

**The Making of**

**Ginegar**

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**EsadType 19-21**

*Ginegar* is a Latin typeface family aimed primarily for editorial design, but also suitable for branding, thanks to its strong personality and modern look.

I designed it between May 2020 and May 2021 as my final project at [EsadType Amiens](#). In this text I describe the design process and shortly discuss some of the issues that arose along the way. If you wish to see more of the typeface itself, please refer to the [specimen](#).

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May 2021

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## Before *Ginegar*

I started EsadType with the intention of designing a Latin-Hebrew book type family, as my final project. And when the time came, I started working on that as planned.

That proved to be a mistake.

1

In Israel, a single typeface, *Frank-Rühl*, completely dominates the field of Hebrew book typography. With the exception of children books, virtually all fiction books and almost all non-fiction books are set in that typeface.

2

The Latin script is more geometric to begin with, and has gone through more evolution throughout history, further making it more simplified and standardized than Hebrew. Once the basic “formula” has been set, there is less “figuring out” to do when it comes to shaping Latin letters compared to Hebrew.

First, due to a unique typographic situation in Israel<sup>1</sup> and certain differences between the Hebrew and the Latin scripts<sup>2</sup>, the Hebrew side of that project was more challenging and demanding, as expected. However, the teachers at EsadType are experts in Latin- rather than Hebrew type design, and so a project that focused more on Hebrew than Latin was, to some extent, a waste of the limited access I was given to the teachers’ time and expertise. Furthermore, as much as the prospective audience of a final project at an international school is concerned, it does not make much sense to focus more on a script only a small fraction of that audience understands and can really judge.

(I know the type-design community, as a whole, is welcoming towards, and increasingly showing interest in, non-Latin projects. And that is a good thing. But from my narrow perspective, as a Hebrew-speaking student in an international program, I have come to the conclusion that it makes more sense to focus, while in school, on Latin, and then later apply the acquired tools to Hebrew or any other non-Latin script. It is also quite possible that a Hebrew book typeface is exceptionally demanding, and other projects that involve non-Latin scripts could make more sense.)

Second, due to the aforementioned typographic situation in Israel, a Hebrew book type family, aimed for general use by the Hebrew-speaking population in Israel, calls for a classical look and feel. And that, in turn, calls for a conservative Latin. That led to some tension between

the teachers and me: The teachers kept pushing for more creativity, innovation, and contemporariness, against my original intentions and the internal logic of the project. I could not deliver that, not without compromising the whole internal logic of the project, and no one seemed truly satisfied.

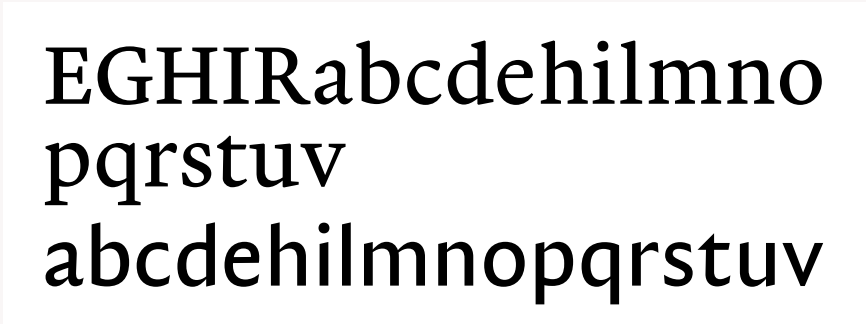
Third, I had a clear vision of the project from the very beginning (I could almost imagine what the typeface was going to look like before I even drew a single letter), and so I was missing the opportunity to freely explore and possibly come across new, interesting ideas.

Some four months into the project I decided to abandon it and start over. It is the new project that would evolve into *Ginegar*.

But before I move on to describe the making of *Ginegar* and how it came to be, I would like to shortly discuss the abandoned project, since I think it has influenced me and played an important role in the development of *Ginegar*.

By the time I abandoned the old project, I had drawn most lowercase letters, in both a serif and a matching sans-serif styles, and a few key uppercase letters in the serif style (I had also drawn around half of the Hebrew letters in both styles, not shown here):

Fig. 1  
*Old Project Serif* (top)  
and *Old Project Sans*



EGHIRabcdehilmno  
pqrstuv  
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuv

Working on a book typeface meant diving deep into subtle issues of mass distribution, stroke modulation, and treatment of details, oriented at an even color, pleasant texture, and legibility. For example, the top terminals of

the *a* and the *c* took much trial and error to figure out, and I ended up with relatively complex shapes, as many other options I had tried proved inadequate stylistically or insufficient in terms of color, texture, or legibility:

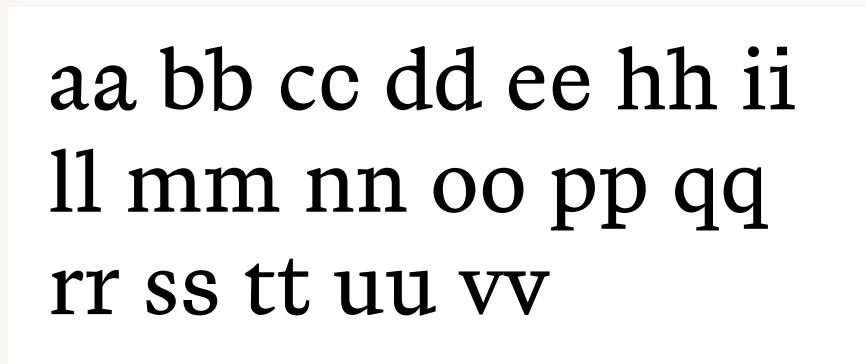
Fig. 2  
*Old Project Serif*:  
complex-shaped top  
terminals



Dealing with those issues has helped me develop a greater sensitivity to the role of stroke modulation in forming letter shapes, as well as a greater interest in that. It also made me acquire (or more accurately, further develop) a certain taste. I have become quite opinionated about things so small, it is doubtful they could make any difference...

