

NEVER USE FUTURA

UNLESS YOU ARE

**NIKE, WES ANDERSON, DAVID FINCHER,
BARBARA KRUGER, THE MOON, PAUL
RENNER, PAUL RAND, LOUIS VUITTON,
STANLEY KUBRICK, SWISSAIR, FOX NEWS,
UNION PACIFIC, PARTY CITY, ABSOLUT
VODKA, AARON DRAPLIN, HEINRICH JOST,
RICHARD NIXON, SHELL, VOLKSWAGEN,
IKEA, MASSIMO VIGNELLI, THE UK
CONSERVATIVE PARTY, ISOTYPE, DESIGN
WITHIN REACH, VANITY FAIR, CHARLES S.
ANDERSON, VAMPIRE WEEKEND, SHEPARD
FAIREY, AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL
GROUP, POLITICO, THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC
PARTY OF GERMANY, VOGUE, ED RUSCHA,
OR THE SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

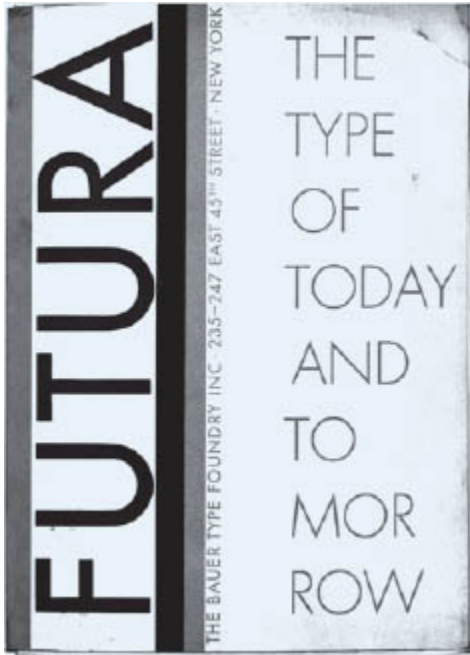
DOUGLAS THOMAS

WITH A FOREWORD BY ELLEN LUPTON

MY OTHER MODERNISM IS IN FUTURA

WHEN ALFRED H. BARR promoted modern European art to new audiences in the United States, modern typefaces came along for the ride. In 1936, while preparing a new exhibition titled Cubism and Abstract Art for the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, Barr created a chart to accompany the show to help people understand the many modern art movements that had contributed to abstraction. It connects the different strands—like cubism, futurism, Dadaism, constructivism, surrealism, and the Bauhaus—with one another, across countries, genres, and years. The chart itself was typeset in the most modern typefaces Barr had available, including Futura.¹

For most Americans, Futura and other new German typefaces were their everyday consumption of modernism. Futura burst into appearance in magazines, books, newspapers, and posters. Its resonance, along with some gutsy advertising by Bauer Type Foundry, asserted Futura's place at the typographic table, as "The Typeface for Our Time." It was imagined, drawn, named, and advertised as mathematical over cultural, revolutionary over historical, and distinctively "The Type of Today and Tomorrow," unlike new cuts of old classics or romantic remixes of past glories (think Times New Roman, released in 1932).²



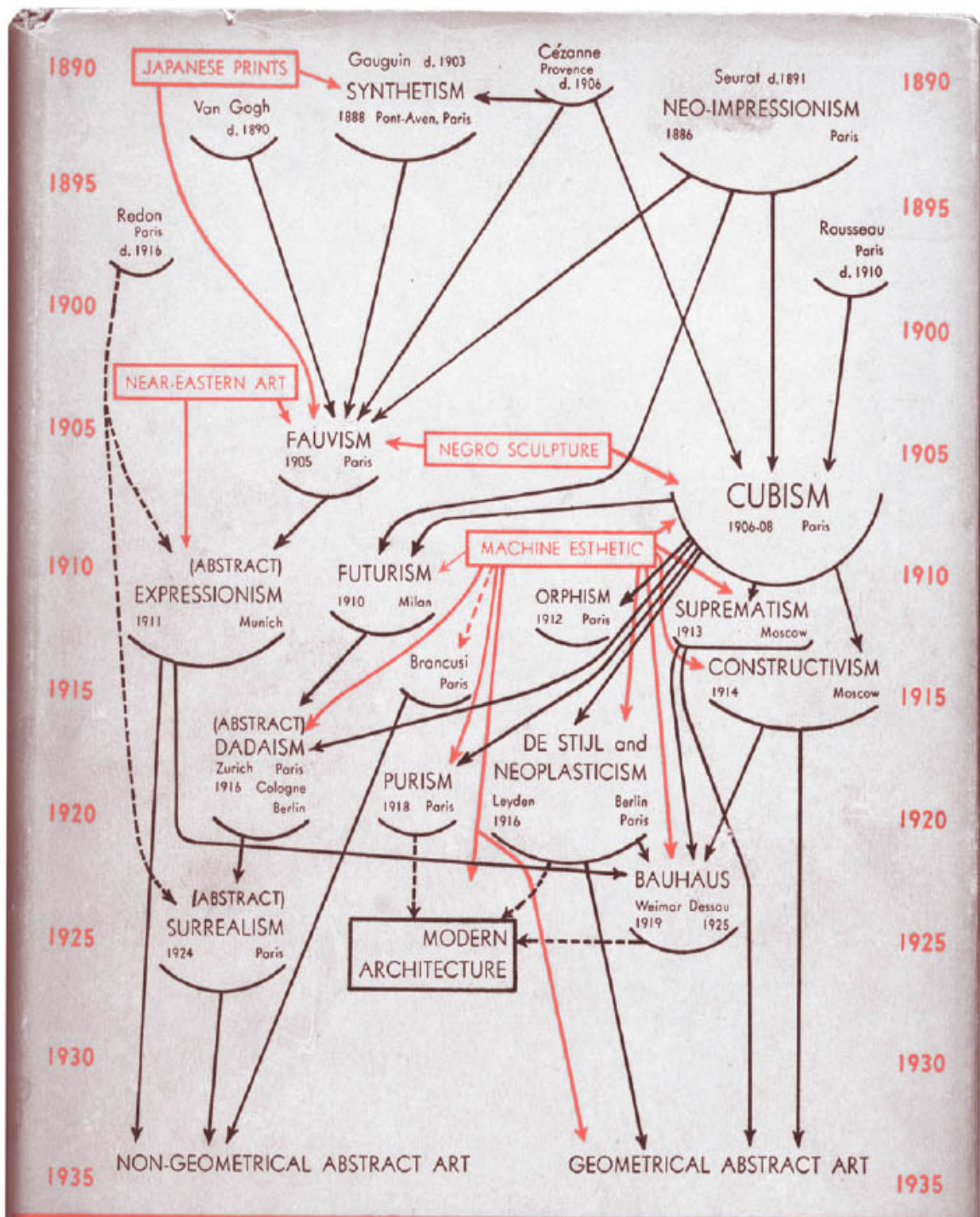
An early Bauer Type Foundry advertisement for Futura in the United States, 1928

