

## Mrs Eaves and the Evolution of Typography in the 20th Century

In the past twenty-five years, graphic design and typography have changed from an analog art-form to a digital one. In the 1980's when digital methods for creating type were introduced, very few typographers were interested because of the initial limitations of the new digital technology. However, Zuzana Licko and a small group of graphic designers began using Macintosh computers to digitally create type because they saw that the technology would eventually catch up. Licko was born in 1961 and moved from Czechoslovakia to San Francisco as a child. After attending college at University of California, Berkley (1981-5), where she studied visual communications, she and her husband created a small magazine, *Emigre* (1985-2005), which had a modest beginning, but eventually became an important forum for new typography and design. It was in this post-modern period of design that Licko's typeface, *Mrs. Eaves* (1996), was the stepping stone between classical and contemporary typography because it combined the principles of classical typography with the post-modernist ability to digitally produce a typeface.

Licko's contribution to the typography extends beyond the typeface, *Mrs. Eaves*. She has created over thirty-five fonts during the twenty years that the magazine, *Emigre* was in print. Her influence in the graphic design community is tethered to *Emigre* magazine because of the unique typefaces that she designed to be used in it. Her influence can be seen by the way she used radical and new typefaces in the magazine. As mentioned by Aaris Sherin in his article on *Emigre Inc.*, *Emigre*, was originally a showcase for artists, poets, and photographers; but had changed its focus to design, typography and criticism because of how popular those aspects of the magazine had become (1).

*Mrs. Eaves* (1996) is a revival of a older typeface, *Baskerville* (1757) [plate 1], created by John

ABCDEFGHIJKLM  
 NOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
 abcdefghijklm  
 nopqrstuvwxyz  
 1234567890

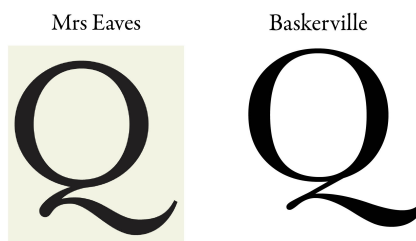
Baskerville (1706-75), so it has a very clear references to classical typography. Licko describes Baskerville's typeface in her interview with *Étapes Magazine*, as a transitional typeface because it maintained the traditional typographic style without sacrificing legibility (6).

É: Why did you choose Baskerville?

ZL: It's an epic design that I really respect. And, being a transitional face, it magically achieves the legibility of a very traditional design, without the old style stress of a Garamond (another one of my all time favorites which I have not yet dared to revive), while avoiding the legibility pitfalls of moderns, like Bodoni.

Ironically, *Mrs. Eaves* possesses transitional qualities of its own, not because Licko was the first typographer to revive an older typeface, but because she was one of the first to digitally recreate a classic typeface design successfully. *Mrs. Eaves* was important landmark for post-modern typographers because it was evidence that digital type could be created that met the principles of the classical typographers, which are legibility and functionality.

The way that Licko reinvented Baskerville's classic typeface is very subtle. At first glance, there does not seem to be any significant differences between *Mrs. Eaves* and *Baskerville*. However, Licko implements a lower x-height, which is, "the distance between the base line (the bottom of the letter) to the mean line (the top of a lower-case letter)" (Garfield 38), and modifies letter forms such as "O" and "Q" [plates 2 & 3] by rounding both slightly more than Baskerville's typeface. By doing this, she maintains the classical form, but reduces the contrast of the letters on the page, which further increases the readability of the typeface.

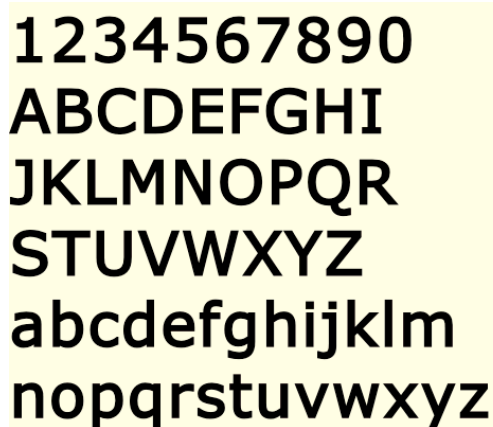


Licko recalls her inspiration and method when she revived Baskerville's typeface during an interview by *Étapes Magazine*, a French publication.