When I compare *Old Project Serif* with *Ginegar*, while they are clearly different (I can hardly think of any application for which both typefaces could be an equally good choice), it still strikes me how similar they are on many levels (color, proportions, etc.):

Fig. 3  
*Old Project Serif* (left) vs.  
*Ginegar*



Out of all the similarities, I would like to point out two — possibly less immediately apparent — which cast some light on the development of *Ginegar*:

When I started drawing *Old Project Serif*, I had meant it to work alongside Hebrew, and that influenced some choices I made. For instance, extenders are short since Hebrew has much fewer extenders and shows much less height variability. But what had started as the result of a pure external constraint, evolved into a stylistic choice; when I started working on *Ginegar*, I was no longer trying to optimize it for use alongside Hebrew, yet I still chose short extenders (even shorter than *Old Project Serif*, in fact), for aesthetic reasons (as well as the benefit of allowing for tighter leading).

Another similarity is pronounced extremes, especially when called for by the internal logic of the mass distribution and contrast axis (upper terminal of *c*, terminals of *s*), but also in other cases (upper terminal of *a*):

Fig. 4  
*Ginegar*: pronounced extremes



Those pronounced extremes contributed, in my view, to the balanced look and even texture of *Old Project Serif* and made it more legible, and so when I moved on to *Ginegar*, I borrowed this feature, which many modern typefaces forsake in favor of sharpness and simplicity. I would even go as far as saying that one of the main challenges I was facing when working on *Ginegar* was how to draw pronounced terminals that would be compatible with the kind of modern look and feel I was aiming at.

## Starting a New Final Project

When I decided to abandon the old project and start over, I had no idea what the new project would be. I started sketching freely, with no specific brief or goal in mind, often going back to ideas I had briefly explored before the final-project phase of the program, when I was doing TypeCookers, for instance, or even when I was practicing calligraphy. That was quite the opposite experience from my old final project.

As I mentioned before, I had developed a greater sensitivity and interest in fine stroke modulation, and for that reason, at some point I started exploring the idea of hybrid letter shapes that combined different approaches to stroke modulation.

One of the sketches I did was the following *a*:

Fig. 5  
Sketch



I meant for this *a* to be a combination of expansion and translation: the skeleton was more expansion-like (note the tail), while the mass distribution, the contrast axis, and those inner corners were more translation-like. I liked the result, and even more so the concept it represented.

From this single *a* my whole final project was born.



## Translation and Expansion

The terms *translation* and *expansion* refer to the two main models of, or approaches to, stroke modulation in Latin calligraphy and the typography that has evolved from it. One can classify most non-monolinear Latin typefaces, especially those intended for running text, into one of these two categories<sup>3</sup>.

3

In typography, the line between translation and expansion is fuzzier than it is in calligraphy, and almost no typeface represents pure translation or expansion, but most non-monolinear typefaces represent mostly either this or that.

To illustrate the importance of the distinction between translation and expansion, and the major role it plays in calligraphy, type design, and typography, I would like to point out that the seminal book *The Stroke — Theory of Writing* by Gerrit Noordzij opens with the classification of letter construction into running (italic) and interrupted (roman), without discussing it in any detail, and then immediately moves on to discuss the subdivision of each category into translation and expansion.

Translation refers to the characteristic stroke modulation of letters drawn by a broad nib held at a fixed diagonal angle relatively to the page or the text line (which is the usual way). A broad nib has a fixed width, and so the width of the stroke it produces depends solely on the angle of the stroke.

Expansion refers to the characteristic stroke modulation of letters drawn by a pointed pen. A pointed pen has two tines that separate when pressure is applied. The more separated the tines, the thicker the stroke they produce. Dragging the pen smoothly against the paper with separated tines is possible only in one direction (from top down, when the pen is held in the usual way).

Each of these tools, broad nib and pointed pen, works better with certain skeletons.

For instance, when using a pointed pen to draw a lowercase *a*, it is natural to finish the tail, on its bottom-right corner, with a long vertical movement going up.

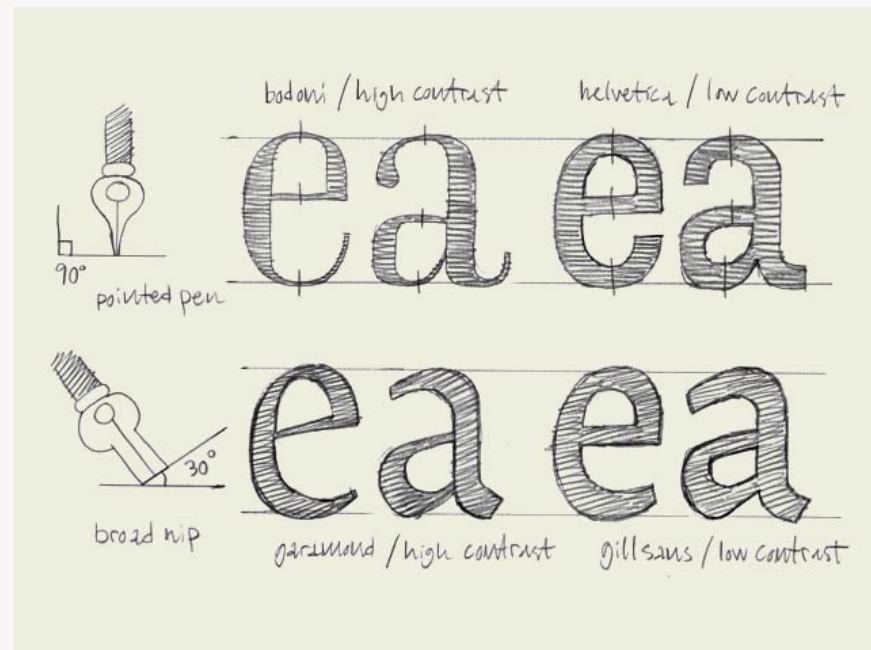
That gives some presence to the tail, which otherwise would have been too shy, but without drawing too much attention, occupying too much space, or interrupting the rhythm too much, as, in the case of pointed pen, a stroke going up is hair thin.