The thing about Futura that designers like myself know, though, is that some of its letterforms are not as revolutionary as some of Paul Renner's original ideas. It's a compromise, expertly crafted to be commercially viable to the widest possible audience, from art deco acolytes to avant-garde New Typography followers, and even the workaday printer looking to breathe new life into old layouts.

Beginning with his initial drawings in 1924, Renner was attempting to create a new typeface to fit the age. Like his Bauhaus contemporaries, he played with basic geometry—circles, squares, triangles, and straight lines—to compose his first Futura. The allure was clear: simple shapes could be produced mechanically and bore little visceral reference to preindustrial, human-centric modes of production (handwriting, calligraphy), which undergirded centuries of conventional typography.³

Instead, he went for even older models: capital letters followed the classical proportions and elemental shapes of Roman monumental type; lowercase, the proportions of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century French letters by Claude Garamond and Jean Jannon. The familiar proportions gave Futura additional legibility and accessibility, in contrast with contemporary typographic

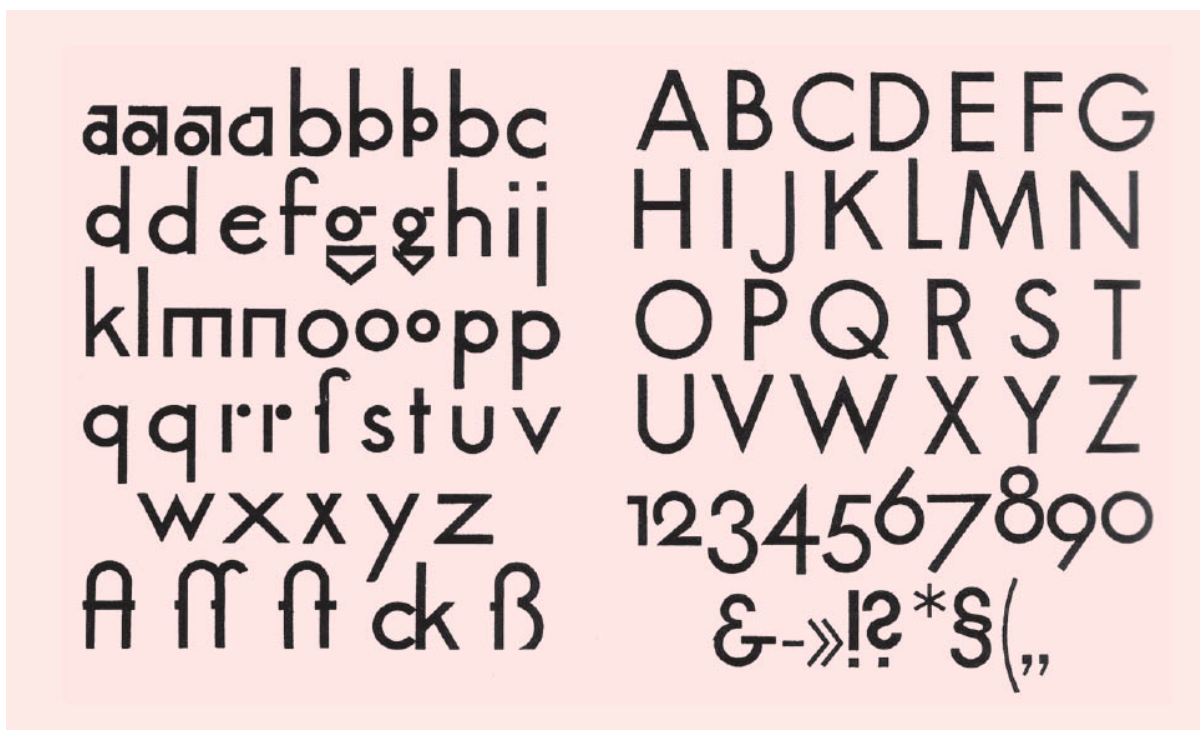
experiments, and even Futura's competitors, like Kabel and Erbar, both of which had slightly different proportions. In this way, Futura's balance of tradition and experiment made it revolutionary, pragmatic, and, ultimately, popular.