With Mrs Eaves, I wanted to reinterpret Baskerville in a warmer manner, with less contrast, so it would be more fluid. Actually, if Baskerville saw my design, he might not approve because he strived for the contrast. He even made white, crisp papers that would accentuate the contrast of the printed type. So I feel strange connecting my design to Baskerville's, except to say that it was my model (5).

Licko comments about how she recreated Baskerville's typeface to make it more fluid with less contrast. Decreasing the contrast allows the reader to focus on the words made by the typeface as opposed to the typeface itself. This concept is called a typeface's transparency. As a typeface, *Mrs. Eaves* is moderately transparent. Its reference to classical typography creates visual interest in the space surrounding the letter forms as well as in the lines that make up the letters. By referencing a classic typeface, Licko satisfied the beliefs held by traditional typographers, which were legibility and functionality, and therefore legitimized digitally created typography.

Matthew Carter, a contemporary of Licko's, created the typeface *Verdana* the same year that *Mrs. Eaves* was introduced [plate 4]. This typeface was created to be viewed on computer screens, and therefore it is designed to be simple. In the book, How to Design a Typeface, Carter's typeface is described as such: "Verdana



1234567890  
 ABCDEFGHI  
 JKLMNOPQR  
 STUVWXYZ  
 abcdefghijklm  
 nopqrstuvwxyz

(1996), a sans-serif face, has since become the gateway to the web. Its large x-height makes it clear on screen, as does the fact that none of the characters touch" (61). If *Mrs. Eaves* and *Verdana* are compared, it is clear that *Verdana* has a much different form and function than *Mrs. Eaves*. Sherin discusses the motivations for Licko's interest in recreating historic typefaces: "Licko created reinterpretations of historical faces when *Emigre* magazine shifted its mission to include more editorial content. Designed to be easily read when used to set large blocks of type, Mrs Eaves and Filosofia (both 1996)–Licko's interpretation of Baskerville and Bodoni—are among her most popular fonts" (2). *Mrs Eaves*, is a

moderately transparent typeface designed to maintain the reader's interest and be easily read in larger font sizes in a printed magazine with editorial content. Licko's motivations for creating *Mrs. Eaves* were to create a typeface that echoed the shift towards formality that *Emigre* magazine was emphasizing. Carter's motivation was to create a legible typeface that was highly transparent and readable in medium to small sizes for use on the internet. Both of these typographers created their typefaces digitally and their typefaces acted as stepping stones between classic and contemporary typography.

As much as typography has changed in the past twenty-five years, its principles of design have remained the same. Licko's typeface, *Mrs. Eaves*, was among the first typefaces to employ these principles of design when creating a typeface with a computer. Even though *Mrs. Eaves* was not the first digitally created typeface, it is one of the few that has had lasting popularity. *Mrs. Eaves'* popularity and adherence to classical typographic principles have legitimized computers as an effective medium for creating contemporary typography.

### Work Cited

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Octopus, Conran. *How To Design A Typeface*. London: The Design Medium, 2010.

Garfield, Simon. *Just my type :a book about fonts* New York : Gotham Books, 2011.

### Image Credits

<http://www.emigre.com/fontpage.php?PMrsR.html>

<http://likeithateit.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/verdana-font.gif>

### Magazine Review

<http://www.commarts.com/Columns.aspx?pub=6665&pageid=1748>

**Rubric/Feedback ART REVIEW- Two** Cut and paste this form to the end of your paper after the bibliography. Yellow highlighting indicates areas that been changed to reflect the emphasis of contextualizing the artist within an art movement and supporting your thesis with the artist's background. Notice too, that you are to choose the publication for which you are writing. Please copy at least one art review from that publication to submit attached to the final revision for this review.