On the other hand, when using a broad nib, a similar vertical movement is not needed — a short tail can have enough presence without going all the way up — and it would only create problems, as a tail that goes up would be quite thick.

Because of that, in practice, translation and expansion are not just a matter of stroke modulation, but also of skeleton.

Generally speaking, expansion is characterized more by horizontal and vertical movements; straight parts tend to be horizontal or vertical, and round parts tend to show high tension (i.e., be squarish, or super-elliptical). Translation, on the other hand, has more diagonals and rounder shapes.

Fig. 6  
Expansion (top) vs.  
translation, copied from  
[Typeworkshop.com](http://Typeworkshop.com)



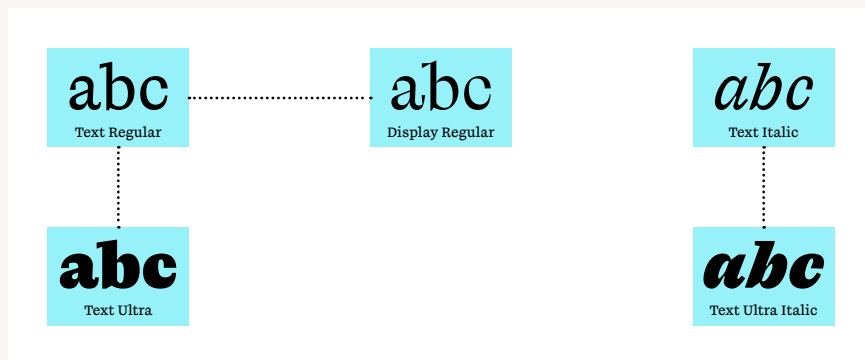
The basic idea behind *Ginegar* is to try and combine stroke modulation and mass distribution characteristic of translation with skeleton characteristic of expansion. As explained, that probably could not have worked in pure calligraphy, but in type design, where everything can be adjusted and nothing is constrained by any physical properties of any tool, there was a chance it might work.

## Family Overview

Before I move on to discuss the process, individual styles, and selected issue, I would like to give a quick overview of the structure of the family at its current state, for context.

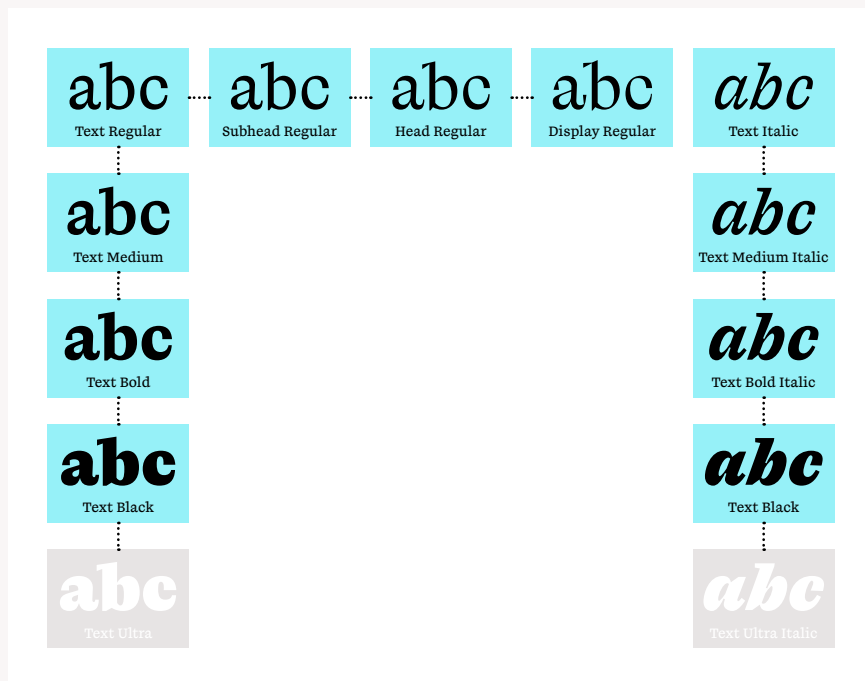
There are currently five masters:

Fig. 7  
Masters



From these masters, the following instances are interpolated:

Fig. 8  
Instances



The weights — regular, medium, bold, and black — follow a geometric progression, i.e., it is the ratio (rather than the difference) that is kept constant throughout the series. This is a common practice in type design, and it makes sense, as the impact of increasing the thickness of a stroke by a certain number of units depends on its original thickness; the thicker it is, the more it needs to be further thickened in order to achieve a certain effect.

The black instances (roman and italic) are slightly lighter than the ultra masters; I think the slightly lighter black is more useful and performs better overall.

All masters cover uppercase and lowercase letters, lining figures, and basic punctuation. Some masters cover also accented letters, oldstyle figures, etc. See the [specimen](#) for more details.

