertisements were considered – no editorial or classified advertisements (which use body-text types) were surveyed. If there were full pages of advertising, the entire page of advertisements was included in the sample unless they were judged as too small. All the typefaces present were tallied from each advert, but if typefaces were judged as extremely small or insignificant (such as a tiny disclaimer at the bottom of an advertisement) these were not included in the tally. Lastly, if the exact typeface was repeated within one advertisement, this was regarded as one count when tallied.

CLASSIFICATION METHOD

The tally will place typefaces from the advertisement sample into attribute-based classes. For example, rather than singular typefaces, such as Futura, having their own separate tally, they will be placed in classes according to form – Futura would be counted under the class ‘Geometric Sans’. There are ten specific classes, and one extra category entitled ‘unclassified’ for uncommon misfits that do not fall into any of the other classes. The classes were determined by using an amalgamation of four sources, beginning with the Vox classification system as defined by Maximilian Vox in 1955.³ This particular classification system focuses more on Roman faces and book type rather than more modern or display developments commonly used in advertising from 1920-40, so it was deemed

³ Maximilian Vox, ‘Classification Maximilien Vox’ table, in *Typography: an encyclopedic survey of type design and techniques throughout history*, F. Friedl, N. Ott, and B. Stein (New York: Black Dog Publishing, 1998) p. 536.

necessary to consult other sources to define appropriate additional classes. The other references used to define the tally classes were as follows: Anne Denastas and Camille Gallet's, 'Classification of families of faces' from *An Initiation in Typography*,⁴ which is a reiteration of the Vox system but with English as well as French class titles, and larger typeface examples; *Rookledge's Classic International Type Finder: the essential handbook of typeface recognition and selection*⁵; and lastly the 'British Standard Classification of Typeface 2961: 1967', from *Type & Typography*.⁶ These more recent typeface classifications allow for typefaces from the period of Modernism to also be allocated appropriate classes. Ten main classes have been established from the aforementioned sources, with one additional 'Unclassed' classification, that encompasses misfits. The selected classes with their origins and characteristics are defined below.

TYPEFACE CLASSES SPECIFIC TO THIS RESEARCH

Humanist

The adoption of this first class originally comes from the Vox system, entitled in French, 'humanes', and is reiterated by the 'British Standard 2961: 1967' as 'humanist'. Denastas and Gallet name this class 'humanistics', while Perfect and Rookledge entitle it the

4 Anne Denastas and Camille Gallet, *Einführung in die typographie = An initiation in typography = Une initiation à la typographie* (Zurich: Verlag Niggli, 2006) pp. 98-99.

5 Christopher Perfect, and Gordon Rookledge, *Rookledge's Classic International Type Finder: the essential handbook of typeface recognition and selection* (London: Lawrence King, 2004)

6 One of several national standards to follow the Vox scheme: 'British Standard Classification of Typeface 2961: 1967', table in *Type & Typography*, P. Baines and A. Haslam, (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, London: Laurence King Publishing, 2002) p. 47.

‘Venetian Serif’. Thus the class has been named ‘humanist’, with the majority of sources employing this titling. The ‘British Standard 2961: 1967’ notes that this class was formerly known as Venetian, “having been derived from the 15th century miniscule written with a varying stroke thickness by means of an obliquely-held broad pen”.⁷

All sources agree on the characteristics of its form. The humanist is a Roman serif letterform with low-contrast strokes that are generally quite heavy, and bracketed serifs. The most distinct feature is the sloping bar on the lowercase ‘e’, with other common features including oblique serifs lower case letters and an angled or vertical stress to the curves of letterforms.

Garaldic

This second class also originates from the Vox system, entitled in French, ‘garaldes’, and is reiterated by the ‘British Standard 2961: 1967’ as ‘garalde’. Denast and Gallet name this class ‘garaldics’, while Perfect and Rookledge entitle it the ‘Old Style Serif’. Thus in this study, the class has been named ‘garaldic’, with the majority of sources employing similar titling. The ‘British Standard 2961: 1967’ notes that “these are types in the Aldine and Garamond tradition and were traditionally called Old Face and Old Style”.⁸

Again, all sources agree on the characteristics of garaldic letterforms. This serif letterform has a stronger contrast between thick and thin strokes compared to that of the humanists, but also has bracketed serifs. It is defined by an angled stress on letterforms, where the axis of the curves are inclined to the left. Unlike the humanists, the bar on the lowercase ‘e’ is horizontal, but the classes share oblique lower-case serifs.

7 ‘British Standard 2961: 1967’; Baines and Haslam, p. 47.

8 *ibid.*, p. 47.

Transitional

This third class again originates from the Vox system, entitled in French, ‘réales’, which in English became known as ‘transitional’. The ‘British Standard 2961: 1967’ titles these letterforms ‘transitional’, as do Denast and Gallet, and Perfect and Rookledge. Thus the class has been named ‘Transitional’, with all the English sources employing this title. The ‘British Standard 2961: 1967’ does not provide any distinct traits when compared to the garaldic description, and the visuals provided in the Vox table are small and only include a few letterforms, making it difficult to distinguish between these similar classes. Perfect and Rookledge provide the best analogy:

Typefaces in this category have vertical stress (or nearly so) on the bowls of letter (such as the lower case o) but still have distinct oblique serifs on the ascenders. The serif foot of the lower case d is usually horizontal but sometimes slightly oblique. The contrast between the thick and thin strokes of letters is generally more pronounced than [with garaldics]. All typefaces have bracketed serifs.⁹

New Transitional

This category is not included in traditional typeface classifications, like that of Vox or the ‘British Standards’. While traditional classifications group typefaces according to similar historical origin, Perfect and Rookledge assert that their classification system of 2004, “is entirely new and is based on the grouping of typefaces according to specific design features”, which means “sometimes typefaces of similar historical origins fall into different categories”.¹⁰ This original addition to typeface classification was added, and as this class is distinct to Perfect and Rookledge, here is how they define New Transitional:

All typefaces in this group have a definite vertical stress and serifs are normally all horizontal

⁹ Perfect and Rookledge, p. 12.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 12.

*(straight). However, a small number have slightly oblique serifs. These typefaces generally have little contrast between thick and thin strokes and the serifs are usually bracketed.*¹¹

This research treats New Transitional as the bridge between Transitional and Slab Serif.

Originally, this class was not included in this research, but after assessment of the first section of tallying, the presence of a number of faces which were difficult to determine between Transitional and Slab Serif, the class system was revised and it was deemed necessary to include this New Transitional class.

Wedge/Hybrid Serif

As with the New Transitional class, Wedge/Hybrid Serif is not a traditional typeface classification, and again this class is distinct to Perfect and Rookledge:

*This category contains typefaces which are not always clearly serif or sans serif (i.e. hybrids). It includes typefaces both of a general serif-style but with only a thickening at the terminals of letters and sans serif-style typefaces with very small line serifs on the terminals. It includes other groups with wedge-shaped serifs and half serifs.*¹²

Although Perfect and Rookledge do not state this specifically, this research will also include typefaces that are considered incised in this class, or ‘incises’ as named by the Vox system, or what the ‘British Standard’ titles ‘Glyphic’, as they are a form of wedge serif.

Slab Serif

This class originates from the Vox system, entitled in French, ‘mécanes’, likely in reference to the mechanical aspect of typefaces of this class. The ‘British Standard 2961: 1967’ defines this class as ‘Slab Serif’, as do Denastás and Gallet, and Perfect and Rookledge. Although sometimes referred to as Egyptian, this class has been named ‘Slab Serif’ as all the English classification sources employ this titling. The most succinct

¹¹ Perfect and Rookledge, p. 12.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 12.

description of this class is provided by the ‘British Standard 2961: 1967’ – “Typefaces with heavy, square-ended serifs, with or without brackets”.¹³ Perfect and Rookledge add that the serifs are often the same thickness as the main stem of the letters.

Didonic

Easier to distinguish than the other variations of the Roman serif through its distinct contrast and serifs, the name ‘Didonic’ originated through the combination of typeface names Bodoni and Didot, which were the original developments of this class. Sometimes called ‘Modern Roman’ or ‘Modern Face’, the Vox system entitled this class, ‘Didones’. The ‘British Standard 2961: 1967’ called it, ‘Didone’, and Denastás and Gallet, ‘Didonics’. Perfect and Rookledge name this class according to characteristics, ‘Abrupt Contrast/Straight Serifs (Modern Serif)’, but this research has chosen a title that the majority of the sources follow. Typefaces that fit into this class feature;

*...a strong and abrupt contrast between the thick and thin strokes of letters, and all serifs are horizontal. The overall stress is clearly vertical. Serifs can be line or slightly bracketed and typefaces can vary in colour from light to dark.*¹⁴

Script

The Vox system calls this class, ‘scriptes’, and the ‘British Standard’, ‘Script’. Perfect and Rookledge do not list this or a comparable class as part of their text classes, having segregated text and decorative typefaces. Within Perfect and Rookledge’s classifications of decorative typefaces, they have ‘Flowing Scripts’ and ‘Non-Flowing Scripts’. This research will utilise the ‘British Standard’ to inform this class: “Typefaces that imitate

13 ‘British Standard 2961: 1967’; Baines and Haslam, p. 47.

14 Perfect and Rookledge, p. 12.

cursive writing”.¹⁵ These will encompass both the Flowing and Non-Flowing Scripts from Perfect and Rookledge’s classification, including brush script typefaces, or by the Vox classification, ‘Manuaires’.

