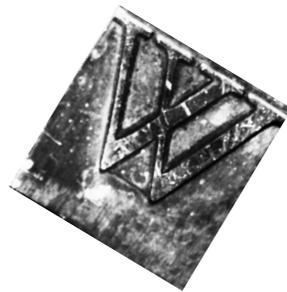


TYPO PHILE

A TAXONOMY OF TYPE
BY DIMITRI THEODOROPOULOS



For anyone who *really* loves type.

I'm in prison...

I'm sure you're wondering how it happened...

That's a loaded question; but when you boil it down,
it was my obsession with *type*.



My relationship with type goes back as far as I do. My father was a typesetter, a profession now extinct. Before computers took over the world typesetting was a specialized skill. A typesetter took written material and set it in type (wooden, metal, and later, machine-generated) according to the specifications of the designer or printer. An incredibly tedious job for anyone, I can guess that my father was meticulous.

I say guess because I never really knew him, my mother wasn't exactly the marrying kind. She met him one night in an airport bar (she was a flight attendant, they were called stewardesses then). The way she tells it she was drinking a gin and tonic with some co-workers and saw him from across the bar. She said he was wearing thick black plastic glasses and had big sheets of paper in front of him covered in letters. She said he was drawing maniacally and drinking water and that there was something about him that she thought was interesting. I personally think the gin and tonic she references in her story was the eighth and she probably fell on him and his drawings. Either way they ended up at her motel room. She said he introduced himself as Gill but his briefcase said E. Wallace, that he was from New York, and was a typesetter.

That's all I know about him.

The only physical remnant of my father is a piece of foundry type, a capital W that must have fallen out of his pocket. It's the only thing he ever touched that I know for sure. Since I don't know what he looks like I relate the W to him and have cherished it my whole life. I go to it in times of stress.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ:CENTAUR

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ:CENTURY

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ:CHARLEMAGNE

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ:PERPETUA

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ:GOUDY

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ:CASLON

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ:GARAMOND

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ:BEMBO

OLD
STYLE

When I was nine years old my sister, mother, and her then boyfriend (his name was either Joe or Jack I can't remember) went to a place called the Old Style Sode Stand.

As I got older and my fascination with type grew I would come to find out that *Old Style* fonts were influenced by roman carved capitals, carolingian minuscules, and fifteenth century humanist writing. Old style letterforms have bracketed serifs and weight stress of rounded forms at an angle. I must repeat this information when I tell this story because that's where I stored that information in my brain. I connect the two. Back to the story...

So we're at the Old Style Soda Stand and after getting a little messy my mother ordered me to the restroom to wash up, I held my fathers W which I aptly named W in my hands, it was sticky like the rest of me from the remains of my Root Beer float. As I walked by the counter toward the bathroom I smiled at the Soda jerk who smiled back, I noticed as he looked away an expression of terror wash over his face and the color leave it. A man in a black coat approached and simply said "I knew I'd find you." Removed a pistol from his pocket and shot the smiling soda jerk dead before turning the weapon on himself. I held W close to my chest as though shielding it from seeing the violence. I heard my mother scream behind me. I stepped over the puddle of blood toward the bathroom. I needed to wash myself and W.

Most people classify life-changing moments by images or music. I am different. My only lifelong loving relationships have been with type. I classify important moments with Type, terms and styles. It's my way of connecting with my father.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: BRIOSO

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: BULMER

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: BELL STD

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: JANSON

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: TIMES

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ:FOURNIER

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ:AMERICANA

TRANS
ITIONAL

By the time I was in my teens my fascination with type verged on obsession. My local library had three books on type and I checked them out so often one of the kind librarians gave me the one I liked most “You’re the only one that ever checks it out, keep it, just don’t tell anyone” she said. I would feverishly read anything to do with type hoping to find the name E. Wallace. Maybe he was a type genius. I hoped for that at least but never found his name and had decided he was probably nobody. Type became my surrogate father and I found the comfort of it constantly surrounding me. I felt this way on the bus ride home from the Library that day. As I sat on the chair I noticed all the type in the safety signs and on all the advertisements, I especially noticed the gilded gold serifed Baskerville type on a textbook on the ground that was titled “The Enlightenment: A short history.” **In typographic terms the Enlightenment makes reference to a point in the 17th century when the world was introduced to new concepts and a renewed appreciation of the arts, the type during this time is commonly referred to typographically as *Transitional*. This style was a significant departure from the former Old Style types and was much less influenced by handwritten letterforms. As people started having new and radical ideas in art, industry and literature, type followed suit looking much more streamlined. The type style on the cover matched the era of the book; the typographer impressed me.** As I picked up the textbook I heard a woman’s voice towards the front of the bus “I have to pay just to check if my book was left on the bus?” the young woman whined, the frigid bus drivers response was “Yeah, sorry, it’s policy.” I heard her mumbling complaints as she paid for the fare. I heard her walking my way assuming the book was what she was looking for.