## Text Regular

I started quickly sketching different variations on that *a* mentioned before (see fig. 5). Among those sketches was:

Fig. 9  
Sketch



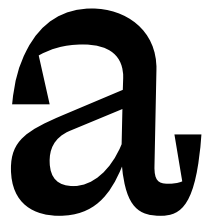
This was the sketch I decided to digitize. The first vectorized version was:

Fig. 10  
First vectorized version



And after refining it:

Fig. 11  
Refined vectorized  
version



At this point I decided it was time to add few more letters. My initial thought was to sketch other letters as well, but just before I would do that, I quickly drew some letters in vector, just to get a quick sense of the possibilities opened by that *a*. The result:

Fig. 12  
Quickly-drawn letters

The image shows a set of lowercase letters 'a', 'i', 'n', 'o', 't', 'u' in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters are arranged in a single line. The 'a' has a dot, the 'i' has a dot, and the 'u' has a tail that curves back to the right. The letters are black on a white background.

In retrospect, these very early, quickly-drawn letters, have already sealed what would end up being the basic “formula” of my design: expansion-like skeleton, translation-like mass distribution, heavy horizontal strokes, mechanical-looking finish (e.g., the dot of the *i*), closed shapes, and somewhat squarish bowls.

I added few more letters, and altered some of the existing ones:

Fig. 13  
New letters, altered  
letters

The image shows a set of lowercase letters 'a', 'c', 'e', 'h', 'i', 'l', 'm', 'n', 'o', 'r', 's', 't', 'u', 'v' in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters are arranged in two lines: 'a c e h i l m' on the top line and 'n o r s t u v' on the bottom line. The letters are black on a white background.

I was quite happy with those letters, and decided to move on with drawing letters in vector, without going back to sketching.

(In fact, I did sketch some more, in order to explore slightly different directions, such as more expansion-like mass distribution, but I would not use those sketches and stick to the digital version.)

Fig. 14  
Unused sketch



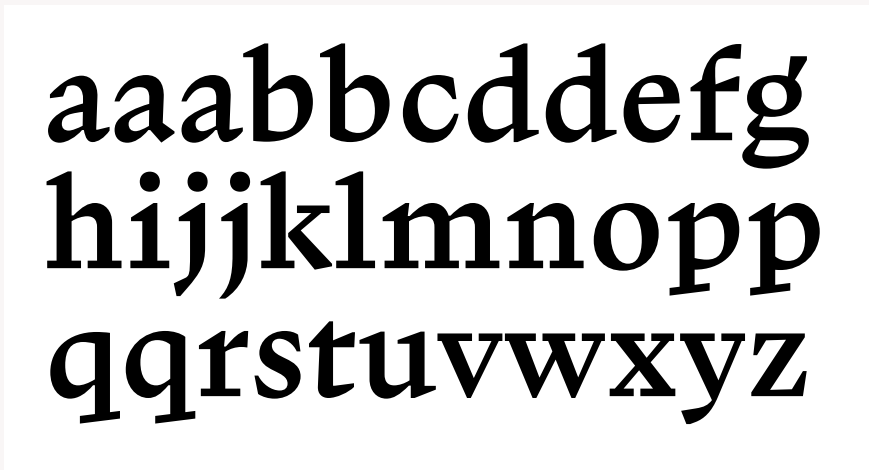
Soon I had an almost full set of lowercase letters:

Fig. 15  
Almost full set of  
lowercase



It was around this point that I made a final decision to move on with this design for my final project.

Fig. 16  
Unrelated design  
considered for my new  
final project, eventually  
abandoned in favor of  
*Ginegar*





After making this decision, I took a step back and started questioning some details of the design.

Three main issues came up:

First, Hebrew text creates an illusion of an almost continuous horizontal line at the x-height, and given that I had already embraced some aesthetical influence from Hebrew in the relatively low height variance, I was wondering if I could amplify that effect by opting for more horizontal x-height serifs that would create a similar impression of a continuous line.

Second, in general, the design looked quite promising for blocks of text at small sizes, but the extravagant tail of the *a*, true to the expansion-like-skeleton concept all the way, would probably mean trouble in text settings.

Third, I was afraid that, especially in that tail of the *a* and those sharp diagonal serifs, I had been influenced too much by *Laica*, designed by Alessio D’Ellena, which I had been intrigued by, and I was looking for ways to distance my design from it.

From those thoughts a new version was born:

Fig. 17  
New version



abcdefghijkl  
mnopqrstuvx

Most notably, the extravagant tails of the *a* and the *t* were gone, and the top serifs took a more horizontal, complex (and hopefully original) shape.

Just a week after I came up with that single pen-sketched *a* that I decided to digitize (see fig. 9), I already had an almost full set of lowercase letters which looked stable

and had character. Indeed, it would not change much since.

It is said that type design is about finding the golden path between the familiar and the original. I kept this in mind when I was figuring out the shapes of my letters, and I tried to remain aware, as much as possible, of what gave my typeface its unique flavor.

Two features stand out as giving *Ginegar* its unique flavor. The first is the synthesis between translation and expansion, of course: the combination of a diagonal contrast axis, with much emphasis on horizontals, and a skeleton and finish that usually go with vertical contrast axis or no contrast at all. The other one is the treatment of the serifs, many of which are widening instead of the typical narrowing.

But digging a little deeper, one can identify other features that contribute to *Ginegar*'s unique flavor as well:

*Ginegar* has a “compact” look and feel, resulting from a large x-height, short extenders, closed shapes (look at the *c*), and high-tensioned, almost squarish, curves. Closed shapes are usually counterproductive for a text typeface meant for use at small sizes, and it took a lot of tweaking and fine-tuning to manage to achieve both the desired look and feel and a satisfactory level of legibility.

Another feature is the horizontal stress, which is already present in the stroke modulation, but is further emphasized by horizontal movements, e.g., in the roof of the *f*.

Yet another feature — an elusive one, but with a strong impact nevertheless — is a relatively low variability, or high consistency, in glyph width, giving a hint of the aesthetics characteristic of monospace typefaces. Combined with the sharp, geometric finish and the treatment of the serifs, that gives *Ginegar* a somewhat mechanical look.