CUBISM AND ABSTRACT ART

Museum of Modern Art director Alfred H. Barr's Cubism and Abstract Art diagram was one of the first schemas for modern art itself, typeset using an Intertype machine in Futura and Vogue (an early Futura competitor in the United States).

Some of Renner's early letterforms were extreme, if simple. The lowercase m and n were straight lines and 90-degree angles, the lowercase g was formed from a circle and a triangle, the lowercase a was a circle enclosed by two lines at a right angle, and the lowercase r was a line with a dot next to it. On the lowercase e, the horizontal stroke disconnected from the end of the circular stroke, making it look more like a modern Euro symbol than a recognizable letter e.* In addition to being an endlessly interesting design exercise, Renner's early experimental letters led the way for versions of Futura that undoubtedly sold better, but still hearkened to geometry, modernism, and, above all, form.



Early test prints of Futura, 1924–25

In preparation for Futura's commercial release in 1927, Renner and Bauer shelved the extreme letterforms in favor of slightly more conventional and certainly more legible shapes. But printers could

still purchase the innovative **a**, **g**, **m**, and **n** as alternates.⁴ Renner and Bauer's iterative approach later became a smug hallmark of Futura's advertising: "The evolution of such a face entailed endless refinements...involved rejection after rejection before the final effects were achieved that justified Futura's immediate acceptance."⁵

At first glance, almost all the letters in the 1927 Futura look like strict compass-and-ruler formations. In the first two weights, Light and Medium, the roman capitals form familiar shapes: a circular **O**, a sharp triangular **M** and **A**, an **R** made from a half-circle and straight lines, a **T** that is two straight lines, and a half-circle **D**. The letters seem precise, with mechanical monolinear strokes and little variation. And yet, at its heart, Futura is not only geometric. The letters **E**, **F**, **L**, and **P** reveal the classical double-square proportions essential to the entire typeface. The result marries the avant-garde concern with line, shape, and form to millennia-old typographic traditions.⁶

The final letterforms support a facade of strict geometry that masks the sophistication of the letter-forms. Many of the changes are subtle deviations from mathematical purity that are essential for obtaining the right visual effect. It's like the extra space on the bottom part of a mat in a picture frame: even if all sides are mathematically equal, if you don't account for visual weight, the frame looks wrong. In well-drawn geometric typefaces, visual sleights of hand abound to ensure the type looks right. The capital **O**, for example, looks like a circle but is actually ever so slightly wider than it is tall. The sharp tops of the uppercase **A**, **M**, and **N** overshoot the height of the other capital letters to compensate for the thinning lines. And the curved strokes of the lowercase letters thin ever so slightly as they join the straight lines in the letters **a**, **b**, **d**, **g**, **m**, **n**, **p**, **q**, and **r**. The extra weight where a curve joins a straight stroke would appear too thick otherwise, especially at small sizes. These and many other careful deviations from mechanically calculated shapes help make Futura a great typeface.



Bauer Futura Medium, 30-point type at 200 percent. Note how the overshoots visually compensate for the thinning strokes.

The type family grew with additional styles available for sale: a set of decorative geometric shapes called Futura Schmuck (1927), followed quickly by Futura Bold (1928). Empowered by commercial success, the family expanded to include additional weights: Futura Black (1929), followed by Futuras Semibold, Semibold Oblique, Light Oblique, Medium Oblique, Semibold Condensed, and Bold Condensed (1930); Futura Book and Futura Inline (1932); Futura Display (1932); Futura Bold Oblique (1937); Futura Book Oblique (1939); Futura Light Condensed (1950); and Futura Kräftig (1954)—literally, “Futura Strong,” effectively a weight somewhere between Semibold and Bold.⁷

The typefaces normally considered to be part of the core Futura family have greater differences between weights than most contemporary type families. For example, the Light and Medium weights have the sharp corners on capitals **A**, **M**, and **N**, which are abandoned for a flat apex in Futura Bold (1928) and most of the other weights. And for good reason: the flat apex helps the bolder weights achieve maximum boldness without sacrificing legibility.