Geometric Sans Serif

The Vox system groups all Sans Serifs under ‘Linéales’. In Perfect and Rookledges text type classes, again all are ‘Sans Serif’, and within their decorative classes they have ‘Modified Sans Serif’, which includes Sans Serif faces that have rounded ends, or vertical thick and thin stress, or even shaded and 3-dimensional Sans Serifs. One class for Sans Serifs is insufficient for this particular research, and the ‘Modified Sans Serif’ class is not valuable as it creates no distinction between letterforms when attempting to determine the introduction of typographic Modernism. The ‘British Standard’ follows the Vox title, using ‘Lineale’ for Sans Serif faces, but within this class has sub-categories. Reiterating much of Bringhurst’s definition of geometric Modernism in typography, the ‘British Standard’ defines ‘Geometric Lineales’ as, “typefaces constructed on simple geometric shapes, circle or rectangle. Usually monoline, and often with single-storey a”.¹⁶ This class will help determine the presence of geometric Modernism, as defined by Bringhurst, in New Zealand typography.

Humanist Sans Serif

Again this class is only present in the ‘British Standard’, although its definition differs to how this research will use it. The ‘British Standard’ describes humanist lineales as: “based on the proportions of inscriptional Roman capitals and Humanist or Garalde

15 ‘British Standard 2961: 1967’; Baines and Haslam, p. 47.

16 *ibid.*, p. 47.

lower-case, rather than on early grotesques. They have some stroke contrast, with two-storey a and g”.¹⁷ As this definition and that of the two other sub-categories within ‘Lineales’ are difficult to distinguish between, and would consequently make the tallying process very slow and inefficient, the Humanist Sans Serif class for this research encompasses all Sans Serif typefaces that are not classified as Geometric Sans Serif.

Unclassed

This class will include typefaces that do not fit into any of the aforementioned classes. This includes typeface styles such as Blackletter, Tuscan, and any unclassifiable hybrids or hand-lettering. Blackletter was originally a separate class, but due to the very low numbers present (greatest count in one year was 4), was not significant enough to occupy its own group or to significantly contribute to the findings.

ART DECO TYPEFACE CATEGORY

An Art Deco typeface category has been created additionally to the tally to identify repetitions of specific typographic styles within the classes. For example, a geometric Sans Serif Art Deco typeface would be placed in the Geometric Sans Serif *class* in the tally, but would also go into the Art Deco *category*, separately. This allows the findings to show what percentage of the total typeface count portrayed the Art Deco aesthetic.

¹⁷ ‘British Standard 2961: 1967’; Baines and Haslam, p. 47.

Additionally to their classification, typefaces that demonstrate certain attributes will also be placed into the Art Deco category. Most of these attributes are described by Friedrich Friedl, Nicolaus Ott, and Bernard Stein in, *Typography: an encyclopedic survey of type design and techniques throughout history*.¹⁸ Although there is no distinct definition for an Art Deco typeface, these following excerpts suggest the characteristics of their forms;

— *Where geometry, abstraction and elementary forms were not employed in the raw (as with futura, for example), but which concentrated on a disharmonious interplay of broad and narrow, of the constructed and the gestural, of light and dark.*¹⁹

— *An enrichment of elementary forms through ornamentation and a variety of decorative elements.*²⁰

— *Three-dimensional extensions were often added to the letters by hand... Alphabets were decorative in the first instance; legibility was a secondary factor.*²¹

These statements about the style of Art Deco typefaces are backed by Benton, Benton, and Wood in *Art Deco 1910–1939*, and Baines and Haslam in *Type & Typography*:

— *Asymmetry, geometric devices, associative decoration and sanserif letters were used for their modishness, rather than as principles.*²²

— *Variants to traditional forms (eg. Curving of normally straight lines, rounded corners, irregular character elements.*²³

The irregular character elements that Baines and Haslam highlight includes the distinct alteration of crossbar heights, a common attribute of geometric Art Deco typefaces.

This category is particularly important, as its results can be used see whether the style had

18 Friedrich Friedl, Nicolaus Ott, and Bernard Stein, *Typography: an encyclopedic survey of type design and techniques throughout history* (New York: Black Dog Publishing, 1998) p. 44-45.

19 *ibid.*, p. 44.

20 *ibid.*, p. 44.

21 *ibid.*, p. 45.

22 Benton, Benton, and Wood, p. 302.

23 Baines and Haslam, p. 50.

as much success in New Zealand as claimed in America, and will also provide comparison to the introduction of Art Deco into Napier's architecture.

DATA REPRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Over the twentyfour years of sample data, 1918-1942, the typographic content of 1528 advertisements has been assessed, averaging 170 advertisements for each selected year. The data from all three Newspapers has been collated to create one, cohesive representation of the typeface presence for each year. Table 4.1 overleaf shows the percentage of typefaces of each class, and also what overall percentage of these were also categorised as Art Deco typefaces. It should be noted that some of the totals of the data for each year add up to 99% rather than 100% due to rounding to whole numbers, while the graphs use exact percentages to create precise plotting. The line graphs following Table 4.1 were judged as the most effective form of representation for the collected data.²⁴ The vertical red lines on these graphs are the decade markers of 1920 and 1940.

²⁴ Pie charts of typeface percentages can be found in the Appendix, pp.132-133.

Table 4.1, *Typeface Class & Category Percentages – New Zealand Data*

YEAR	Humanist	Garaldic	Transitional	New Transitional	Didonic	Wedge/Hybrid Serif	Slab Serif	Script	Geometric Sans Serif	Humanist Sans Serif	Unclassed	Art Deco Category
1918	7%	5%	5%	17%	1%	8%	16%	7%	7%	24%	2%	13%
1920	9%	2%	5%	14%	2%	13%	12%	9%	10%	20%	3%	7%
1922	6%	1%	5%	14%	2%	14%	8%	13%	11%	22%	3%	16%
1926	3%	2%	4%	13%	2%	13%	19%	17%	8%	15%	4%	12%
1930	1%	3%	3%	11%	7%	12%	18%	7%	19%	19%	0%	26%
1934	1%	3%	3%	11%	5%	3%	10%	10%	31%	21%	2%	22%
1938	0%	1%	3%	8%	5%	2%	10%	13%	34%	24%	1%	18%
1940	1%	0%	1%	2%	8%	2%	6%	19%	39%	23%	1%	17%
1942	0%	0%	2%	5%	8%	2%	5%	16%	38%	23%	1%	17%
Average ->	3%	2%	3%	11%	7%	8%	12%	12%	22%	21%	2%	16%