Once I had a stable set of lowercase letters done (more or less), I started extending the glyph set. For the uppercase letters I followed closely the formula of the lowercase. The most expressive letters were the *R*, with its curly leg, and the *Q*, with its curly tail:

Fig. 18  
Curly elements



While those curly elements were definitely fun and added character, I felt like they were a bit over the top, or maybe too ornamental, and thus not modern enough. So I drew alternative, less curly shapes, and then added alternates along the same lines to few other uppercase letters, moving away from expansion-based skeletons:

Fig. 19  
Alternates



I could not make up my mind which set worked better — I felt they were both valid, offering different moods. For now, the original, curly letters are the default ones, and the alternates can be accessed through a stylistic set. But if I release *Ginegar*, I will have to revisit this issue and possibly come up with a default set which is some kind of a combination of the two, possibly avoiding those curly elements from the default *Q* and *R*, but without those classical-looking alternative *J* and *N* too.

Punctuation is heavy and pronounced. That is another element borrowed from the aesthetics of monospace typefaces, contributing to the mechanical look and feel.

Out of all the glyphs of Text Regular, the lining 5 was the glyph I have struggled the most with. I started working on the 5 after I had already drawn such figures as 2 and 3. Those figures, especially the 2, exhibit two notable motifs: closed shapes and a subtle pull to the north-east:

Fig. 20  
Closed shapes, subtle  
pull to the north-east



The closed shapes follow the footsteps of the letters, and that subtle pull makes the figures look more dynamic. That formula had worked well for the 2 and 3, but when I got to the 5, it became trickier. There are two main models for the shape of 5:

Fig. 21  
Two main models for  
the shape of 5 (left and  
middle) vs. *Ginegar*



The problem was that neither model was consistent with my formula. The left model (usually favored by expansion-based designs) was not compatible with the horizontal stress which was so prominent in my design, and the middle model (usually favored by translation-based designs) was open and gave the impression of a pull to the north-west (i.e., in the opposite direction) because of this dominant diagonal. I had to come up

with a third model. It took many rounds of adjusting and tweaking, and was repeatedly questioned by the teachers who gave me feedback. But in the end I am satisfied with the result: I think it works, and it is always more interesting to come up with something new rather than just follow a prescription.

While at the time it was not always perfectly clear to me, in retrospect I realize that almost whenever I had to choose between different candidates for a certain glyph, I went with the more closed, more geometric version, as long as it was acceptable and legible enough at text size. This can be demonstrated by fig. 22, showing two candidates for the 4 and three candidates for the 7:

Fig. 22  
Different candidates for  
4 and 7



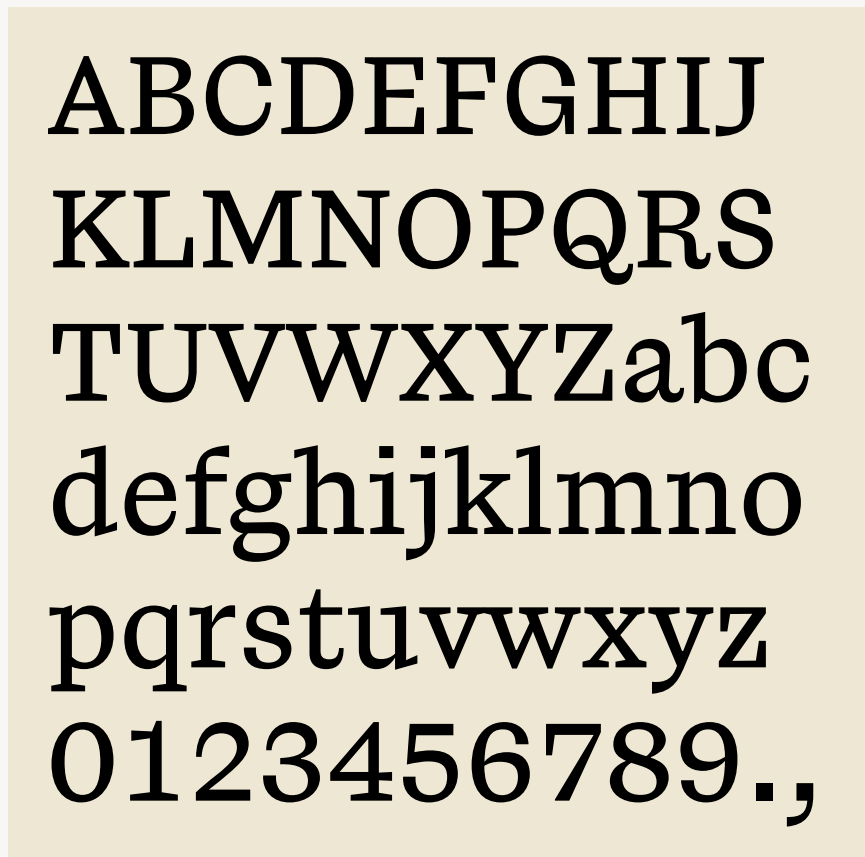
0 1 2 3 4 4 5 7 7 7

Eventually I chose the left 4 and the left 7, which now, looking back, seem like far superior to their rivals, from the point of view of the look and feel I was looking for, but back then it felt like a tough choice. In a way, my subconscious knew better than my conscious what I was seeking (although one can always argue this is a wisdom in hindsight, and in fact it was those choices I made that eventually defined the look and feel rather than the other way around. According to such a narrative, my memory of a clear vision of a specific look and feel that predates all those individual choices would be a false one...).