Other styles of Futura are completely different, and many digital versions rarely offer them as part of the family. Futura Black, released in 1929, is a stencil constructed out of abstract shapes that is similar to typefaces associated with art deco and the Roaring Twenties. Some contemporaries derided the entire trend with the racially tinged label *jazz types* and tarred designs using it or similar faces as “loud, black, erratic.”⁸ Futura Display (1932) is a bold headline typeface based on a rounded rectangular geometry, but

unlike the other weights, it has no circular shapes. In the 1950s Renner created another condensed typeface similar to Futura Display that included italics and various weights. It was released under various names, as Bauer Topic (in the United States and United Kingdom), Vox (Spain), Zénith (France), and Steile Futura (Germany), demonstrating that the name Futura was, above all else, a marketing tool.⁹

Futura, mager

4/6-84 Punkt

Botanischer Garten

Light, 1927

Futura, halbfett

4/6-84 Punkt

Musik von Händel

Medium, 1927

Futura, dreiviertelfett

6-84 Punkt

Presse und Kultur

Semibold, 1929

Futura, fett

6-84 Punkt

Bücherfreunde

Bold, 1928

Futura, schmal fett

6-84 Punkt

Zeichnung von Rubens

Bold Condensed, 1930

Futura, schräg mager

6-48 Punkt

Dekorative Malerei

Light Oblique, 1930

Futura, schräg halbfett

6-48 Punkt

Moderne Reklame

Medium Oblique, 1930

Futura Buchschrift

6-14 Punkt

Katechismus der bildenden Künste

Book, 1932

Futura Black

20-84 Punkt

Seidenindustrie

Black, 1929

Futura, licht

20/16-84/72 Punkt

SCHWARZWALD

Inline, 1932

Futura has greater differences between weights than many current type families. Compare Light to Bold to Black of Bauer Futura as published in *The Typesetters' Book (Das Buch des Setzers)*, 1936.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z Ä Ö Ü
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r f s t
u v w x y z ä ö ü c h c k f f i f l f f f i f t ß
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 & . , - : ; · ! ? ' (* † « » §
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z Ä Ö Ü
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r f s t
u v w x y z ä ö ü c h c k f f i f l f f f i f t ß
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 & . , - : ; · ! ? ' (* † « » §
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z Ä Ö Ü
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q
r f s t u v w x y z ä ö ü c h c k
f f i f l f f f i f t ß
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0
& . , - : ; · ! ? ' (* † « » §

The first three weights of Bauer Futura: Light, Medium, and Bold (1928 specimen)

Futura was created during an era when typefaces were on the front lines of culture. In 1920s Germany even the alphabet was a matter of national identity and fierce debate. For some traditionalists, the only true German letters were blackletter types like Fraktur—the thick-lined, heavily ligatured types that mimicked medieval scholarly handwriting, in which paper was scarce and words were long. Once popular across Europe, blackletter type was born in Gutenberg’s Germany and matured in Luther’s Bible. Over the centuries many European nations adopted roman (Latin) typefaces from Italian printers, relegating blackletter to newspaper mastheads and the occasional official document, but Germany had largely resisted the change. In contrast, liberal-minded reformers wanted Germany to integrate with Europe and the Western world by embracing roman typefaces. For reformers, roman types represented a positive attitude toward internationalism, commerce, and science. For traditionalists and nationalists, they posed a cultural threat to the core of German identity. Even the handwriting taught in schools became a contest between Kurrentscript (known as Deutsche Schrift—“German Script”) and Latin Script.¹⁰



Bauer Futura contains a few characters that reveal its German origins—including *ch* and *ck* ligatures. (8-point type at 300 percent—from *Die Kunst der Typographie*, 1940.)

Thus, creating a new typography seemed to be an ideal way to change the world for many printers and artists, and their argument was at the forefront of the cultural battles of the day. For Jan Tschichold, typography was the means to create a true socialist

paradise, imbued with a universal egalitarianism, devoid of class and national distinctions.¹¹ In 1925 he wrote, “The exclusive materials of New Typography are those given by the task.... Ornament of even the simplest form (shaded rules!) is superfluous, impermissible.” Importantly, the typefaces mattered: “The simplest and therefore only persuasive form of European script is the Block—(sans serif)—type.... National typefaces are excluded as generally incomprehensible and as leftovers from history.”¹² The printed form of Tschichold’s manifesto makes clear that these national typefaces included Fraktur and German blackletters, as well as Russian Cyrillic types, and any other distinctive national scripts.