Overarching Issues	Specific elements	Grade
A <b>thesis</b> is presented to the readership	<input type="checkbox"/> Supported throughout the paper <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete examples provided <input type="checkbox"/> Analysis of a typeface using formal (form) visual art language. The artist's visual art elements and design principles are tied to the delivery of content and meaning of the work, and ultimately to your thesis. <b>Please underline your thesis sentence in this art review.</b>	<b>/50</b>
<b>Context-</b> A comprehensive overview of the artist is provided	<input type="checkbox"/> Background (all details are pertinent to thesis) <input type="checkbox"/> Contribution to field of typography is summarized. <input type="checkbox"/> Genre/Movement, to which artist is associated, is defined, <input type="checkbox"/> Examples of another typography/typographer within that genre are mentioned with an explanation of how they relate to the one featured.	<b>/50</b>
<b>Tone</b> is consistent for what might be expected on a cultural arts page of a sizeable city	<b>Choose the publication you are writing for: <u>Commarts</u></b> <b>List several of the qualities that characterize the writing in the publication: professional, educated, and informative</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Tone is consistent <input type="checkbox"/> Voice is active. <input type="checkbox"/> Quotes are introduced and summarized when more appropriate. <input type="checkbox"/> Slang, clichés and the casual use of "I, my opinion, I like," are avoided.	<b>/20</b>
<b>Structure</b> of the paper is in line with assignment requirements	<input type="checkbox"/> Logical Order <input type="checkbox"/> Transitions in place <input type="checkbox"/> Syntax is clear <input type="checkbox"/> Language is concise, but varied <input type="checkbox"/> Bibliography formatted correctly – USE Hacker for MLA guides. <input type="checkbox"/> Images included/captioned - <b>Arrange the images within the body of the text so that they are integrated –more article-like. When the image is highlighted, a dropdown window appears in Word that enables tools like (wrap-around text).</b>	<b>/20</b>

<b>Grammar</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Tense agreement is consistent	___/20
	<input type="checkbox"/> Comma use is appropriate and consistent	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Proofreading is employed	
	<input type="checkbox"/> MLA is used throughout	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Format requirements followed (margins, image, title, file name, etc.)	
<b>Subtotal –</b>	A=144-160    B=128-143    C=112-127    D=96-111    F=80-95	___/144
<b>Process Grade</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> /20 Peer review conducted of another's, Peer review delivered to PR	___/40
	<input type="checkbox"/> /20 Assignments received on time. (Assignments not accepted after 5 days late.	
<b>Total</b>	A=182-200    B=162-180    C=142-160    D=122-140 F=112-120	___/200

+ = Met expectations with dedicated and disciplined effort

√ = usually met expectations, but exhibited inconsistencies

– = Did not address an area of concern, **or** did not exhibit an understanding of a requirement.

# Typographic Hate Lists Tirades, Tantrums & Truths

*by Allan Haley*

*"I hate Papyrus!"*

You can replace "Papyrus" with any number of other typefaces—from Arial to Zapfino—and find a bevy of graphic and type designers who embrace the animosity.

In fact, typophiles have a long and well-documented history of hating various typefaces. Fred Goudy's designs were maligned by the typographic cognoscenti of his time. Baskerville's peers and printers of his day reviled his designs—and fifteenth-century scribes probably despised Gutenberg's 42-line type.

Today, type hate has taken on pandemic proportions. Myriad blog posts and YouTube videos by the score condemn hapless designs. Whole websites have been created to revile specific fonts. There's an "[I Hate Rotis](#)" site, a "[Ban Comic Sans](#)" site, a Facebook page dedicated to haters of [Papyrus](#) and a [Flickr](#) group looking to wipe Arial from our hard drives. The list continues to grow—an anti-Arial app is probably already in development!

It's easy to find font haters, but a bit harder to figure out what inspires their animosity. I've done a little research into this condition, and have come up with some conclusions. There are nuances to each but, basically, there are four reasons why typophiles hate various typefaces: 1. The design is overused. 2. It's a copy of another typeface. 3. It's considered poor quality. 4. It's just hateable.

## **ABUSED AND OVERUSED**

Comic Sans has probably been at the brunt of designers' scorn for as long as any typeface in history. Interestingly, it wasn't hated when it first appeared in the pop-up balloon help guides of Microsoft 3D Movie Maker, or even when it became part of Microsoft's Windows 95 Plus! Pack of fonts. But when Comic Sans dared to show up in Microsoft Publisher and Internet Explorer, it attracted the ire of graphic designers. A dozen years later, Comic Sans is still at the center of an odium-filled maelstrom. Although designers cite a litany of reasons supporting their distaste, the overwhelming opinion is that it is overused. Answers to a recent web poll that queried designers about their dislike for Comic Sans typically pointed to the typeface's virtual ubiquity.

"It's because anyone can use it, so it looks unprofessional. It's a web font now for goodness sake!"



“Comic Sans: too available, overused; most often used by individuals with no design skills.”

“It’s because it’s so ubiquitous and a font that untrained people used incorrectly.”

If Comic Sans is disdained because of its popularity, what about typefaces like Frutiger, or Franklin Gothic or Trade Gothic? These designs have consistently been at the top of the “best seller” list of fonts for decades. Newer arrivals—such as Interstate and the recent revival of din—also seem to show up everywhere. If typeface popularity is a sin, surely these designs should also be listed among the transgressors, but they are not. Graphic designers love Trade Gothic and certainly consider din more than a passing typographic fling.