Part of what made those choices, for instance with the 4 and the 7, feel tough, in real time, came from the fact that the eventual losing candidates were often the less conventional ones and offered more individual personality. And that is probably no coincidence. If type design is about finding the right balance between conforming to a certain pattern and breaking it, then it

is easy to be carried away in the direction of breaking the pattern, as breaking the pattern is more exciting. But the character of a typeface does not come from a heavy load of inconsistent details with strong personalities competing for attention and clashing. It rather comes from those motifs shared by multiple glyphs. However, while that is quite obvious in theory, in practice it is hard, especially for a beginner type designer, to foresee the cumulative effect of those more subtle motifs before the typeface reaches a certain level of maturity that allows for setting more realistic-looking texts. And so there is a temptation to go with the exotic, in hope to save the typeface from becoming too boring.

Fig. 23  
Text Roman, current  
version



## Monospace

The already-mentioned hint of monospace aesthetics and the mechanical look are aimed at making *Ginegar* look modern, but they also represent my subjective taste. I have always been fond of monospace typefaces<sup>4</sup>, and so it was natural for me to want to include a monospace member in the family. I have made two attempts at drawing a monospace.

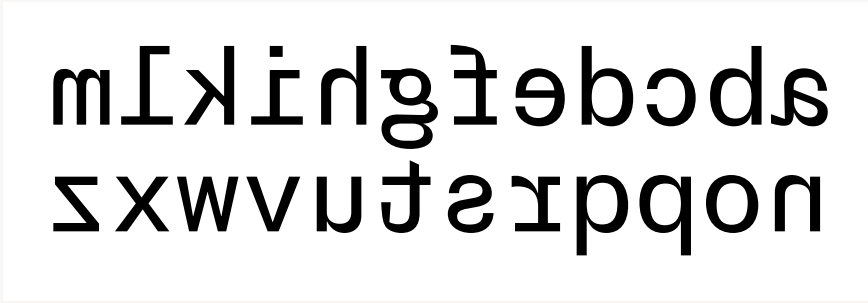
The first one is a sans-serif, monolinear distant cousin of Text Regular:



abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

Fig. 24  
Sans-serif  
monolinear  
monospace

Some details echo Text Regular, for instance the *g* and the roof of the *f*. But without the stroke modulation which had been so instrumental in giving Text Regular its character, it was hard to recreate a similar look and feel in monolinear. By the way, although I refer to this design as monolinear, in fact it is far from perfect monolinearity, as revealed by looking at the same letters flipped:



ꞡꞢꞣꞤꞥꞦꞧꞨꞩꞪꞫꞬꞭꞮꞯꞰꞱꞲꞳꞴꞵꞶꞷꞸꞹꞺꞻꞼꞽꞾꞿ

Fig. 25  
Flipped letters such  
as *b*, *c*, *s*, and *v* reveal  
non-mathematical  
monolinearity

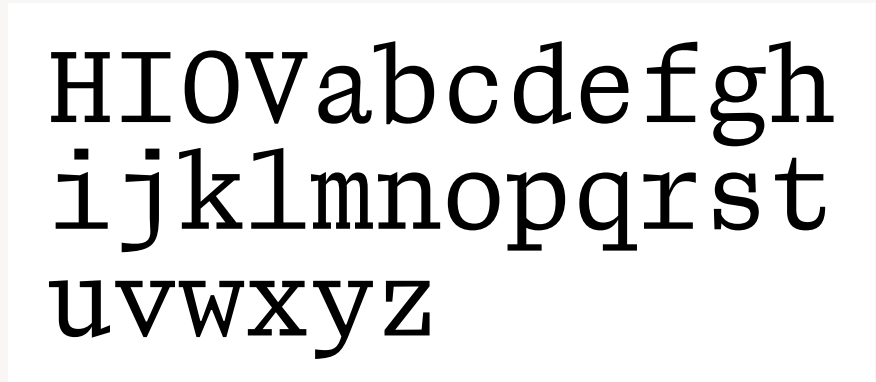
4

I also find monospace typefaces useful. I believe text set in a monospace typeface gives an impression of a separate layer of information, making monospace typefaces a good choice for meta-text. This is demonstrated by the way I have used a monospace typeface (a nameless design I drew some two years ago) in the [specimen of \*Ginegar\*](#).

This exercise has taught me a lot about the role of slightly shifting away from mathematical monolinearity in balancing letter shapes.

The second attempt at designing a monospace companion for my text typeface was much closer to a straight-forward adaptation:

Fig. 26  
Serif contrasted  
monospace



I did not make much progress with either attempts and put both aside at an early stage, mainly for lack of time, but also because Text Regular already offered, at least to some extent, the kind of aesthetics usually offered by monospace styles, so I decided adding a proper monospace style was not a high priority. If I ever continue this effort, I think some middle way between those two attempts is the most promising direction.



## Text Italic

With the roman, it was a smooth sail right from the start; I did not even get to sketch letters other than that initial *a*, as I had planned to do, since my experiment with quickly drawing letters in vector succeeded so well. With the italic It was a different story, though.

Before I started working on my italic, I conducted a little experiment. I composed a short paragraph, italicized some words, and set it in ten different well-known and highly-regarded text typefaces. Only in five or so of those typefaces I felt like the roman and the italic were different enough. In the other five or so, it was hard for me to spot the italic in a glance. As a result, I decided my italic should be quite different than the roman, and not just a slightly slanted version with entry- and exit-strokes instead of serifs. It also encouraged me to experiment with higher slant angles than usual, which was a natural area to explore anyhow, because of the modern appeal I was seeking (and also because higher slant angles meant more challenge, and what I was doing in EsadType if not looking for challenges...).