cps 20 Block-Fraktur Geschnitten cps 6 bis 96
Größere Grade in Holz

Hygiene-Museum

cps 20 Schwere Block-Fraktur Geschn. cps 6 bis 96
Größere Grade in Holz

Kuhrtwerften

cps 20 König-Type Geschnitten cps 6 bis 48

Pädagogium Traub

cps 20 Halbfette König-Type Geschnitt. cps 6 bis 96

Badische Trachten

cps 20 Fette König-Type Geschnitten cps 6 bis 72

Nibelungenring

cps 20 Enge König-Type Geschnitten cps 8 bis 96
Größere Grade in Holz

Großes Orchester-Konzert

cps 20 Schm. fette König-Type Geschn. cps 8 bis 120
Größere Grade in Holz

Hochschule für Politik

cps 20 König-Schwabacher Geschnitten cps 6 bis 48

Der Rosenkavalier

cps 20 Halbf. König-Schwab. Geschn. cps 6 bis 72

Technikum Ulm

cps 20 Bismarck-Fraktur Geschnitten cps 5 bis 84

Wagner-Abend

cps 20 Berthold-Fraktur Geschnitten cps 6 bis 48

Fußballmeisterschaft

cps 20 Schm. halbf. Berthold-Frakt. Geschn. cps 6 bis 96

Jagdrennen Karlsdorf

cps 20 Schm. fette Berthold-Frakt. Geschn. cps 6 bis 96

Deutschlandsender

cps 20 Walbaum-Fraktur Geschnitten cps 5 bis 48

Deutsches Theater

cps 20 Original-Unger-Fraktur Geschn. cps 6 bis 48

Mozart-Serenaden

cps 20 Kaufhaus-Fraktur Geschnitten cps 8 bis 96
Größere Grade in Holz

Weltausstellung Antwerpen

cps 20 Halbf. Kaufhaus-Fraktur Geschn. cps 6 bis 96
Größere Grade in Holz

Naturfreunde Eger

cps 20 Mainzer Fraktur Geschnitten cps 6 bis 48

Lyrik im Altertum

cps 20 Fette Mainzer Fraktur Geschn. cps 6 bis 96

Nordische Sagen

cps 14 Breite halbf. Mainzer Frakt. Geschn. cps 6 bis 14

Maler der Renaissance

cps 20 Straßburg Geschnitten cps 6 bis 72

Gotisches Bildwerk

cps 20 Sebaldis-Gotisch Geschnitten cps 6 bis 72
Größere Grade in Holz

Das alte Nürnberg

German typefoundries provided a large variety of blackletter typefaces, including various Frakturs.



Comparison of geometric typefaces by Herbert Bayer, Josef Albers, and Kurt Schwitters with Futura in *Klimschs Jahrbuch*, 1928

Others in the debate pushed for radical equality in the Latin alphabet as well. Herbert Bayer, a student and teacher at the Bauhaus, pushed for a single roman lowercase alphabet—no capitals—to replace the traditional two-case alphabet. Bayer theorized that the two-case system lengthened the time it took for children to learn to read, because they had to learn two symbols for every letter. Bayer’s design for a single alphabet has a similar starting point as Renner’s Futura, built from simple geometric shapes. Appropriately enough, he called his 1925 experimental type design Universal. Bayer’s typeface never enjoyed commercial release, but he wasn’t alone in advocating such changes. The British writer T. S. Eliot had

attempted to eliminate national pride by putting nationalities in lowercase, e.g., *the english*, not *the English*—which sounds egalitarian, except when lowercase universalism is shorthand for denigration, as when James Joyce ominously set *jew* instead of *Jew*.¹³

love, and the gentleman with the monocle

BY CLAUDE ANET

from which it is proved that love always seems a little more alluring when it is allied to elegance and good manners

... did indeed; he was a man of letters, subsisting on the small income which his father had left him.

This was interesting. In our simple eyes it heightened the distinction that somehow was already his—the elegance that, reflected in his every gesture, radiated a glorious effluence. Yes, he wore a monocle. Here was a marvel that, each time I saw him, amazed me anew. With a youthful curiosity, I studied it; his left eye dropped a little, but the right one opened wide behind a circle of glass, framed in tortoise-shell and thrust grandly in the arch of his eyebrow. Why, I wondered, didn't it fall out with the jolt of his steps as he walked? That it never did, seemed to me nothing short of miraculous.

He had, furthermore, a taste in dress that was entirely his own, and I still seem to see the richly cut, fawn-colored suit in which he was wont to stroll, fashionable and unique, along the *Grande Rue*. His given name, too, was surprising: for in the heart of our French province he called himself, unaccountably, James. Where, we marvelled, had he got this British name when our own fathers were all Jules, Pierre or Jacques?

But hark! hark! illness, melancholy, shyness, British name . . . all of these paled before another and still more enchanting distinction: his more subdued? There were, of course, others in the town. The clerk of the court wore in front of his ears two rabbit's paws of a doubtful white, and the shocks of the tailor in the *Pince de Marche* were pulled beneath a startling arrangement of whiskers . . . but what were these compared to the adorns of this delightful James? Of a dark, gentle brow, they were a mere melancholy shadow on each temple, extending almost to the side of the ear and giving his face a romantic, almost a delicate contour. More than that they implied, in our lavishly bearded community, a sense of restraint which was commonly chic. Europe, then, this James with his oddities, and for me a glamorous and exciting personage whom I looked upon with awe; for in the simple, everyday life of our town, my young eyes saw no other vestige of romance. Life there seemed to me rather tepid and lacking in interest; things happened too regularly. Our people followed a mode of living from which all fantasy seemed necessarily to be excluded. They became engaged, got married and had children when their turn grew up, because men and women, and continued to lead the identical life that had been their parents' before them—helplessly following the immutable laws, human and divine, which were faithfully observed by all society.

... therefore to be tainted with a certain vulgarity and definitely restricted by the heavy chains.

One day, I saw an astonishing thing. It was a late afternoon in the Spring. I had left the house, my slingshot in my pocket, and had gone to a little neighbouring wood in hope of catching, by a happy shot, some jacksnipe. A wild and winding path led in this wood, a charming, solitary place, and scarcely anybody came there except on the setting sun danced through the cool, dark leaves in a shower of brilliant gold, sparkling in the distance. Warm, and a little dazzled, I had stopped to wait until a blackbird went in position for our more favourable in my opinion aim, when I saw two people entering the wood.