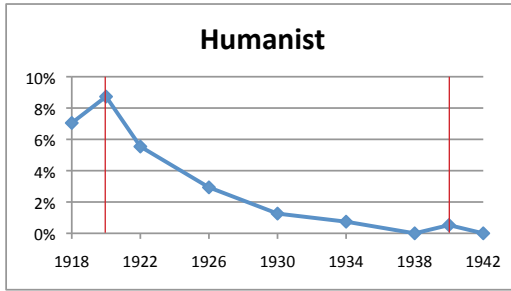


Figure 4.1, *Humanist* graph

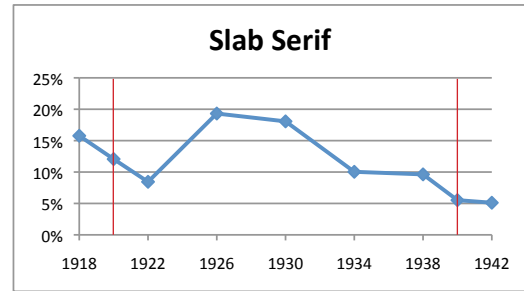


Figure 4.6, *Slab Serif* graph

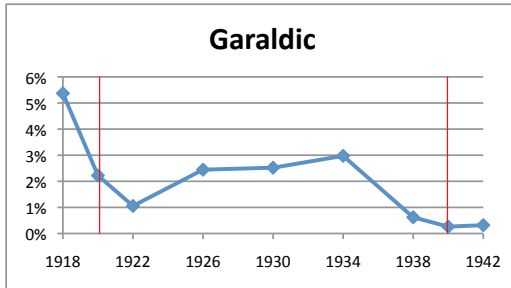


Figure 4.2, *Garaldic* graph

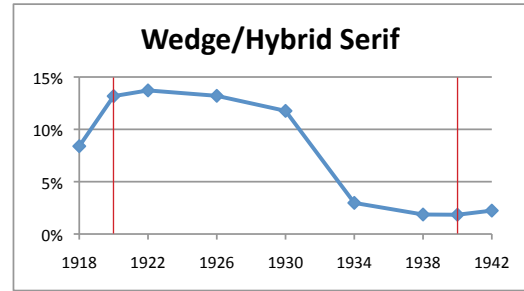


Figure 4.7, *Wedge/Hybrid Serif* graph

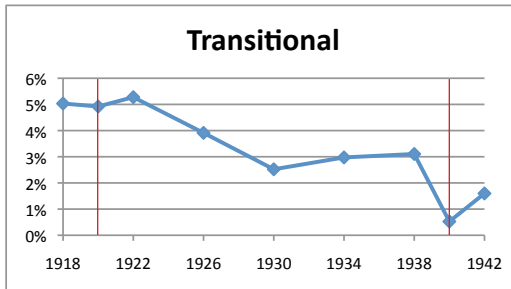


Figure 4.3, *Transitional* graph

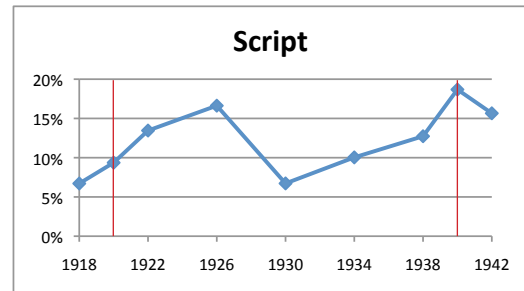


Figure 4.8, *Script* graph

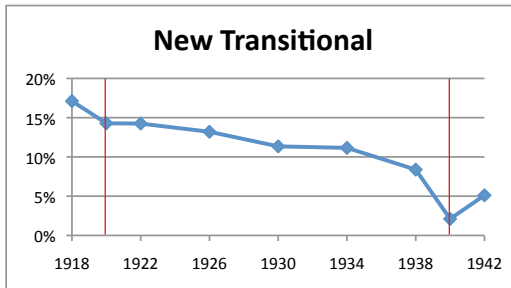


Figure 4.4, *New Transitional* graph

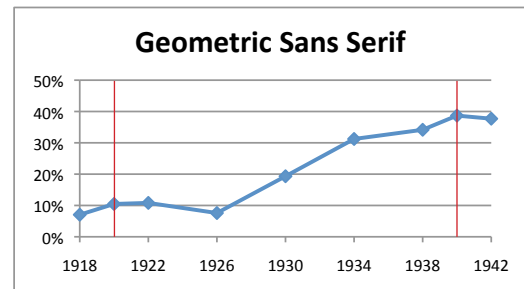


Figure 4.9, *Geometric Sans Serif* graph

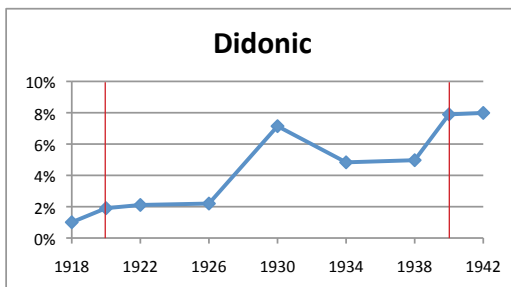


Figure 4.5, *Didonic* graph

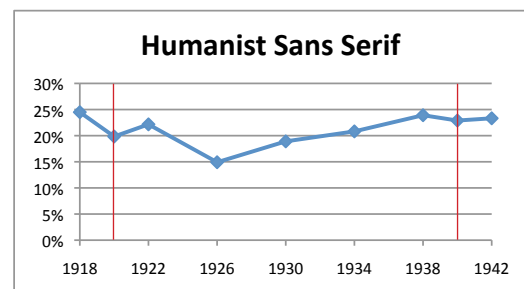


Figure 4.10, *Humanist Sans Serif* graph

Figures 4.1 to 4.10 are graphs that show the progression of typeface presence within each of the ten classes, charted through percentages of the total typeface count. The Unclassed graph in figure 4.11 below shows the percentage of typefaces that were misfits each year, but as the typefaces of this class are varied, the results do not portray any relevance in their plotted progression. Also, the highest amount of unclassified fonts in any one given year is less than 4%, an insignificant amount to prove anything about the presence of Unclassed typefaces, other than the fact there were very few.

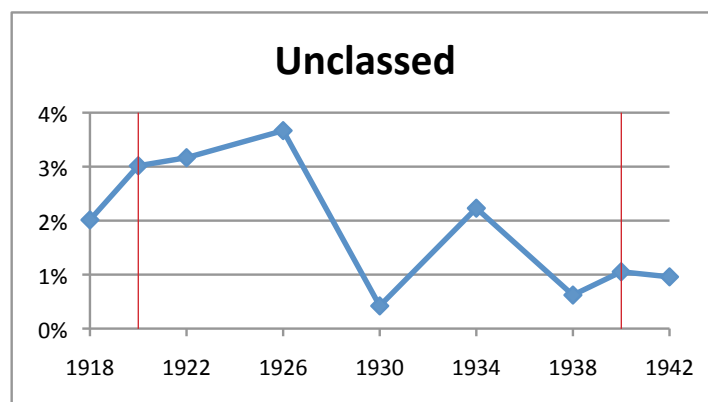


Figure 4.11, *Unclassed* graph

The graphs in figures 4.1 to 4.4 show that the general plotted curve for typefaces in the Roman serif classes of Humanist, Transitional and New Transitional all steadily decrease, while Garaldic also decreases, although less consistently. The overall continual decrease in these types of letterforms show that New Zealand gradually rejected these traditional letterforms in favour of typefaces from other classes throughout the progression of typographic Modernism.

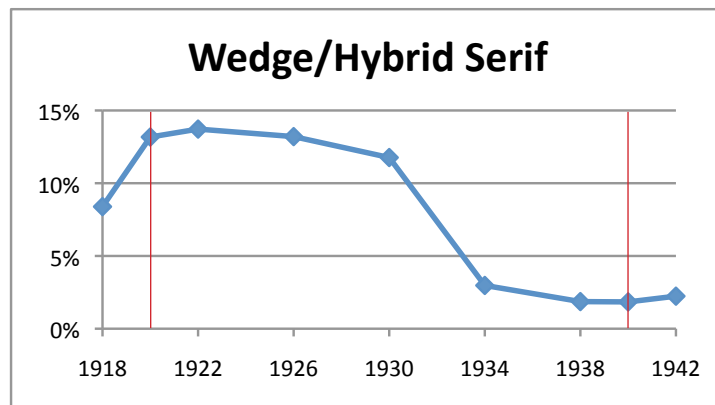


Figure 4.7, *Wedge/Hybrid Serif* graph

Also suggesting that traditional letterforms were rejected, is the *Wedge/Hybrid Serif* class in figure 4.7 (although not all the typefaces in this class would be classed as traditional, the majority would be). This class exhibits a drastic jump between 1930 and 1934 in utilisation, with presence at 12% and above of all typefaces used inclusive from 1920 to 1930, which drops to below 4% from 1934 onwards. This dramatic decrease could be a result of the introduction of more geometric sans serif typefaces into New Zealand, as the *Geometric Sans Serif* graph in figure 4.9 shows the opposite curve plot, although more gradually.

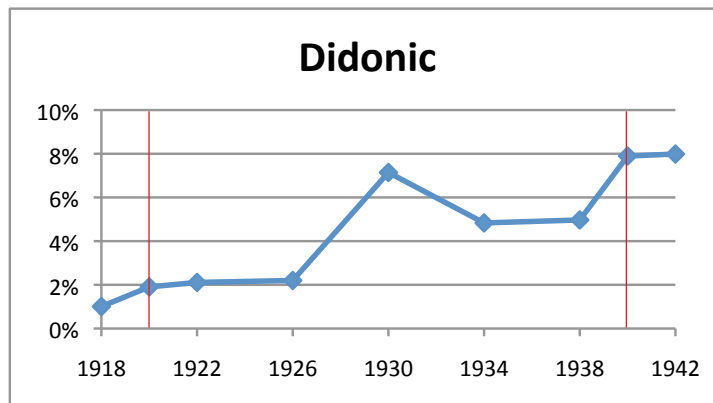


Figure 4.5, *Didonic* graph

The Didonic graph in figure 4.5 shows an overall increase in use within the timeframe, with a distinct initial peak in 1930. As the overall percentage of typefaces in this class is low, the difference between its presence in 1926 and 1930 could be perceived as quite large in the graph, but with such low percentages in the y-axis it only represents a 5% increase between these two years. That is not to say that 5% is an insignificant increase, but the representation of this data is highlighted so as not to mislead. This small peak in 1930 could be linked to the Art Deco peak of 1930, as seen later in figure 4.15.

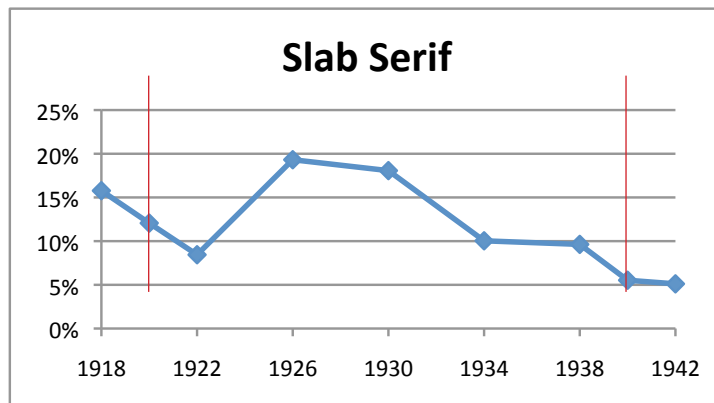


Figure 4.6, *Slab Serif* graph

As seen in figure 4.6 and Table 4.1, a high percentage of the total typefaces in the tally were classified as Slab Serif in 1926 and 1930 – 19% and 18%, respectively – making it the most common class of 1926, followed closely by Script typefaces at 17%. This sample shows that almost one out of every five typefaces used during these two years was Slab Serif.

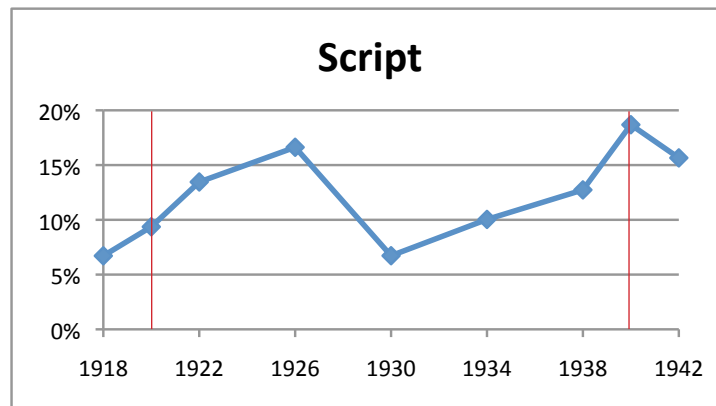


Figure 4.8, *Script* graph

Figure 4.8 showcases the progression of Script typefaces, which (apart from the Unclassed graph) is the most sporadic of all the typeface classes. The first peak occurs in 1926, and a second in 1940. Retrospectively, it would have been beneficial to note if these faces were brush-script, as this would have indicated whether or not the peaks were due to an increase in brush-script utilisation. These two peaks, 17% in 1926 and 19% in 1940, means that during these years Script typefaces accounted for close to one fifth of all the typefaces in the sample advertisements.