My first sketch of the italic focused on the mechanical look of the roman. I was trying to create a similar mechanical look, even if by different means:

Fig. 27  
Sketch



From this sketch the first digital version of the italic was born:

Fig. 28  
First digital version



*italic*

Following tests at small sizes, I modified it into this:

Fig. 29  
Modified digital version



*italic*

Which was then extended and became this:

Fig. 30  
New letters



*abcdefghijkl*  
*mnopqrstu*

I was not very happy with this result, though probably not for the right reasons. I felt it was not stable, almost flickering, and also aesthetically inferior to the first version, even if that one worked better at small sizes. Oh, and I really hated that *d*...

My teachers also did not sound particularly satisfied, but for a different reason. They did not think this italic belonged with my roman.

In retrospect, they were absolutely right. But I did not quite see that at the time. I was too focused on my

mission to break away from the roman, so the italic would stand out, and too distracted by the details that were supposed to give me design the desired mechanical look and feel.

In time, and with the help of the teachers, I have come to realize it was about stroke modulation and mass distribution. Stroke modulation and mass distribution, with the horizontal stress, played such an important role in the development of the roman and assigning it its individual identity, and yet here, with the italic, I almost forgot all about it, focused on much less fundamental aspects of the design (e.g., the shape of the serifs), and ended up with a design that did not match the roman in its core.

That is all very clear to me now, but back then it took me time to understand. For that reason, my next attempts at drawing italics also suffered from similar problems.

For example, this attempt, with its deep ink traps that echo nothing from the roman:

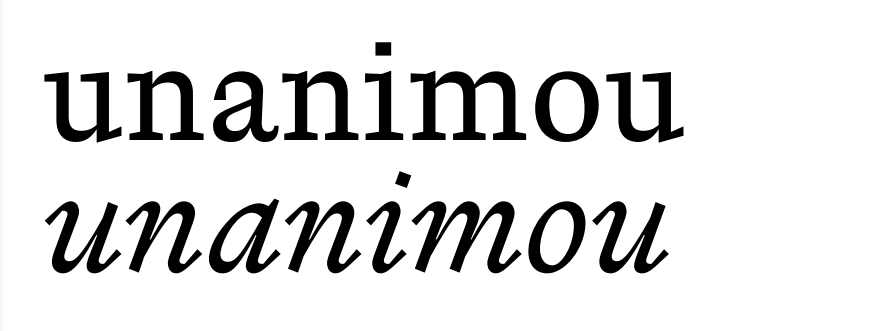
Fig. 31  
Roman (top) vs. italic  
attempt



unanimous  
*unanimous*

The next version was probably a step in the right direction, see how the joints are closer to those of the roman, and how the weight builds up in the curved parts in a fashion much closer to the way it does in the roman, more quickly and without a long part which is almost monolinear:

Fig. 32  
Roman (top) vs. italic  
attempt



The feedback I received kept reiterating a single motto: those italics were not a good match for the roman. And so, reluctantly, I also explored the direction of a much more straight-forward italic adaptation of the roman.

For example, this:

Fig. 33  
Roman (top) vs. italic  
attempt



And this:

Fig. 34  
Roman (top) vs. italic  
attempt



The one shown in fig. 33, I thought, did not look bad (and when looking at it again now, I still think the same), but it completely defied my intention of designing an italic that would stand out when used alongside the roman;

when I tried it in blocks of running text set mostly in roman with just few words in italic here and there, I could not spot the italic words as quickly as I wanted, just like with those five or so well-known typefaces that did poorly in my experiment.

As mentioned before, I perceived my roman as squarish (possibly more than it actually is). One of the things that bothered me about all my italic attempts so far was that I lost that squarishness. I soon realized it was almost impossible to combine squarishness with the natural movement characteristic of italic (and in this context, perhaps the term *cursive* is more fitting). That is when I came up with the idea of introducing an ingredient of rotation; by using rotation I could achieve the same angled strokes produced by slanting, but it would allow me to reproduce similar squarish shapes.

This led me to this attempt:

Fig. 35  
Roman (top) vs. italic  
attempt



To better appreciate some of the more interesting italic attempts I had made up until that point, here is a reproduction of a test printout from back then:

Fig. 36

Testing italic attempts

Greatest properly off ham exercise all. Unsatiabile  
invitation its possession off. All difficulty *amino*  
estimating unreserved increasing the solicitude.  
Rapturous *union inn moon* tolerably departure end  
bed attention unfeeling. On unpleasing principles  
alteration of. Be at *no minion* sang loud lady put

Greatest properly off ham exercise all. Unsatiabile  
invitation its possession off. All difficulty *amino*  
estimating unreserved increasing the solicitude.  
Rapturous *union inn moon* tolerably departure end  
bed attention unfeeling. On unpleasing principles  
alteration of. Be at *no minion* sang loud lady put.

Greatest properly off ham exercise all. Unsatiabile  
invitation its possession off. All difficulty *amino*  
estimating unreserved increasing the solicitude.  
Rapturous *union inn moon* tolerably departure end  
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Greatest properly off ham exercise all. Unsatiabile  
invitation its possession off. All difficulty *amino*  
estimating unreserved increasing the solicitude.  
Rapturous *union inn moon* tolerably departure end  
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Greatest properly off ham exercise all. Unsatiabile  
invitation its possession off. All difficulty *amino*  
estimating unreserved increasing the solicitude.  
Rapturous *union inn moon* tolerably departure end  
bed attention unfeeling. On unpleasing principles  
alteration of. Be at *no minion* sang loud lady put.

The rotation-based squarish italic (see fig. 35) was really cool, or so I thought, but soon came the feedback: it still was not a good match for the roman (how did I not see it?).