A blond I recognized the magnificent James. Distant, smiling, romantic, he advanced slowly through a charming little pattern of sun and shadow. And at his side there walked a lady. Who was she? At that distance, I could not see, and I was concerned with curiosity. Unobtrusively, I hung myself behind a bush nearby and, motionless as a crouching animal, I waited.

The couple drew nearer, and I perceived that the lady with the magnificent James was his cousin by marriage. She was a young woman, married not longer than five or six years, who had come from a distant province and had therefore been reared by our community with that slight coarseness which the proud bourgeoisie know so well how to affect. Firmly, diligently. (Continued on page 100)

some one-line drawings by pablo picasso



picasso — experimenter extraordinary — sends us these feats of single line drawing . . . the hand never leaves the paper!

Mehemed Agha's October 1929 *Vanity Fair* redesign brought avant-garde European typography and art to the American mainstream. The redesign was a watershed moment within the spread of a modernist aesthetic. Not all of the ideas were well received. Due to reader outcry, the magazine abandoned the all-lowercase titling in the March 1930 issue.



Agha's redesign of *Vanity Fair* featured Futura and innovative amounts of white space.

For many, using Futura in print came packaged with these underlying cultural battles about capitalization, nationalism, and modernity. Printers and writers across the United States noted the changes with varying degrees of acceptance. A flashpoint arose in 1929 with the redesign of *Vanity Fair*.

Vanity Fair had redesigned the entire magazine largely in sync with modernist styles. All the headlines for feature stories were set in lowercase, and all the typography throughout the magazine used Futura. The redesign represented one of the first direct incursions of European design into American publications. The recently hired art director in charge of the redesign, Mehemed Agha, had previously been the director of *Vogue Berlin*.¹⁴ The structure of the contents page, as well as organizational headings, suggests his interest in utilizing elements, such as the typeface Futura and bold rules (lines), that were common in modern European typographic designs.

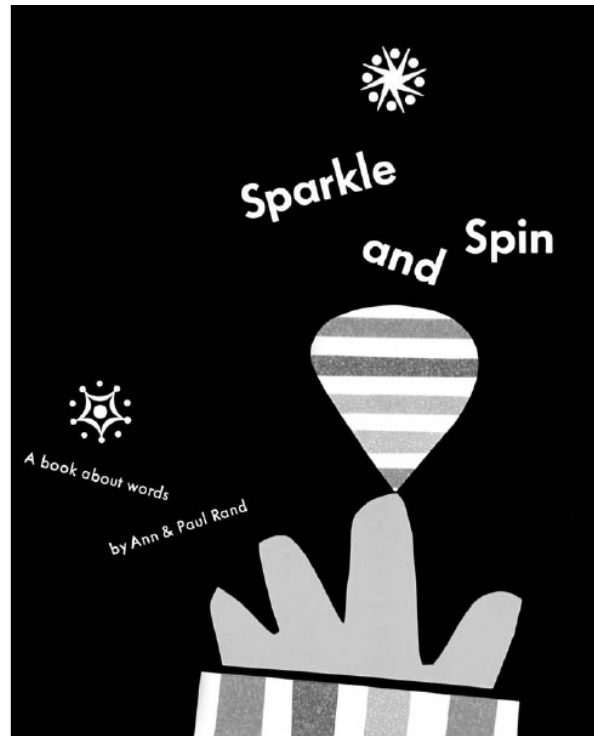
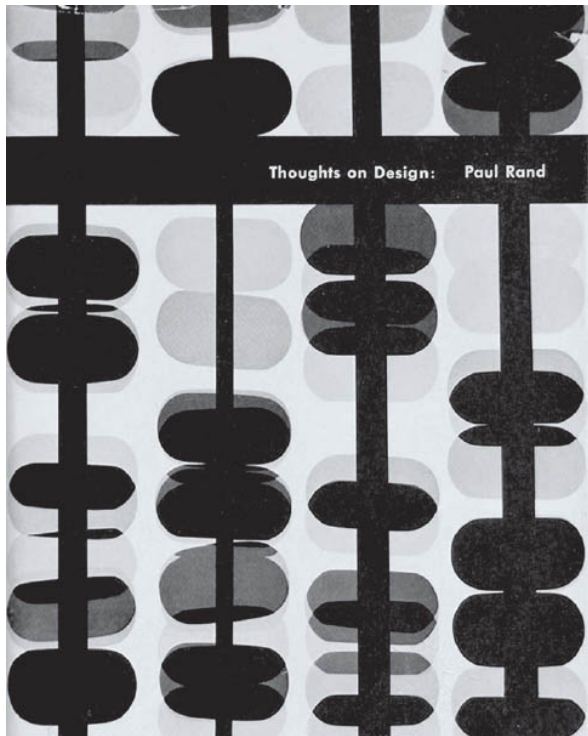
Agha's expressive typography met with opposition, however, and within five issues the more avantgarde features of the layout were toned down. For example, after the first issue, Agha's layout reverted from all-lowercase titles to once again include upper-and lowercase, and reverted to serified type rather than sans serif in some aspects of the layout.¹⁵ Responding to readers, the magazine posted a notice that read, in part, "A title set entirely in small letters is unquestionably more attractive than one beginning with a capital or with every word beginning with a capital, but, at the present time, it is also unquestionably harder to read because the eye of the reader is not yet educated to it." Accepting the current state of readership, the text continued: "The issue is thus one between attractiveness and legibility, or between form and content, and *Vanity Fair*, not wishing to undertake any campaign of education, cast its vote by returning to the use of capital letters in titles, to legibility, and to the cause of content above form."¹⁶