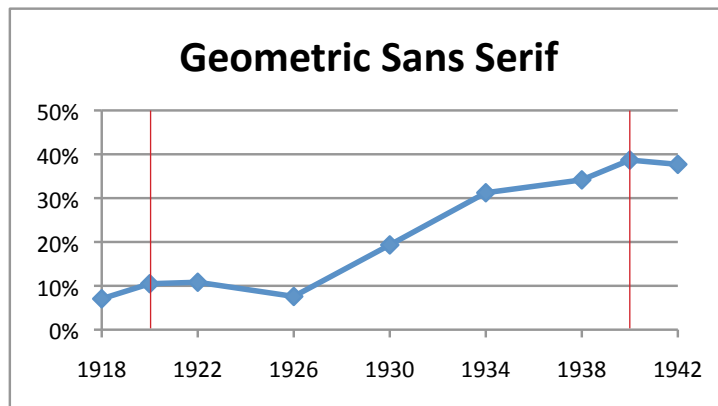


Figure 4.9, *Geometric Sans Serif* graph

As seen in the class averages in Table 4.1 (bottom line), overall the Sans Serif classes occupy the greatest percentage of all the typefaces. Separately they account for over 20% of the total typeface count each, and when combined at 43%, they were the most popular typefaces by a decent margin. The Geometric Sans Serifs (figure 4.9) float around 10% from 1918 to 1926, but from 1926 onward increase constantly towards a significant peak of 39% in 1940.

Such a high peak lends partly to the fairly common presence of the geometric sans serif typeface as seen in figure 4.12, overleaf. This must have been part of *The New Zealand Herald's* case, or machine type-setting matrices, as it is seen in a number of non-block advertisements beginning in May 1938, and is more frequent in 1940 and 1942.

**THERE IS NO
SHORTAGE OF
ONIONS**



**EAT YOUR FILL
AND KEEP YOUR
BLOOD PURE**

CARROTS



**EXCEPTIONAL
SUPPLIES. FULL
OF VITAMINS**

Wholesale from Turners & Growers Ltd.

Retail Everywhere.

Figure 4.12, Geometric Sans Serif example,
The New Zealand Herald, 1942

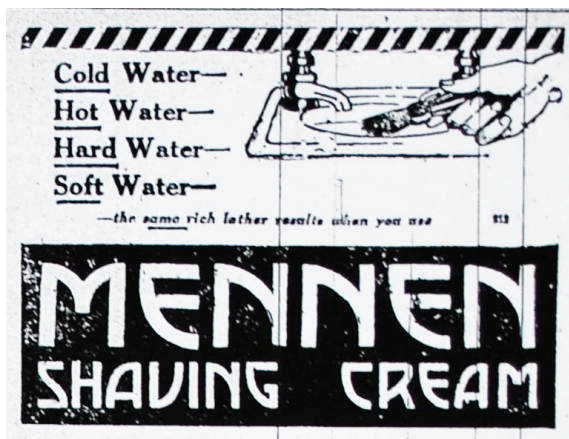


Figure 4.13, *Mennen* advertisement, *The Auckland Weekly News*, 1922



Figure 4.14, *Heenzo* advertisement, *The New Zealand Herald*, 1922

As an example of how early these Geometric Sans Serifs were appearing in New Zealand advertising, figures 4.13 and 4.14 show examples from 1922. *Mennen* was an American brand, established in 1878, then bought by the Colgate-Palmolive Company in 1922. Figure 4.13 showcases a distinctly Art Deco, Geometric Sans Serif, which confirms that the New Zealand public was exposed to these typefaces early.

The origins of the *Heenzo* brand are unknown, but the advertisement in figure 4.14 (also from a printers block) is another example of the Geometric Sans Serif faces that were seen much earlier than one may expect in a country that could be considered marginal.

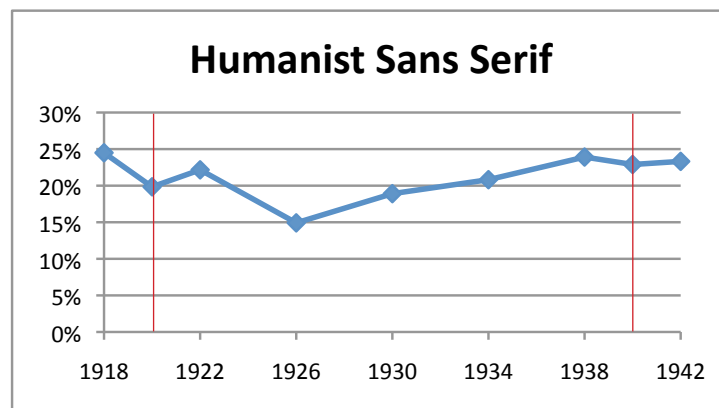


Figure 4.10, *Humanist Sans Serif* graph

The Humanist Sans Serif class, graphed in figure 4.10, is the most steady of all the classes. Averaging 21%, this class shows that New Zealand employed Humanist Sans Serifs constantly and consistently during the period of typographic Modernism, and to a comparatively high degree. Quite distinct from its Geometric counterpart, the Humanist Sans Serifs start at a peak close to 25% in 1918. By Beatrice Warde's definition on page 5, through the common use of Sans Serif typefaces, our local printers had 'modern minds'. Perhaps the early use of Geometric Sans Serif typefaces might have been higher and this Humanist Sans Serif peak might have been lower if the printers had more access to geometric typefaces – it is highly likely that they would have been less available to printers in the earlier years of typographic Modernism. However as many of the advertisements in the sample were pre-made blocks, often printers were limited to applying typefaces to the dedicated, smaller sections of the blocks, left blank for local input about the national retailers of overseas products. The trough seen in the Humanist Sans Serif graph in 1926 may have been a consequence of the peaks seen in the Script and Slab Serif classes.

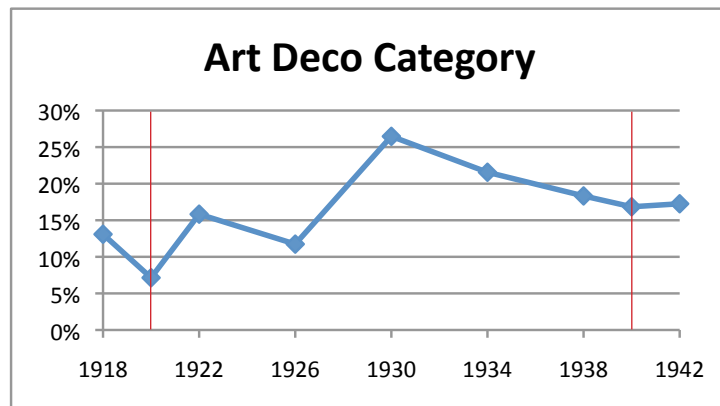


Figure 4.15, *Art Deco Category* graph

Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, above in figure 14.11 is the graph of Art Deco typeface progression. This graph shows a clear peak in 1930 of these typefaces, where 26 percent of all the typefaces used were classified as Art Deco. Occupying over one quarter of all the typefaces present in the sample in that year, this clearly asserts that by 1930 New Zealand had truly embraced the typographic modernity of Art Deco.

COMPARISON TO W. HAROLD BUTLER'S BRITISH DATA

This research gains strength from comparison to British surveys, rare in typographic history, by W. Harold Butler. Butler was the Technical Production Manager of the advertising agency *Saward Baker and Co., Ltd* (well-known for being the appointed agents for *Ovaltine*),²⁵ in the 1920s and 30s, and during this time wrote a number of key articles on Britain's typographic preference. His first relevant article, 'The Types We Use: an examination of a thousand advertisements'²⁶ published in 1928, contains typeface family counts of 1,153 advertisements from eleven different daily newspapers, four weekly newspapers, and one monthly. As with this current research, Butler only considered display advertisements (not in-text adverts from readers or otherwise). His second relevant article, 'Has the Sans Come to Stay?',²⁷ shows the tally results of typeface utilisation in 750 advertisements from nine newspapers in December of 1932. Butler's final relevant article, 'Typefaces in the Nationals in War Time',²⁸ published in 1939 (eleven years after the first) considers the typeface utilisation in display advertising of eight newspapers over the five-year period, 1935-1939. So over these three articles, Butler provides data for 1928, 1932 and the years 1935-1939 inclusive.

Butler only samples once within each year (unlike like the sampling of this research that takes data from four separate months within a year to obtain a more accurate overview of typographic presence in any given year), but nevertheless can be used as comparative

25 [author unknown], *Ovaltine*, Kings Langley Local History & Museum Society, updated 2009, <<http://www.kingslangley.org.uk/ovaltine.html>> [accessed 10 December 2010]

26 W. Harold Butler, 'The Types We Use: an examination of a thousand advertisements', *Advertisers Weekly*, 10 August 1928, p. 205.