So, why do designers hate Comic Sans and adore Franklin Gothic? Maybe the former is just, well, hateable.

#### **DEEP DISTASTE FOR THE CRIME OF COPYING**

The lion’s share of hate mail directed at Arial admonishes it for being a copy of Helvetica. According to a posting by Mark Simonson on his [blog](#), “Most people who hate Arial do so because it is a complete and total rip-off of Helvetica. The changes that were made so that it would pass on copyright issues just stand to make it uglier.” His analysis continues, “Monotype was a respected type foundry with a glorious past and perhaps the idea of being associated with these ‘pirates’ was unacceptable. So, instead, they found a loophole and devised an ‘original’ design that just happens to share exactly the same proportions and weight as another typeface. This, to my mind, is almost worse than an outright copy.”

ITC Souvenir used on a 1979 book cover, designed by Robert Anthony, Inc.

Simon Garfield, in his book *Just Your Type*, also zeros in on the much-maligned Arial, and makes the point that it has proved difficult to protect fonts in court, since an alphabet can be regarded as being in the public domain. He adds that, for anyone with the patience and wherewithal to do so, each letter, number and glyph can be individually copyrighted. And Arial, in Mr. Garfield’s opinion, turns out to have enough tiny deliberate changes from Helvetica to make the two as different “as pineapple is from mango.” Although he maintains that Arial is rightly regarded as a “cheat.”

And yet Mr. Simonson and Mr. Garfield are both oh, so wrong. Arial wasn’t developed for Microsoft; it didn’t originally share common character widths with Helvetica. And it wasn’t drawn as a clone of

Helvetica.

Arial was originally drawn for another computer giant. In the early 1980s Xerox and IBM introduced the first big laser-xerographic printers. These were huge machines, closer in size to a Mack truck than to their diminutive offspring that we use today. In addition to typefaces that emulated customary mono-spaced all-cap strike-on data-processing fonts, Xerox and IBM also wanted “typographic” fonts for their new machines.

The two type companies that bid on the contracts to provide fonts to Xerox and IBM were Linotype and Monotype. At the time, the most popular typefaces in North America were Times New Roman and Helvetica. Linotype and Monotype shared rights to Times New Roman from its introduction 50 years earlier, but Monotype did not have rights to Helvetica. Linotype won the contract with Xerox. Monotype pursued IBM. To be successful, however, Monotype would need a viable competitor to Helvetica.

Monotype’s solution was based on Monotype Grotesque, a type design first drawn at the turn of the last century. The goal was to create a competitor to Helvetica, not to copy the design. Arial was drawn more rounded than its rival. Its curves are softer and fuller and its counters more open. The ends of the strokes on letters such as “c,” “e,” “g” and “s,” rather than being cut off on the horizontal, are terminated at the more natural angle in relation to the stroke direction.

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Was Arial drawn to compete with Helvetica? Sure. Does it look a lot like Helvetica? Right again. But then, Helvetica itself was an “updating” of New Haas Grotesk and that, in turn, is a pretty close cousin to Berthold’s Akzidenz Grotesk.

Now that the truth is out about Arial (actually, Arial’s backstory has been available for some time), will designers stop maligning the design? Probably not.

Do graphic designers hate Interstate because it is a copy of highway signage? No. How about the many interpretations of Garamond, or Baskerville—or the obvious design send-ups of Century Gothic and Silkstone Sans? Nyet. So, why do designers harbor animosity toward some emulations and not others? Maybe it’s for the same reason that so many Bostonians hate the Yankees: They just do.

## UGLY INCURS HATRED

The Rotis family is another suite of typefaces that is reviled by designers—but not because it’s popular or a clone. The problem with Rotis is that many think that it is not a very good design and, thus, undeserving of its popularity. Erik Spiekermann even went so far as to claim that Rotis isn’t even a typeface. According to him, “[Rotis] has some great letters, but they never come together in one typeface. Otl Aicher [the designer of Rotis] wrote a great theory about how one would have to make the most legible typeface ever but then proceeded to prove with Rotis that a theory does not make a typeface.” Spiekermann continues, “As many designers seem to lack critical faculties, they judged Rotis by the theory cleverly provided and not by the evidence in front of their eyes.”