I stood up and said aloud "Is this what you're looking for?" pointing to the book sitting on my former seat. "Yes!" she exclaimed as she walked toward me. I didn't realize how beautiful she was until that moment, she reminded me of the Ornate Baskerville lettering on the cover of her book, she was classic and curvaceous like the S in the subtitle of the book, I felt my face get red and my hands begin to tremble I quickly threw them into my pockets where I found W. It was comforting. When she was within a two feet the bus suddenly started moving forward, she fell into my arms. It was the closest contact I'd ever had with a woman. "Damnitt! He didn't wait for me" We got up and I sat back in my seat, she sat in the seat across from me, I saw the shape of her body taking on my most favorite letterforms, she was so beautiful, I never felt this way before, my hands continued to shake. "I'm still getting used to this city...what's your name?" she asked. I told her my name and she said, "I'm Serifina, I just moved into town, nice to meet you." It felt like destiny her name had serif in it. If he was dead he must have been trying to communicate with me from the other side, I hoped that was the case at least. The bus stopped, "I guess this is my stop" she said and got up. I felt something rise in me I hadn't felt before or since" I stood up and nervously said "Well if you ever need a tour guide I could show you around" she smiled "That would be nice, What are you doing now?" I followed her off the bus. "How old are you?" she asked "Nineteen." I responded, even though I was sixteen. "Oooo older man, I'm eighteen!" she exclaimed and wrapped her arm in mine. I didn't want to admit that I didn't really know the town myself and took her on a typographic tour of the whole city pointing out different typefaces and classic logos and signs. "Wow, you really love this type stuff." She said to me. "Yeah, sorry" "No, it's great, you're great" she responded and kissed me. She opened her purse and pulled out a pen, she proceeded to write her telephone number on my hand, the numerals were sharp, some connected, but overall they looked delicate like she did. "Call me sometime, I have to go." She walked away. I never got the nerves to call her and didn't see her again. I still feel like that was a mistake.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: BODONI

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: DIDOT

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: MINION

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: FAIRFIELD

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: BERNHARD MODERN

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: CALEDONIA

MODERN

A month later I dropped out of school. I had thirty-seven dollars in my pocket all stolen from my mother's secret stash in a small gold jewelry box on her nightstand. I bought a one-way train ticket to New York. I sat in the train station patiently as my train wouldn't arrive for another hour. My decision was quick, the note I left was on the back of a telephone bill and all it said was "I need to go now, find someplace more Modern I'll call you and let you know when I get to where I'm going, goodbye I love you..." I threw all I had that was clean and my favorite flannel that was dirty in a duffel bag, I put the metal W in my pocket, and grabbed my orange portable typewriter (I love type but my handwriting is horrendous) my life was about to change; I was in search of the Modern. **Typographically speaking the era known as *Modern* defined extreme contrasts between thin and thick strokes. The Uppercase width is regularized: wide letters are condensed while letters like T and P are expanded. With strong geometric qualities this era proved to be the greatest change in western type yet.**