27 W. Harold Butler, 'Has the Sans Come to Stay?', *Advertising Display*, January 1933, p. 16, 47, 49.

28 W. Harold Butler, 'Typefaces in the Nationals in War Time', *Advertisers Weekly*, 28 December 1939, p. 234.

findings. Butler tallied typefaces in his data according to family name (i.e. Bodoni), so to make it easy to compare and contrast his findings with this current research, each of Butler's typeface families were placed according to their attributes into the classes specific to this research (i.e. Bodoni goes into the Didone class). The small number of specific typefaces in Butler's data of which no examples could be found were tallied as Unclassed. Butler has no category for Art Deco typefaces, and the typeface families listed in his data do not showcase this presence (for example, in his 1928 article all San Serif typefaces are placed into one category, and in his 1939 article, his 'Modern Sans' family encompasses all Geometric Sans Serif typefaces, but neither allude to whether the typefaces within these categories are decorative or not, and there is no mention of specific characteristics). As Butler's 1928 data series categorises Geometric Sans Serif and Humanist Sans Serif typefaces (from this research's classification system) collectively as a single Sans Serif category, Butler's 1928 data point for the Geometric Sans Serif and Humanist Sans Serif classes will not be used in the comparative graphs. Table 4.2 show the percentages obtained from the Butler data, followed by graphs in figures 4.16 to 4.25 that show the progression of typeface presence within each of the ten classes, charted through percentages of the total typeface count. In the graphs, the blue plot and line represents the data from this current research, while the red tracks the progression from Butler's Data.

Table 4.1, *Typeface Class & Category Percentages – New Zealand Data*

YEAR	Humanist	Gothic	Transitional	New Transitional	Didonic	Wedge/Hybrid Serif	Slab Serif	Script	Geometric Sans Serif	Humanist Sans Serif	Unclassed	Art Deco Category
1918	7%	5%	5%	17%	1%	8%	16%	7%	7%	24%	2%	13%
1920	9%	2%	5%	14%	2%	13%	12%	9%	10%	20%	3%	7%
1922	6%	1%	5%	14%	2%	14%	8%	13%	11%	22%	3%	16%
1926	3%	2%	4%	13%	2%	13%	19%	17%	8%	15%	4%	12%
1930	1%	3%	3%	11%	7%	12%	18%	7%	19%	19%	0%	26%
1934	1%	3%	3%	11%	5%	3%	10%	10%	31%	21%	2%	22%
1938	0%	1%	3%	8%	5%	2%	10%	13%	34%	24%	1%	18%
1940	1%	0%	1%	2%	8%	2%	6%	19%	39%	23%	1%	17%
1942	0%	0%	2%	5%	8%	2%	5%	16%	38%	23%	1%	17%
Average ->	3%	2%	3%	11%	7%	8%	12%	12%	22%	21%	2%	16%

Table 4.2, *Typeface Class & Category Percentages – Butler Data*

YEAR	Humanist	Gothic	Transitional	New Transitional	Didonic	Wedge/Hybrid Serif	Slab Serif	Script	Geometric Sans Serif	Humanist Sans Serif	Unclassed
1928	36%	8%	2%	31%	8%	1%	2%	2%	7%	7%	2%
1932	17%	11%	7%	10%	16%	1%	5%	1%	24%	7%	1%
1935	28%	10%	7%	9%	14%	0%	9%	0%	18%	6%	0%
1936	6%	12%	11%	5%	15%	0%	12%	0%	31%	7%	1%
1937	9%	10%	10%	7%	18%	0%	10%	0%	30%	6%	0%
1938	9%	14%	14%	4%	12%	0%	8%	0%	28%	11%	0%
1939	4%	12%	13%	6%	19%	0%	9%	1%	28%	7%	0%
Average ->	16%	11%	9%	11%	15%	0%	8%	0%	23%	6%	1%

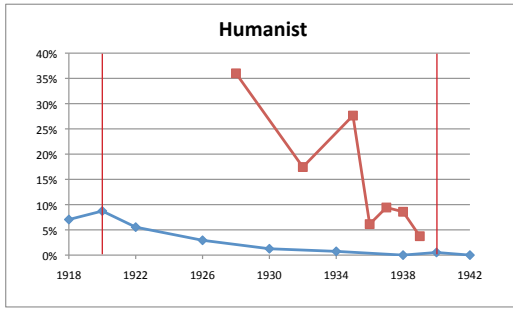


Figure 4.16, *Humanist* graph

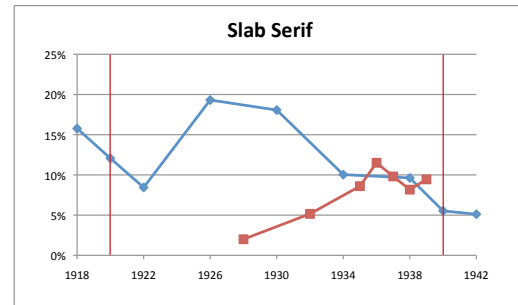


Figure 4.21, *Slab Serif* graph

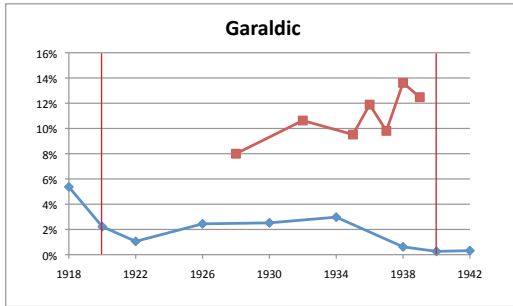


Figure 4.17, *Garaldic* graph

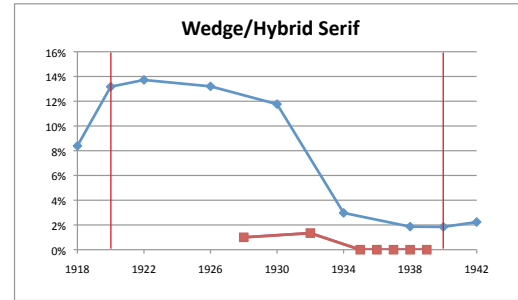


Figure 4.22, *Wedge/Hybrid Serif* graph

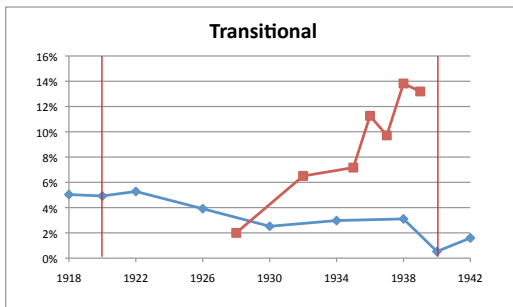


Figure 4.18, *Transitional* graph

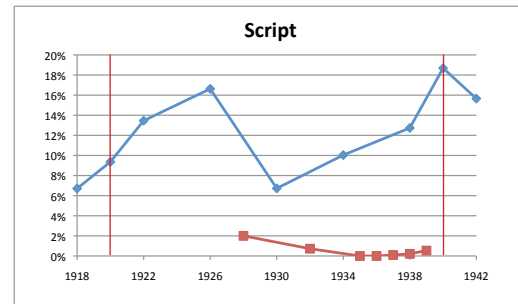


Figure 4.23, *Script* graph

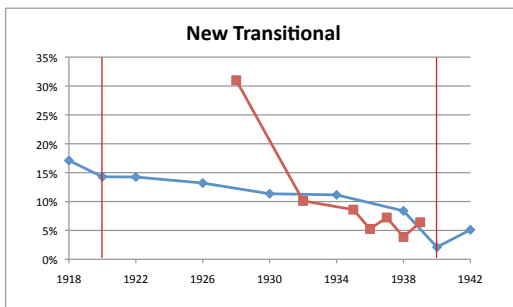


Figure 4.19, *New Transitional* graph

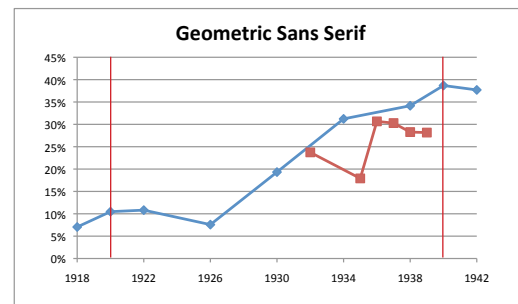


Figure 4.24, *Geometric Sans Serif* graph

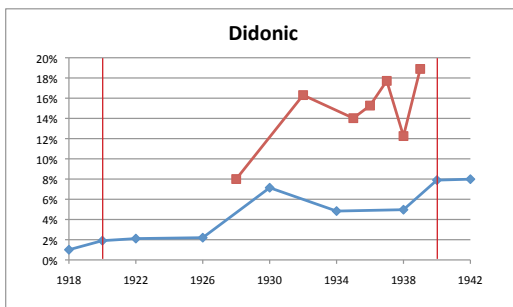


Figure 4.20, *Didonic* graph

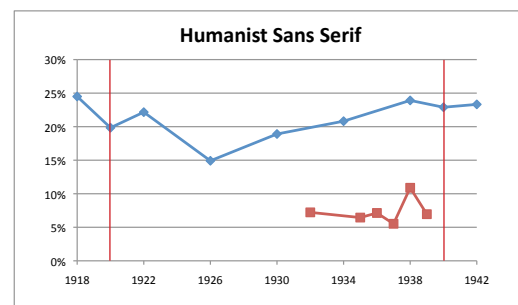


Figure 4.25, *Humanist Sans Serif* graph

The Unclassed graph in figure 4.26 below shows the percentage of typefaces that were misfits each year against Butler's that were also classed as such. Again, as mentioned in the analysis of the Unclassed graph from figure 4.11, as the typefaces of this class are varied, the results do not portray any relevance in their plotted progression. Also, the highest amount of unclassified fonts in any one given year is less than 4%, and in Butler's data is 2% or less – an insignificant amount to prove anything about the presence of Unclassed typefaces, other than the fact there were very few.