A *New York Times* editorial, "Proletarian Punctuators," satirized the controversy, backlash, and return of capitalization in *Vanity Fair*. The *Times* joked that the "anti-capitalist" lowercase revolution had been compromised with a "New Punctuation Policy," which, like Lenin's New Economic Policy, had rein-fused elements of capitalism into a Communist economy. The unchanged left-justified layout is satirized too: "They do not put the name of an article in the centre of the page or in the centre of the column, but put it flush with the left-hand edge of the type column. This revolutionary struggle has maintained itself much more successfully than the case war, by which we mean the war of the lower cases against the upper cases."¹⁷

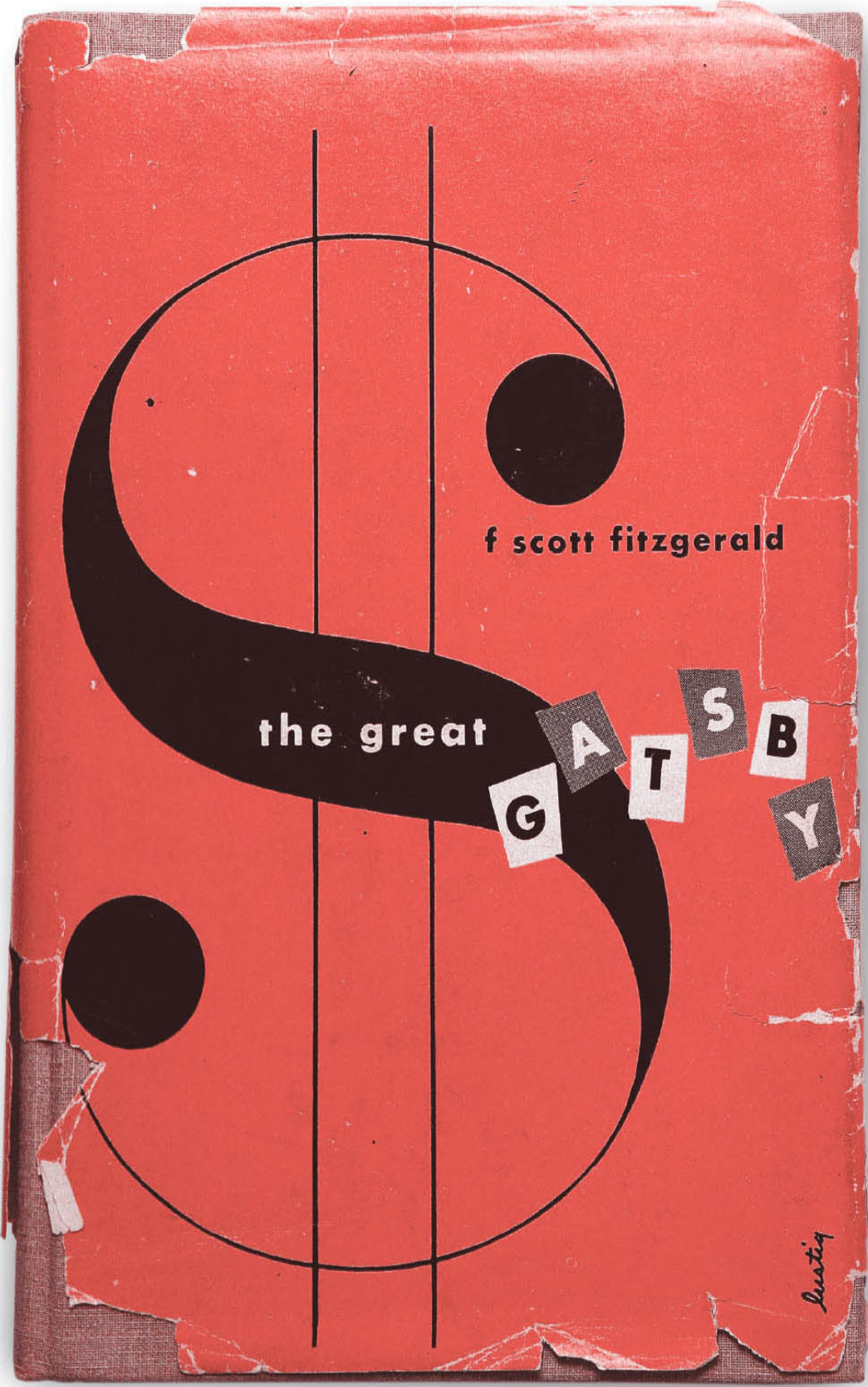
Another example of criticism of modernism comes from a 1930 issue of the *Inland Printer*, written by the editor J. L. Frazier.¹⁸ He celebrated the return to traditional orthography as a sane return to legibility, albeit with snide remarks about the magazine's pride in "the chic, the utter modernity of its readers" and its arrogance as the "arbiter elegantiarum."¹⁹ Later Frazier's editorial stand against the excesses of modern experimental design was trumpeted in another *Inland Printer* editorial, "You Didn't Go Wrong on Modernism if You