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ : COURIER

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: BOOKMAN

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: CLARENDON

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: MEMPHIS

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: LUBALIN

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: ROCKWELL

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: SERIFA

EGYPTIAN

When I arrived in New York I toured the city. Times square was covered in massive signs some meticulously painted, some lit with lights and others individually hand set, it was beautiful. I knew what I wanted; I was there with W to find E. Wallace. I immediately set out on a mission. First I scoured the phonebook for anyone with the first name that started with E followed by Wallace. I had a certain rhythm, I would pretend to be looking for the great typographer...but I got nothing. So I set off to plan B, I took entry-level jobs at all of the major advertising agencies in hopes of finding him. I would try and get a position in the mailroom if I could. I would read for E. Wallace over and over again on the envelopes but it was a bust. I didn't have a plan C. I ended up working in mailrooms all over Manhattan, as that was my only experience. For years I sorted and transported memos and mail within some of the tallest skyscrapers, but I always looked for the name E. Wallace, It never appeared. After 20 years in the greatest city in the world I wasn't even senior mailroom staff. Maybe it was my personality, I was also too passive for my own good. I saw my job disappearing as technology began to take over the world, the beautiful hand painted signs I loved when I came were being replaced with computer generated images, and haphazard design. My fate was finally sealed one day when I came into work and was told that in two weeks my job would be replaced with a machine and a computer. The two weeks went by quickly, I didn't care. I just didn't know what I would do for money in the future. Here I was jobless, and fatherless. My dreams never came to fruition. I worked in some of the most prestigious design houses all over New York and never made it past the mailroom. As fate had always played its tricks on me, it was the middle of the afternoon on my last day when a little cyan colored postcard elegantly and simply designed appeared beneath my feet. It advertised an art show premiering that night at the Egyptian gallery on 43rd street. The show was dedicated to type and it's history in the city. Conveniently it would be in the Egyptian gallery. **In type history *Egyptian* is a reference to a moment in type history where type is classified by its slab serifs, slab serifs being heavy square or rectangular serifs usually unbracketed. Curves are often minimal.**

I showed up to the gallery unemployed in the only sport coat I owned. It was navy blue and had gold buttons. One of the buttons on my sleeve wasn't gold anymore, I replaced it with a brown one off of a winter jacket, I hoped nobody would notice. I went from piece to piece, there were a lot of old signs from the city and successful advertisements from local agencies and designers. I finally found the section dedicated solely to type designed in the city. Most work was references to Herb Lubalin and the fonts he created, but nothing about E. Wallace. It was great to see all the originally hand tooled letters designed by New York designers. I finally saw a set of letters that looked strangely familiar. The strokes, the x height, I studied the whole alphabet lipping out the letters: T, U, V . . . X, Y, Z followed by glyphs. There was no W. No W? No W? I reached into my pocket and pulled out W , my trusted friend after all these years. It fit perfectly. I frantically read the tag next to the old type set. Outlook Type Foundry: 44th st NY. I had never heard of that place, I never saw it on a single envelope. I quickly left the gallery bound to get to 44th st. immediately

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ:BAUHAUS

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: BRIEM AKADEMI

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: CALCITE

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: EUROSTILE

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: FUTURA

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: KABEL

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: OCR A

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: OCR B

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: AVANT GARDE

SANS
SERIF
GEOMETRIC

I didn't know an address, and 44th st. was a very long street. I had hoped that fate would intervene as it often had in my life. It would be different this time though, I would be tenacious for the first time in my life, I would march right into the office and ask to see E. Wallace immediately. I was incredibly nervous but determined; the prospect of potentially meeting my father was incredibly enticing. I walked up one end of 44th and down the other reading every mailbox, but found nothing. Finally after hours of walking I found a scratched up sign but was drawn to it immediately, it was the Outlook Font from the gallery. I recognized it immediately, and the kerning (spacing of the letters) was meticulous and perfect, this had to be it. As I came close I read the name Modern Design Group. "They must have changed their name," I thought. It was definitely after hours, but I would return in the morning.

All night I couldn't sleep, I rehearsed my story repeatedly. The anguish of waiting all those hours was utterly excruciating. I would walk in and ask for E. Wallace. Would that be too presumptuous? Should I ask for the Director and casually bring him up? I wasn't completely sure what I was going to do. The only thing I knew was that I was going to wait until 9:30, I didn't want to seem overly eager. At some point between 6 and 7:30 I fell asleep from absolute exhaustion. When I woke up, it was 11:30. 11:30? I darted out of bed like I was struck by lightning. I quickly got dressed and rushed to 44th. I made my way to the brick building that housed Modern Design Group. After reading the suite number on the mailbox I walked up the stairs and made my way into MDG as the door said. The walls were a brilliant yellow, with the letters MDG in a bold sans serif typeface behind the receptionist desk. "They weren't even kerned properly" I thought. I rolled W in my pocket before I approached the receptionist.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: FRANKLIN GOTHIC