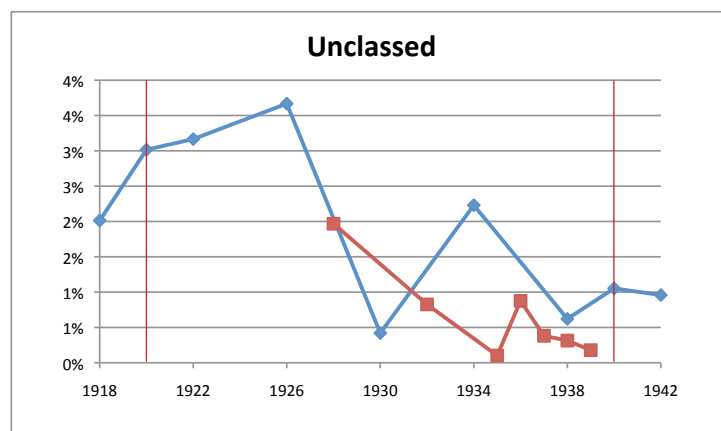


Figure 4.26, *Unclassed* graph

When assessing graphs 4.16 to 4.25, this research firstly asserts that a longer time series of comparison would be needed to determine with accuracy whether New Zealand was ahead or behind Butler's British data, but as Butler's sources were the only known parallel of international type use, comparisons can only be made from 1928 to 1939.

The New Zealand data is occasionally consistent with the Butler data in terms of the increase or decrease in typeface class percentages over time, but clearly the denomination of percentages over each typeface class were markedly different between the two surveys. One of the classes that showcases significant divergence is Garaldic. Its New Zealand

use shows a plateau from the early 1920s and then a decline in usage from 1934, while the Butler data shows an increase in the usage of Garaldics. Also the overall percentage of use of Garaldic in the Butler tally is significantly higher than the original tally – in the only directly comparable year of 1938, for example, typefaces classed as Garaldic by Butler were at 14%, while in the same year New Zealand it is a bare 1%. The increase in overall use of garaldics and transitional typefaces in the Butler data, could be indicative of the revival of historic faces and a revert to traditional practise that England experience during the period of typographic Modernism, derived from theorists like Stanley Morrison. This resurgence is confirmed in Butler’s 1933 article:

There has been a Caslon revival, and a reversion to the classic style of the old printers helped by the introduction of such faces as Kennerly, Verona, Cloister, and the recasting of faces like Garamond, Baskerville and Bodoni... Today we find that although the use of sans serif faces is undoubtedly the “fashion”,...the “classic” types are in greater demand now than at any other time during this century.²⁹

Butler’s data shows the opposite occurring with Humanist Serif faces, which, with their Venetian origins, may have been rejected for being too old-fashioned.

Despite the surge in these two Roman faces occurring, the total percentage of typefaces in the Didonic class is higher than the counts for the Garaldic and Transitional classes, and the Geometric Sans class is significantly higher, with the highest percentage ratio each year that it was able to be tallied as a separate class in Butler’s data. This suggests that even though there was a resurgence of some Roman faces, overall typeface presence in display advertising was mostly sans serif. The one year that is significantly different in the ratio of Sans Serif typefaces, is 1928, the year that Butler grouped all Sans Serif typefaces as one. This data was not represented in the Geometric or Humanist Sans Serif graphs

²⁹ Butler, 1933, p. 16.

as it does not show the denominations for each class, however the combined percentage shown in Table 2.1 shows that in 1928, of all the typefaces counted in Bulter’s sample, only 7% were Sans Serif. It would be useful if Butler provided data of 1930, as this would show more accurately the popularity of Sans Serif faces (or more specifically, Geometric Sans Serif faces) in comparison to New Zealand. Although Butler does not provide specific numbers for 1930, he does include a small bar graph that compares the most popular typefaces of that year in Britain to 1928 and 1932 data. As seen in figure 4.27, this graph clearly demonstrates a large leap in “Modern Sans” numbers between 1928 and 1930, and an opposite decline with “Cheltenham”.

HOW THE WHEEL HAS TURNED IN FOUR YEARS

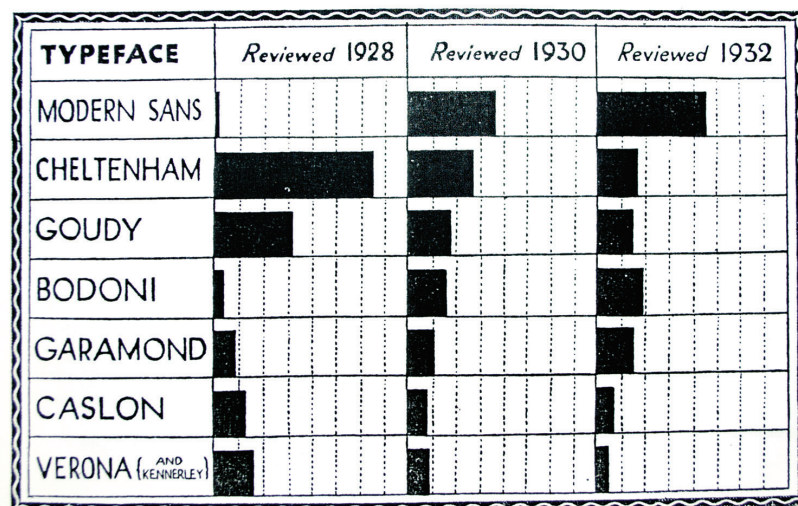
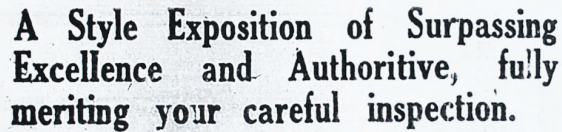


Figure 4.27, *Typeface Presence Graph 1928-1933*, Butler, 1933

It should be noted that due to the Cheltenham family’s close resemblance to both the Transitional class and also the Slab Serif class – particularly in its bold form that has heavy serifs, as shown in figures 4.28 and 4.29 – the Cheltenham family was classed as New Transitional when it was tallied for both in the New Zealand and English data.


Butler considers in his 1928 article why Cheltenham may have been so popular in 1928;

*Most typographers will be surprised to find that the twentyfive-year-old Cheltenham is still the most extensively used typeface in current advertising...in most cases because the said papers had no other display typefaces that would fill the bill.*³⁰



A Style Exposition of Surpassing Excellence and Authoritive, fully meriting your careful inspection.

Figure 4.28, Cheltenham example,
The New Zealand Herald, 1918



Novel Xmas Gifts

Figure 4.29, Cheltenham example 2,
The Auckland Weekly News, 1920

This also seemed the case in New Zealand, with both *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Auckland Weekly News* showing Cheltenham very regularly in 1918 (the *Herald* more so), bringing the New Transitional count up to second place at 17% in that year. It should be noted, that the Cheltenham was released in 1904 by the American Type Foundry's - its popularity in Britain showcasing that despite the resurgence of Roman types that Britain showed, these may not have been British typefaces.

Cheltenham's popularity, which is suggested by the peaks in the New Transitional graphs, declined relatively steadily in New Zealand, unlike the drastic jump shown from 1928 to 1930 in Butler's data. Perhaps New Zealand did not drop the New Transitional style so quickly due to a lack of possible replacement faces, or alternatively the newspapers might have been less brazen in their typographic transitions so as to keep visual consistency, enticing their audience through a sense of familiarity. The former is probably more likely, as the block advertising being published certainly exemplified international trends as they were popularised internationally.

³⁰ Butler, 1928, p. 205.

Another clear difference between the data of New Zealand and Britain, is in Slab Serif usage. In New Zealand this class declined steadily from a peak in 1926, whereas Butler shows Slab Serif usage increasing from the late 1920s before plateauing in the mid 1930s. This is again backed by another article of Butler's, 'World's New Type Faces of 1935: trend away from stark sans and towards a much softer letter',³¹ published in the British *Advertiser's Weekly* supplement in 1936. Under the heading, "Many New Egyptians", Butler states, "All the typefounders in the world that have issued an Egyptian face seem to have added to their families. Sheets of showings of bold, extra bold, open and condensed faces and others have come along with unfailing regularity".³² He continues, stating how "Egyptians" (or as this research classes them, Slab Serifs) continued to develop, and rivaled the "famous" Cheltenham family. By this notion, if the 1935 Butler data for Slab Serifs and New Transitionals is compared to that of 1936, it could be that the decrease in New Transitionals from 9% to 5% use is a counteracting effect from the increase of Slab Serifs from the same 9% in 1935, to 12% in 1936. The same can not be said of New Zealand: Slab Serif use here peaked much earlier, around 1926 to 1930. Perhaps this is due to New Zealand embracing typographic Modernism earlier than England, as from 1934 onwards the combined percentage of Sans Serif faces was over 50%, peaking at a high 62% in 1940. The highest percentage when combining Butler's Sans Serif classes is only 39% (in 1938), however perhaps Britain's considerably lower Humanist Sans Serif numbers might have been a consequence of their significantly greater Didonic percentages.

31 W. Harold Butler, 'World's New Type Faces of 1935: trend away from stark sans and towards a much softer letter', *Advertisers Weekly Supplement*, 23 January 1936, p. iv.

32 *ibid.*, p. iv.

The last significant irregularity between the two samples is with Script typefaces, which, like the Slab Serifs, also diverges during the 1930s. The New Zealand data portrays the utilisation of Script typefaces increasing as the 1930s progressed, while its presence was almost non-existent in Britain during the same time period according to Butler. This contradicts Butler's commentary, again referencing his 1936 article, 'World's New Type Faces of 1935: trend away from stark sans and towards a much softer letter'³³. Finishing his introductory paragraph about the appearance of new typefaces, he comments, "More than twenty, of widely divergent designs, have appeared, with perhaps a sort of sneaking preference for script letters." Following this, under the heading, "Corvinus the Best?", Butler states:

*These scripts have appeared in all weights from a hair line letter to a heavy brush stroke, and are probably the type designer's reaction to the sans letter, a sort of longing to get away from the rigid severity of non-serif face.*³⁴

So although Butler is asserting the preference of some type designers to the creation of script faces, these have not been reflected in the 1939 retrospective data he provides of 1935. It is difficult to assume why Butler's tally data shows such low numbers of script typefaces, as there are many possible contributing factors that may have caused this. Perhaps, although type designers were producing them, printers were not using Script faces as they were more difficult to read, or perhaps for their understatement when compared to a bold, geometric serif. Alternatively, this could be the result of an error in Butler's data, or possibly a misinterpretation of his data by this study. In any case, this research shows that overall New Zealand used script faces much more frequently than Butler recorded Britain as doing.