Gerard Unger, the designer of typefaces such as Vesta, Swift, ITC Flora and Demos, echoes Spiekermann’s concerns—albeit in gentler words. “The problem with Rotis is that some of the characters, like the ‘e’ for example, don’t belong there. They fall over backwards. And I do not understand why there are so many designers who like it and like to use it.”

The interesting thing is there are thousands of really bad type-faces that designers do not go out of their way to hate. There are also a flock of typefaces that are used, admired and praised by designers—which are also less than perfect. Paul Shaw wrote an article on his [blog](#) about a dozen well-liked—if not loved—typefaces that are flawed by the designs of particular characters. Among these are ITC Galliard, Bembo, Centaur, Univers and Gill Sans.

## BECAUSE, WELL, WE JUST HATE 'EM

Rationality does not have to be a factor when it comes to despising typefaces. Michael Bierut, in his essay “I Hate ITC Garamond,” admits that he does not hate ITC Garamond for any rational reason. He writes, “I hate it like I hate fingernails on a blackboard. I hate it because I hate it.”

Although some claimed that Goudy’s typefaces were flawed, many of his contemporaries disliked his designs because they disliked him. Goudy was one of the first type designers to promote himself, which was seen as roughly akin to Veg-O-Matic sales tactics by typophiles of the early twentieth century. They thought his populist touch impressed what were deemed to be “under-educated” minds. Daniel Berkeley Updike, the eminent printer and type historian of the early twentieth century, wrote of Goudy, “I have never seen anyone with such an itch for publicity, or who blew his own trumpet so artlessly and constantly.”

In *Just My Type*, Garfield also takes a stab at sorting out this issue of typeface insufferability. He follows the popular thesis that we dislike certain typefaces because of misuse and overuse—but adds to these offenses “memory.” “Fonts may trigger memory as pungently as perfume,” he writes. “Gill Sans can summon up exam papers. Trajan may remind us of lousy choices at the cinema.”

### **A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE**

I may be overly sensitive to this hating typefaces thing. That would be because I've had close relationships with many typefaces that are on the list of reviled designs. I worked at International Typeface Corporation when ITC Souvenir was both loved and hated; I consulted to Agfa's type group when Rotis was in its prime; and I now work for the people who own Arial—and Papyrus.

#### Epic Shaded

To top it off, I've even had one of my own typeface designs listed among the scorned. Des Edmonds, British type designer, typographer and typographic studio owner of the 1970s, was vociferous in his disdain for my design, Epic Shaded, in Robert Norton's 1993 book, *Types Best Remembered/Types Best Forgotten*. The problem wasn't, however, that Epic Shaded was overused (I wish it were) or that it was a rip-off, or even that it was particularly ugly. It was just damn difficult to set. According to Edmonds, “Setting Epic Shaded requires manual dexterity, a fit and supple body and the reactions of a ferret after a rabbit.”

### **TIME HEALS ALL**

I've also discovered that, after a period of time, typeface animosity turns to benign acceptance—and, in some cases, downright admiration. Take Baskerville, for instance. Even though Benjamin Franklin (yeah, that Benjamin Franklin) openly praised the fonts of John Baskerville, contemporaries complained that the typeface's marked contrast in stroke weight, exacerbated by the intensity of the black ink and shininess of the paper Baskerville used, would (quite literally) make the reader go blind. Today, Baskerville is generally accepted as handsome—and certainly harmless.

When I was a lad, ITC Souvenir was ranked right up there with root canals and paper cuts on the *bête noire* scale. In fact, I've lived through a succession of “I hate this typeface” sagas, and the ill feelings ITC Souvenir inspired back in the '70s pretty much still eclipse all that have followed—even toward Helvetica and Comic Sans. Today, ITC Souvenir is hardly used—but neither is it reviled. In fact, Joe Clark, in an article titled “Reviled Fonts,” writes, “I found a usage of Souvenir from 1979 that's winsome, calligraphic, and fully appropriate: The cover of the Simon and Schuster hardback of Margaret Atwood's *Life Before Man*.” Jacket design by Robert Anthony, Inc.

**THERE IS NO SCIENCE**

Perhaps trying to put words to why designers hate certain typefaces is fruitless. Matthew Carter has pointed out that a great typeface is identifiable before we can distinguish the words—and this is also probably true of the hateful ones. Just as we can identify people we know well by their walk or the way they stand, so can we tell typefaces by their color on a page—and by other qualities that we cannot articulate. Sometimes we hate typefaces just because we hate them. **CA**