Followed the *Inland Printer!*”²⁰ It began, “The more intelligent of those persons who two years ago ardently championed the use of the eccentric, malformed, ugly, and illegible type reflecting cubist art, as adding to typography what self-styled modernists called a fresh note, now admit they are passé.” The editorial continues to describe the resurgence of traditional norms of printing and, most unsurprisingly, the essential principle of legibility. As such, traditional layout principles are superior to “eccentricities of layout,” with “lines and whole displays aslant” and other “bizarre and incomprehensible” characteristics.²¹

Neither Frazier nor the *Inland Printer* were enemies to all new typefaces associated with modernism. Despite its gloating editorials about its abilities to predict trends, even it made a distinction between “cubistic” typefaces and the “smart new ‘gothics,’” which are “infinitely more attractive and legible.” For Frazier and his editors, one of the benefits of modernism and sans serif typography as opposed to “pseudo-modernists” was “simplicity of layout and absence of ornament.”²² In championing the lack of ornament, the *Inland Printer* defended one of the basic principles that informed both the New Typography of Tschichold and, later, the Swiss style while arguing against the more experimental excesses. Given the gradual adoption of Futura into the headlines of the *Inland Printer* throughout the 1930s, it seems clear that one of the “smart new ‘gothics’” must have been Futura. In this light, Frazier’s opposition to the *Vanity Fair* redesign seems to have stemmed from his specific opposition to all-lowercase titles and the expansive letterspacing for headlines—both of which violated Frazier’s sense of legibility—rather than opposition to the typeface Futura.



Paul Rand used Futura in many of his designs, including his 1947 *Thoughts on Design* and his 1957 children's book *Sparkle and Spin*, written with his wife Ann Rand.



f scott fitzgerald

the great

GATSBY

Leontina

Modernism was more fun when it employed Futura, used here by Alvin Lustig for his cover design for the 1945 reprinting of *The Great Gatsby* for New Classics, New Directions. The original printed in yellow and black.

herbert bayar

FIRE STEALS



too much of an important resource: WASTE PAPER

Save waste paper!

SELL OR GIVE TO LOCAL COLLECTORS



CONTAINER CORPORATION OF AMERICA

Herbert Bayer used Futura extensively in his work before and after emigrating from Germany prior to World War II in 1938. His use of the typeface for the Container Corporation of America was part of a unified system to which dozens of illustrators contributed.

KENNEY, SQUADRON 511-3

Eyes of the Home Skies

CIVIL AIR PATROL



OF THE U. S. OFFICE OF CIVILIAN DEFENSE



CCPA 1964-1971

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1964 O-560-000

Futura fought on both sides of World War II. American printers, designers, and advertisers largely embraced Futura and new ideas about modernism.

In America advertisers increasingly specified Futura for printing. All three of the magazines used in the Typographic Scoreboard tabulations by the *Inland Printer*—*Vogue*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and the *Nation's Business*—showed increases in the use of Futura. *Vogue* in particular demonstrated the greatest change. In 1930 Futura appeared in 18 percent of advertisements in *Vogue* (20 out of 111), compared to 8 percent in the *Saturday Evening Post* (21 out of 264).²³ By 1933 *Vogue* advertisements using Futura increased to 23 percent (27 out of 117).²⁴ By 1945 the overall picture of the typographic use demonstrated a complete acceptance of Futura. The *Inland Printer* noted that Futura was featured in one-quarter of all the advertisements (51 out of 210) in three consecutive issues of *Vogue*.²⁵ Bauer ads hyped Futura's advertising success as well, with 1930 ads noting 11 of the 26 full-page ads in the *New Yorker* magazine and 30 of 53 ads in *Harper's Bazaar* featured Futura.²⁶

Many of the most famous designs by American modernist acolytes featured Futura, although often in a supporting role while their illustrative designs and photographs took center stage. Futura was an anchor of many of the works of Paul Rand, Bradbury Thompson, and Alvin Lustig, as well as, with the rise of Nazism in Germany, an expanding number of European émigrés, including Bayer (1938), Ladislav Sutnar (1939), and László Moholy-Nagy (1937)—all of whom brought their own interpretations of modernism to a wide American audience.²⁷

Printers, advertisers, and designers popularized Futura in part because it represented modernity and progress. But for others, Futura simply became a unique headline typeface that could be used in largely traditional layouts with slight modifications. In this way, Futura was completely integrated into a vernacular typography across the country and accepted as an American typeface—even during World War II, in spite of its German roots.²⁸

*Where possible, the early variants of Futura have been placed into the text. Renner's experimental e was not included in the font used (Neufville Digital Futura, 1999).





The only Futura that can claim complete authenticity is metal type from Germany's Bauer Type Foundry. Every other Futura, however faithful to the original, is a newer creation.