³³ *ibid.*, p. iv.

³⁴ Butler, 1936, p. iv.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE DATA

The survey has clarified that New Zealand embraced typographic modernity, and perhaps to a degree typographic Modernism. While use of the traditional Roman typefaces from the Humanist, Garaldic, Transitional, New Transitional, and the Wedge/Hybrid class steadily decreased from 1920 to 1940, Didonic and Geometric Sans Serifs increased. The increase of Didonics suggests increasing typographic modernity, as Didonic were considered 'Modern' Roman. Although they did not reflect the ideals of typographic Modernism, some of these faces were considered Art Deco, and therefore representative of modernity. The first peak of the Didonic class in 1930 could have contributed to the Art Deco peak that is also seen in 1930.

The steady increase and later high percentage of typefaces in the Geometric Sans Serif class suggests that New Zealand quickly embraced the popular typographic developments from the Metropolitan centres. When discussing Bringhurst's category of geometric Modernism in typography in the introduction, it is asserted as representing two strands in this research: typographic Modernism and typographic modernity. Therefore the Geometric Sans Serif class, which encompasses typefaces that fit under this main category of Bringhurst's, also represent these two strands. Through this class, it can be stated that typographic modernity and also forms of Modernism were seen in New Zealand from 1920 to 1940, increasingly so. Although a number of these faces showcased the geometry of typographic Modernism, the range of typographic use in New Zealand's newspapers and the presence of Art Deco typefaces means that New Zealand use could not be considered as representative of High-Modernism, which was albeit limited in its diffusion. This also suggests New Zealand's typeface use did not reflect the typographic Modernism of Germany, but more as the filtered version, typographic modernity – yet as is the complex

nature of Modernism, Nazi Germany did initially reject the Geometric Sans Serifs, so Germany was not entirely exemplary of typographic Modernism either. Despite much of the typefaces that showcased prominent examples of typographic modernity in New Zealand being printers blocks, particularly early on, the presence of these typefaces means the public were exposed to modernity from an early stage.

What is perhaps the most significant analysis derived from this study is found in the Art Deco Category. With over one quarter of all the typefaces present in the sample of 1930 categorised as such, this clearly asserts that by that year New Zealand had truly embraced the typographic modernity of Art Deco. This finding is particularly significant when compared to the presence of Art Deco in New Zealand architecture. The rebuild of Napier, considered by Douglas Lloyd Jenkins as beginning Art Deco architecture in New Zealand³⁵, began in mid-1931, so the Art Deco presence in their architecture was only at its starting point in this year, continuing to grow through the 1930s. The static nature of buildings means that the presence of Art Deco in architecture does not decline like the more fickle character of typefaces, but this research is more concerned with the introduction of Art Deco, as a signifier of modernity, rather than its longevity. Considering that 16 percent of typefaces were considered Art Deco as early as 1922, it can be deduced that the Art Deco style was evident in typefaces well before its presence in the Napier rebuild. Consequently, where the Art Deco style acts a signifier of modernity, and Napier as representative of New Zealand architecture, the arrival of modernity in New Zealand occurred through typography before it did in architecture.

Perhaps due to having most of his data occurring every year, Butler's graphs show a

³⁵ Jenkins, p. 65-66.

more sporadic typographic use than the more gradual typographic trends shown in New Zealand. The closest typographic use to one another, in terms of percentage and trend, is in the New Transitional class – but even in this class there is a major gap between Butler’s high count of 1928 versus less than half the percentage of use in New Zealand two years either side. Perhaps the only other common class is Geometric Sans Serif, but even here there is a significant dip in the British data of 1935. The comparison against Butler’s British data has shown that, according to these two samples, typographic use was markedly different between New Zealand and Britain from 1928 to 1939. It shows, through the increase in Garaldic and Transitional typeface use, that Britain may have embraced what Bringhurst defines as lyrical Modernism, while in New Zealand there was not a resurgence of the traditional Serif typefaces in this sample period. It is tempting to conjecture Beaglehole’s promotion of traditional fonts from 1940 took us backwards to follow Britain, but his typographic focus was more on book type than advertising or display type. The graphs clarify that despite New Zealand’s historical ties as British colony, typographic use in advertising did not resemble that of Britain, although as the timeframe of the British data was shorter, a greater amount of data may have revealed otherwise.

Although this study investigated the use of typography, not image, it was observed that images were common throughout advertising from 1920 to 1940 in New Zealand. Perhaps this is proof that the aesthetic of pictorial Modernism was more appealing to our national audience than reductionist functionality, which is reflected in the popularity of Art Deco faces here that also valued form over function. While The Bauhaus challenged the use of imagery, advocating the abolition of image unless absolutely necessary, this sample

did not show evidence of the image being obsolete – although layouts became more simplified.

Overall, the New Zealand sample shows a reasonably gradual shift from the use of traditional serif typefaces, towards a distinctly high percentage of Geometric Sans Serifs. Typefaces in the Didonic class have an initial peak in 1930, the Art Deco category also shows a distinct peak in that year, and the Slab Serif class was at its highest point in both 1926 and 1930, at almost 20% of all the typefaces in those years. The use of Humanist Sans Serifs is the most constant; perhaps its lowest percentage of use in 1926 was relative to the peaks seen in the Script and Slab Serif classes. With the combined total of both Sans Serif classes occupying 40 percent of all typefaces used in 1926, and over 50 percent from 1930 onwards, this research has shown that the typography in newspaper advertising in New Zealand was decidedly modernistic, and the peak of typefaces categorised as Art Deco shows New Zealand clearly exhibited that particular strand of international typographic modernity.

Conclusions

{ CHAPTER FIVE }

This research was undertaken as a means of uncovering a relatively unexplored area of New Zealand's typographical history, with the purpose of determining the arrival and form of Modernism or modernity through the medium of typography. Metropolitan centres of typographic design were studied for their developments to provide international context. It also had the objective to form a research basis for type design, for this study and in future. With the nature of this research being substantially from original sources, and with no basis of comparable data, it did have limitations. Because of its foundational nature, it was necessary to undertake a significant amount of primary research. This required thorough and comprehensive sampling, tallying, and analysing, which in their time-consuming nature imposed constraints, but left a number of opportunities for further research.

The sample has shown that although there was a high use of Geometric Sans Serif faces, which might suggest derivation from Germany, the two strands within geometric Modernism in typography means that many of the faces in this class were representative of typographic modernity, like the forms of Art Deco, rather than Modernism. Typographic and trade journals that were present exposed New Zealand printers to

international typeface developments and layouts. Despite many of these originating from Britain, the graphs in this research showed New Zealand did not reflect or follow the typography in British newspaper advertising.

The research charted progression towards a peak of typographic modernity in the 1930s, particularly through assessment of the Art Deco typeface category, and a continuation of modernity through the abundant use of Geometric and Humanist Sans Serif classes. However the non-existence of other research with which to form a basis has meant there are limits to the applicability to the findings, particularly from the limited number of newspapers in the sample. This three-newspaper limitation, as stated, was due to the large quantity of sampling needed, and the two major newspapers were selected for their longevity and popularity in New Zealand's largest metropolitan centre of Auckland. A more accurate representation of the typefaces from advertising in New Zealand would have been achieved through the inclusion of more newspapers, and of those from other centres, such as Wellington or Christchurch. A second limitation was the short time period of available data from Butler. Although he does provide seven distinct years of data for comparison, which was not found elsewhere, it would have been particularly beneficial to have data earlier than 1928 to use for comparison, and to claim more concrete findings.

Due to the relatively introductory nature of this research, there is a multiplicity of directions for future research. The first would be to undertake further sampling of the New Zealand data in 1927, 1928 and 1929, to be able to see whether the peak of Art Deco typefaces as seen in 1930 occurred earlier or not. Likewise, as with any increase in sampling, collecting data from more points within the 1920-1940 timeframe would

create a more accurate representation of New Zealand's typographic use (although the New Zealand graphs showed a much more steady progression in typeface presence than those of Butler). Another possibility for extended research would be to locate samples (if they exist) of the advertising in newspapers from other centres during this timeframe, such as Germany and North America, to confirm similarities or differences that New Zealand showed against the major international forerunners of typographic Modernism and modernity. A further detailed extension of this research would be to identify brush-script typefaces as a category within the script class, while another would be to identify more of the typefaces to accurately determine their origins.

