

A brief history of typography:  
**Styles through time**

Art 209: Typography • Historical Type Styles • Sarah Haig

# 5 historical type styles:

Yes, this is something that is debated, can be broken down into further sub-categories and, like everything else in the art world, can be questioned. These specific 5 mark major shifts in the accepted attitudes of type and its use.

1. Humanist/Old Style

2. Transitional

3. Modern

4. Slab Serif

5. Serif

# 1. Humanist/Old Style

Sometimes referred to as Venetian

Humanist emerged from Blackletter during 1460s and 1470s

Characteristics:

- sloping cross-bar on lowercase e
- relatively small x-height
- little variation on stroke width

Examples: Jenson, Centaur



# 1. Humanist/Old Style

Old Style fonts are a transition away from Humanist, but still similar

This is the first appearance of italics, but as their own font

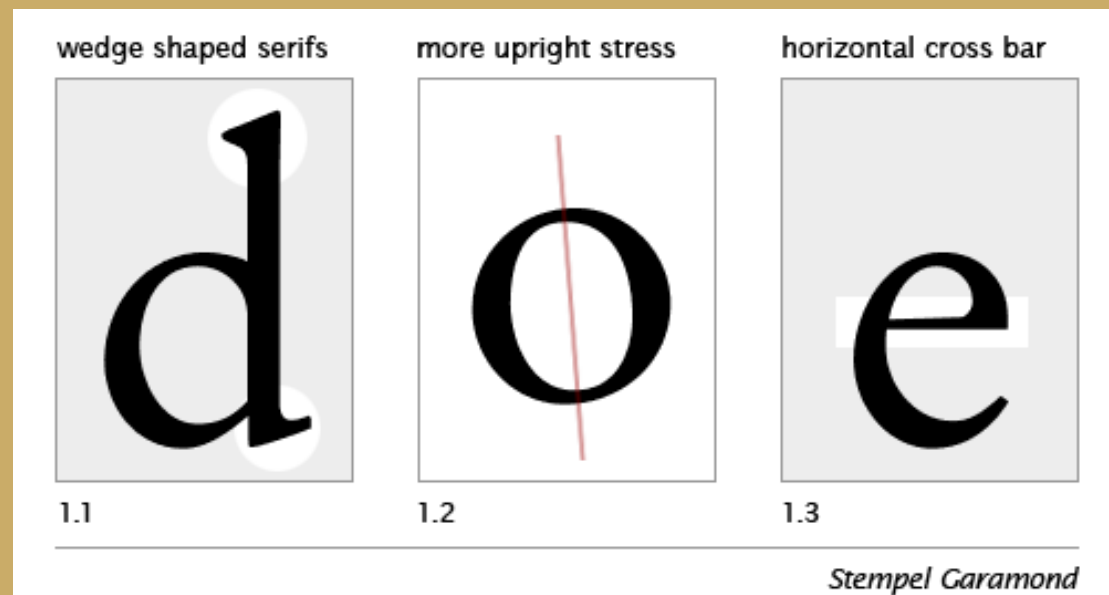
- used when space was at a premium
- publications that were more common and widely produced

Characteristics:

- More varied stroke weight
- Stress becomes more upright

Can be split into further categories by region

Italian    French    Dutch    English



## 2. Transitional

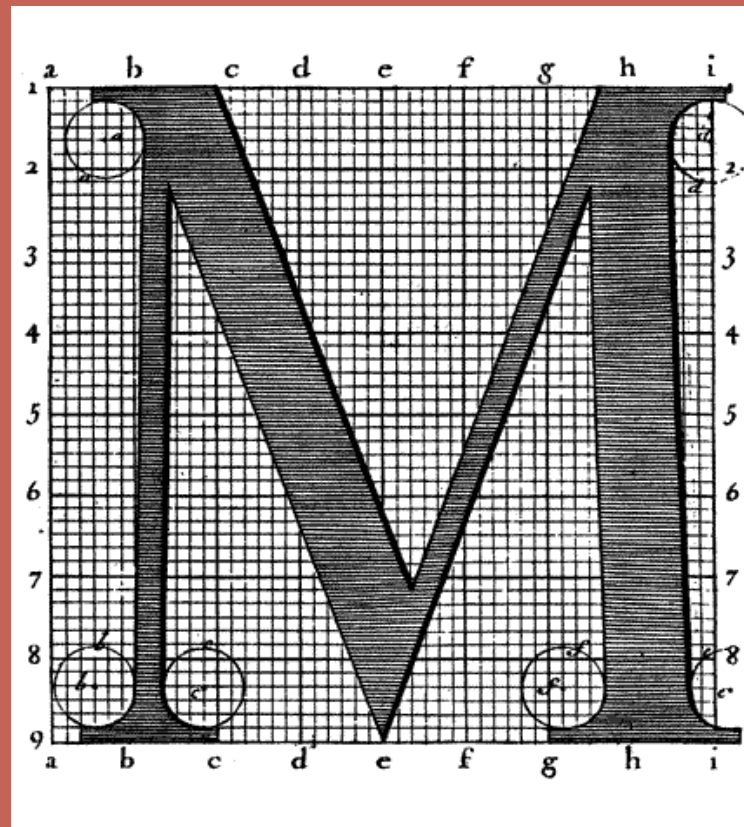
Result of industrial revolution and the Enlightenment