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: FOLIO

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: HELVETICA

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: IMPACT

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: LETTER GOTHIC

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: NEWS GOTHIC

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: UNIVERS

SANS
SERIF
NEO & GROTESQUE

She was Latin and had a china doll haircut with magenta framed glasses, she was wearing one of those annoying headsets and was answering calls with it. I walked up to the desk and my nervous hands bumped into a slinky. "Why is there a slinky on the desk?" I thought. "Sorry?" the receptionist said. Did I say that out loud? "Uh, Hi I have an appointment" I nervously stammered. I shouldn't have said that. "What's your name?" she said. I hadn't planned this part. "I'll be honest, I'm here to see Mr. Wallace, I hear he's the best there is. I don't have an appointment, but this is urgent" She looked at me with a cocked eyebrow. "Well, let me call him and see what he says" she responded, her lips were pursed she was obviously unhappy about this. I proceeded to sit down in a weird Black chair made out of tires. It was horribly uncomfortable. "What is this pertaining?" she asked me "A personal matter" was all I could say. I was so nervous, yet was peculiarly calm. Was this really happening? "He'll be with you shortly," she said. This was real I thought. Yet something didn't feel right. This trendy design firm couldn't be where E. Wallace worked; it didn't have a shred of the refinement I expected from him. The rusty and shabby sign outside was loads more distinguished than this colorful toyshop.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: FRUTIGER

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: ERAS

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: MYRIAD

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: OPTIMA

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: OFFICINA

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ:FRITZ QUADRATA

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: GILL SANS

SANS
SERIF
HUMANIST

I focused on the poorly kerned MDG. The M and The D were touching and the G was nowhere near the D. I focused on the sans serif letters. **Sans Serif letters were the biggest change in type ever. They first appeared long before they were popularized. Characterized by a uniform stroke weight and an absence of serifs; Vertical in nature with geometric and organic qualities.** As I pondered this notion I heard "Can I help you sir?" I turned to see what I could only call a whipper-snapper, this Wallace was young enough to be my son. "Are, Are you Mr. Wallace" I somehow got out those words. "Yes" he said. The look on his face was more and more concerned. "E.Wallace?" I nervously said. Fate was laughing at me I thought. "Yes." He said, "Was that all you needed." I was shaking and began to walk away nervously. I flashed back to the girl on the bus. I needed to be tenacious. I turned around, "Your sign outside...Where did you get it?" he looked at me puzzled "The one by the door? My father made that for me when I opened this place, see it used to be his firm and he retired and I took over" An uncontrollable smile wiped over my face "Is he still in the city?" I could barely speak. He looked down at his feet and looked back up at me "I'm sorry to say that he passed a few months ago." I looked in his eyes and saw my own, I saw our fathers. I felt them instantly fill with tears and somehow the words just flew out of my mouth. "He was an amazing man." The young Wallace looked at me confused, "Yes, yes he was, how did you know him?" My voice trembling, I said "We knew each other years ago, I've been looking for him for a long time" I had to get out of there, before I started sobbing. When I exited to the street I saw the sign outside one last time. That was when I lost it. I pulled out W from my pocket, sobbing, I threw it at the sign "Just my Luck!" I sarcastically cried out. After the tears I was filled with anger. My whole life goal was a waste.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: Zapf Chancery

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: Tekton Pro

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: Arcana

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: ARNOLD BOEKLIN

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: BANSHÉE

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: Bickham Script

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: Briem Script

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: Brush Script

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: CORIANDER

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: Coronet

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: ECCENTRIC

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: Ex Ponto

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: Mistral

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: Park Avenue

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: Poetica

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: POMPEIJANA



H A N D G E N E R A T E D

I walked as fast as I could to the gallery on 43rd it was only a few blocks and in that time my anger grew more and more. I burst threw the doors in a bout of tenacity I had never felt before. This was for all those missed moments, for living in the sidelines and watching my life pass me. The gallery attendendant stammered out "S.. Sir can I help you?" I breezed past her to the sibilings of my dear now lost W , I took a painting of Times Square and ripped it off the wall kicked a hole through it. I heard the gallery attendant scream in horror I grabbed the set of Outlook letters and took them out to the sidewalk, shaking them out of their wooden holder and kicking them into the street. This was my ultimate breaking point. The rest of it at this point was a blur, the Police came and arrested me obviously. Fate's final laugh at me? The painting I kicked in was one Georgia O'Keefe painted while in New York. It was nearly priceless and destroying it bought me fifteen years in here.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: Clairvaux
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: COPPERPLATE
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: ENGRAVERS
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: HERCULANUM
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: TRAJAN
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: Fette Fraktur
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: Notre Dame
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: Wilhelm Klingenspor
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: CRITTER
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: CUTOUT
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: GILL FLORIATED
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: MYTHOS
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: STENCIL
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: UMBRA
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: COOPER
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ: AACHEN



NOVELTY/DISPLAY B L A C K L E T T E R

So that's the story. My life was consumed and destroyed by type. When my story got out, the media started calling me the o'keefe office freak blaming my nervous breakdown on me losing my job. I prefer Typophile, defined as one who has a truly unhealthy obsession with type.