Despite New Zealand being defined as marginal under Fry's theories of marginality (peripheral location and powerlessness), it is clear that during the period of typographic Modernism, New Zealand was not typographically marginal. Perhaps following the cessation of Robert Coupland Harding's typographic journal, *Typo*, in 1897, there may have been a return to typographic marginality in New Zealand. But as this research of 1920 to 1940 has uncovered, New Zealand advertising was showcasing international developments in typographic modernity soon after their presence elsewhere, keeping pace with international trends, which is exemplified in the *Manslaughter* movie advertisement (figure 2.14) that was on display in New Zealand in December of 1930, only five months following the movie's American release in July of the same year. New Zealand's increasing utilisation of typefaces classed as Geometric Sans Serifs, consistently high use of Humanist Sans Serifs, and peak of Art Deco typefaces in 1930, show that New Zealand use was in-line with popular international developments as charted in current histories such as that of Philip B. Meggs. It also demonstrates that in selection of typefaces, use and layout, New Zealand had little delay in receiving international trends – with

geographical distance only having a slight influence. This suggests a modification of Fry's claim that marginality led to a degenerate mimicking of metropolitan forms.¹

While New Zealand cannot be credited for typographic invention during this period, it can be credited for its embrace of modernity through typographic utilisation and presence. The data conclusions verifies that, where the Art Deco style acts a signifier of modernity, and Napier as representative of New Zealand architecture, the arrival of modernity in New Zealand occurred through typography before it did in architecture. Its arrival also occurred in typography before the governmental embrace that followed the election of the first Labour government in 1935. Fittingly, New Zealand's Centennial Exhibition culminated the period that this research considers, and can perhaps be seen as celebratory of not only New Zealand's first official one hundred years, but perhaps subconsciously as a celebration of the country's dismissal of a status of marginality. But perhaps our cultural marginality is over-exaggerated, or even cyclical? This study, another history, strongly suggests it is more complex than an either marginal, or not-marginal status, and adds further complexity to standard histories of social and material culture.

1 "The guardians of British culture neutralised and diluted the avant-garde objectives of the variants of European modernism as they were represented to British society and its tastemakers. Although Britain was not the sole source of cultural forms for Australia, it was dominant and in modernism's transposition to here, it gain screened out the vanguardist dimension of the avant-garde projects. The consequence of the double mediation was a contentless and stylised, periodised modernism – a modernism stripped of everything save exterior appearance. Thereafter, in disadvantaged local hands, it further degenerated into a deformed reflection of unconvincing simulation." Fry, pp. 215-216.

Although our marginality during the period of typographic Modernism can be questioned, what is certain is that at this time typographic forms became a critical tool in the forming of a national identity:

The ideas and activities of these years [of Modernism] reveal the emerging significance of typography, its position in the flux of creativity between fine art and architecture, and its value as a crucial political and commercial tool.²

What is also certain, is that studies such as these contribute towards an increasing new dialogue, and contribution to other histories that showcase alternative forms to metropolitan centres. To paraphrase Fry³, New Zealand has little to offer typographic history as currently constituted.

It has a considerable amount to offer a typographic history that might be.

² Lewis Blackwell, *20th Century Type* (California: Gingko Press, 1998) p. 34.

³ Fry, p. 217.

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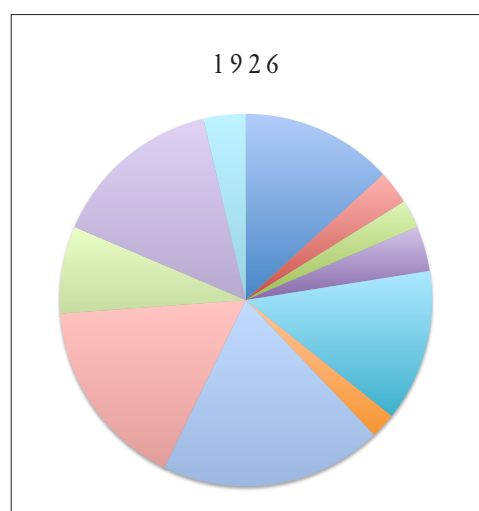
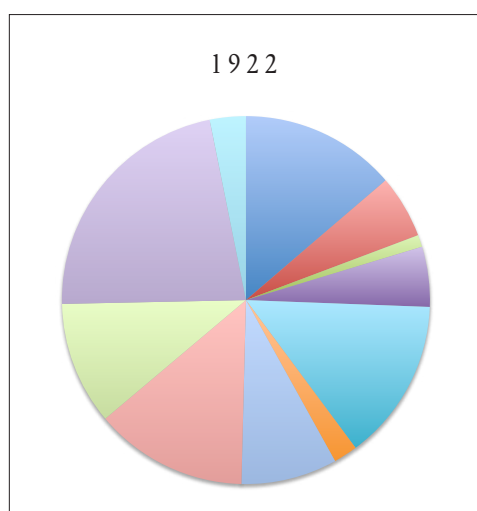
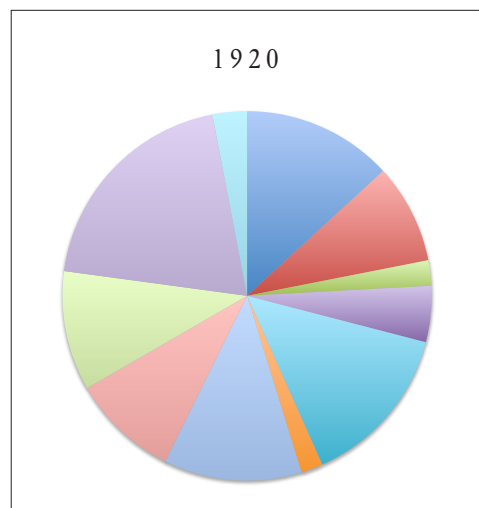
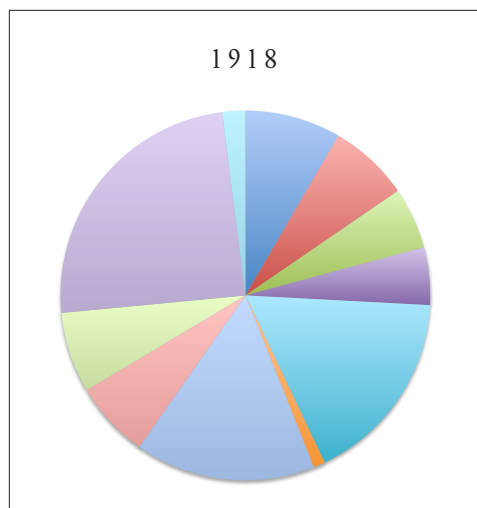
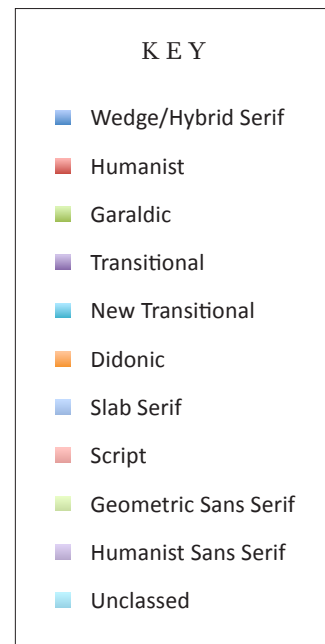
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APPENDIX

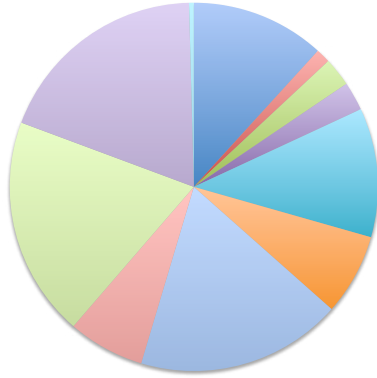
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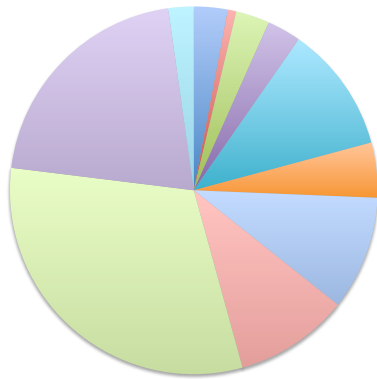
K E Y

- Wedge/Hybrid Serif
- Humanist
- Garaldic
- Transitional
- New Transitional
- Didonic
- Slab Serif
- Script
- Geometric Sans Serif
- Humanist Sans Serif
- Unclassed

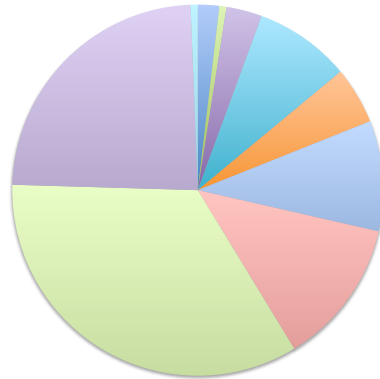
1930



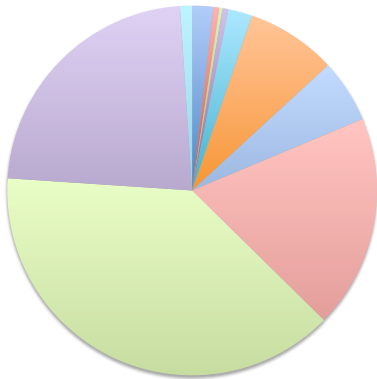
1934



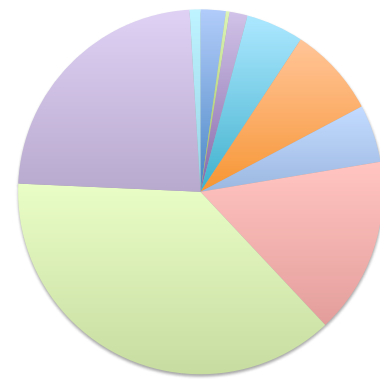
1938



1940



1942



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<< NOTE ON THE TYPE >>

This thesis is set in the digital version of Monotype Fournier. Commercially released in 1925, it was an attempt to recreate a type cut in Paris in the 1740s by Pierre Simon Fournier, which he entitled 'St Augustin Ordinaire'. This typeface was among the most influential designs of the eighteenth century, being one of the earliest Transitional typefaces, which were stepping stones to the modern styles developed later in the century, and classified here as Didonics.