Moved completely away from calligraphic influence

Point system introduced for measurement

First face is considered to be the *Romain du Roi*

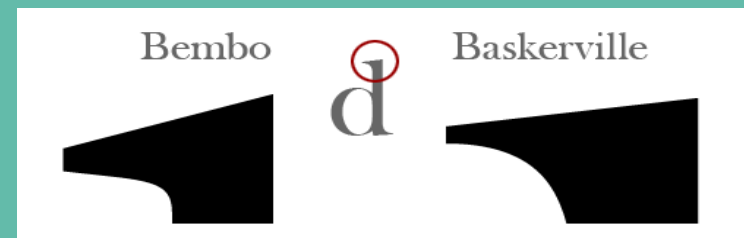
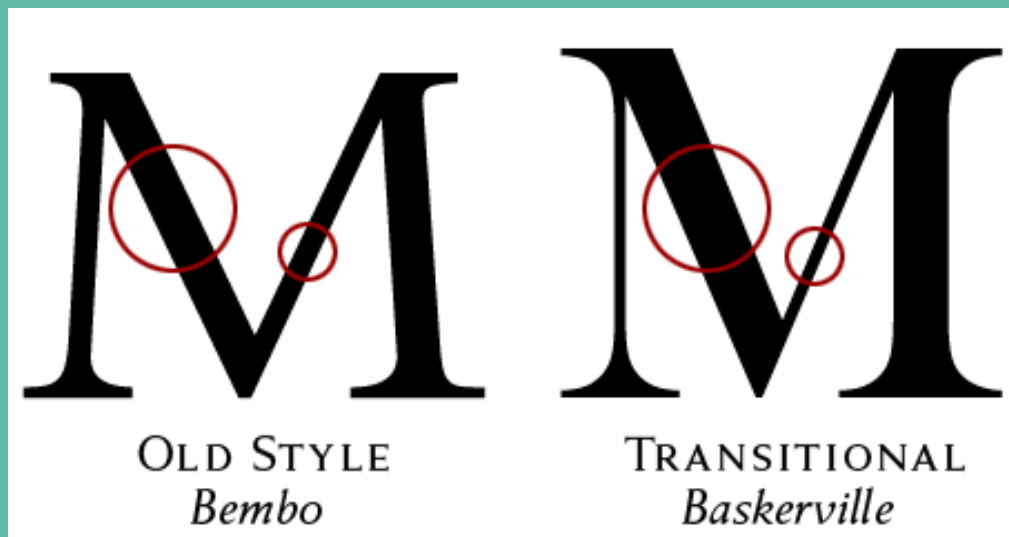
- Designed for Louis XIV
- Created by a committee of scientists and mathematicians



## 2. Transitional

Characteristics:

- Vertical or almost vertical stress
- Greater contrast between thick and thin stroke
- Head serifs on ascenders are generally more horizontal



### 3. Modern aka Didone

These are marked by HIGH contrast between thick and thin stroke

Elegant and formal, if you need an example, look at a fashion magazine

Characteristics:

- High and extreme contrast between thick and thin stroke
- Hairline serifs
- Vertical axis
- Horizontal stress
- Small aperture



# 3. Modern aka Didone





## 4. Slab Serif aka Egyptian

The first faces to be seen as headline, not body copy

To be used at large sizes

Considered to be the exact opposite of the graceful and stylish moderns

Typically have unbracketed serifs that meet at a 90° angle



## 4. Slab Serif aka Eypatian

Extended to include Fat Faces

Attempts were made at that point to reign the Fat Faces in as text faces (Clarendons)

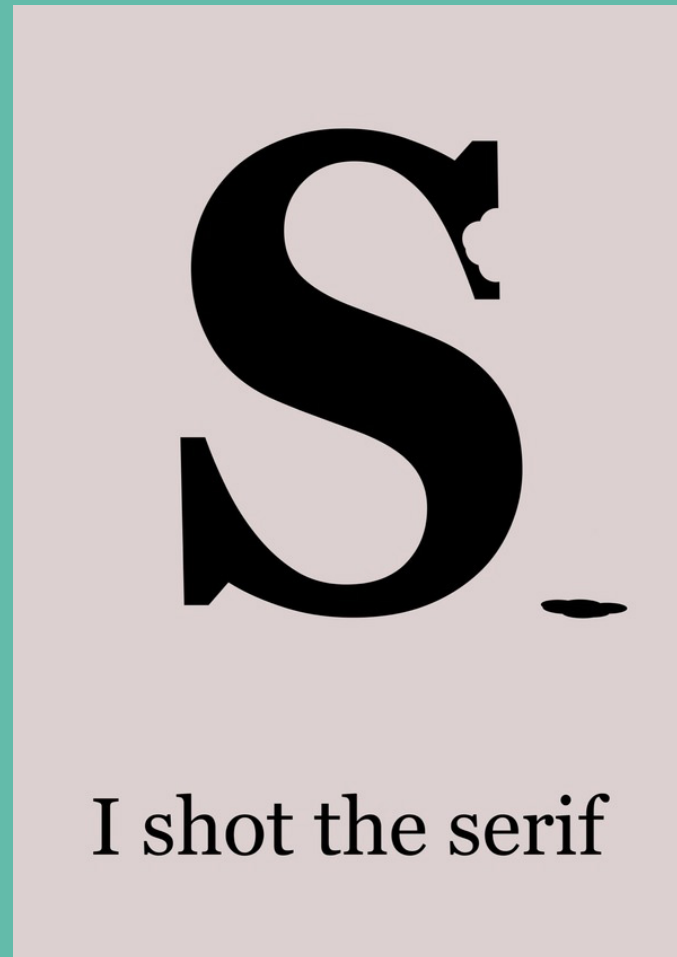
Also are considered early versions of typewriter faces



## 5. **San Serif** aka Gothic

Almost even stroke weight and lacking serif (really???)

Introduced in the early 1800s but not adopted until the Bauhaus embraced them for their simplicity and clarity



And that is your brief history. Now comes the part where you learn to torture others...