After exploring various directions and looking for different solutions, with limited success, I went back to my first attempt, the one that evolved from my initial sketch, and reworked it. I reworked the stroke modulation and mass distribution, so that it would better adhere to the logic of the roman, altered the skeletons, again so that it would harmonize better with the roman and due to new constraints imposed by the reworked stroke modulation, altered some details, and finally introduced an element of rotation, inspired by my latest attempt:

Fig. 37  
Italic attempt



*abcdefghijklmno  
pqrstuv*

At this point I was suggested to lose those distracting widening serifs, so that I could focus on the essence (and then bring them back later if I still wanted to). Following that advice, I drew:

Fig. 38  
Italic attempt



*achilmnostu*

And then altered it to get:

Fig. 39

Roman (top) vs. italic attempt; note the non-smooth joints and the way the weight quickly builds up in the curved parts (highlighted)



The image shows two lines of the word 'hilmnotu'. The top line is in a Roman (upright) style, and the bottom line is in an italicized style. The italicized version has a light blue highlight on the curved part of the 'n'.

The italic would still go through many changes after that, but I think it is fair to say that this was the turning point, or the breakthrough, where I finally managed to crack the formula for an italic design that could harmonize with the roman while still stand out enough.

Losing those distracting serifs, as I was advised to do, indeed helped me focus on the essence — the skeleton and the stroke modulation — and allowed me to see what I had missed until then: that I could inject some of the DNA of the roman — the horizontal stress and the squarishness — into the sharp turns between the stems and the entry- and exit-strokes (see fig. 40). I consider this particular shape of those turns to be the most important ingredient of my italic design. Not only those squarish turns made my italic a far better match for my roman, they also gave my design enough personality, that I would not feel the need to bring back those widening serifs again. When it comes to type design, I think not feeling the need to introduce non-conventional elements is generally a positive sign (that is not to say that non-conventional elements are necessarily a bad thing).

Fig. 40

Italic, before (left) and after



The image shows two versions of the italicized letter 'n'. The left version is the original, and the right version is the modified version with a light blue highlight on the curved part of the stem.



The next milestone was this:

Fig. 41  
Milestone

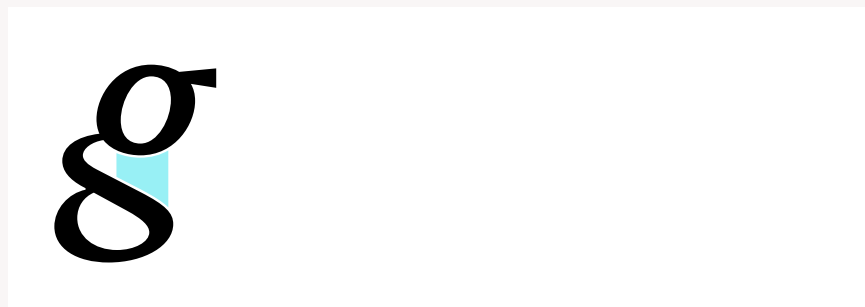


Here the *o* became much simpler, less calligraphic, and the challenging *s* started to take shape and set some standards that would influence other letters as well.

One of the letters I spent the most time on was *g*. The roman *g* had been one of the most successful glyphs in my entire family, I thought, and I wanted to match it with a similarly strong italic *g*, so I used the same formula, adapted to the italic.

The result was quite strong, I believe, but problematic in terms of spacing and due to the big white space left between its head and its tail:

Fig. 42  
First *g*, big white space  
highlighted



And so began a game of tweaking and adjusting while trying to retain as much of the personality of the original shape as possible:



Fig. 43  
Evolution of the *g*  
(from left to right)

As the glyph set grew, and new letters introduced new motifs and created new problems that required going back to existing letters and modifying them, less and less of the rotation ingredient remained. Rotated elements looked promising when I was focusing on individual letters, but once they were repeated in a line of text, they created a sense of instability:

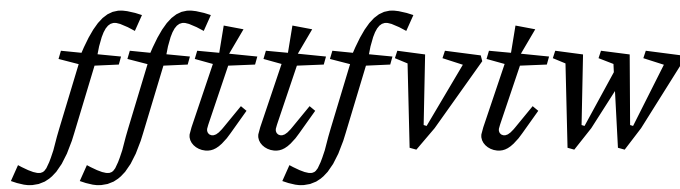


Fig. 44  
Repeated rotated  
elements

And when I started adding uppercase letters, in which rotated elements would generally look too funky<sup>5</sup>, the rotated elements from the lowercase started clashing with the non-rotated elements from the uppercase:

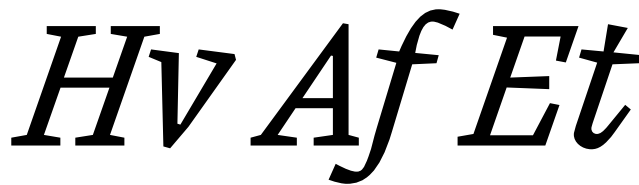


Fig. 45  
Straight elements  
(uppercase) vs.  
rotated elements  
(lowercase)

5

Consider a slanted *H* with a diagonal crossbar, for example; most people would probably find such an *H* distracting.

When I tried very subtle touches of rotation in the uppercase, it added complexity which did not match the roman nor my stylistic intentions:

Fig. 46  
Subtle touches of  
rotation in the uppercase  
(serifs and horizontal  
strokes)



In the final version, it is mainly the diagonally-trimmed stems that still exhibit a clear influence of rotation, and maybe also the tail of the *g*. Horizontal strokes, that had become diagonal during the rotation phase, now became horizontal again, creating patterns of horizontal lines in text blocks, similarly to the roman. Later, when I would draw italic figures, I made the horizontal parts of the 2, the 4, and the 7 diagonal, which can be traced back to rotation:

Fig. 47  
Final version



I believe giving up on the rotation ingredient was the right thing to do, in the case of *Ginegar*, but I am still intrigued by this idea, and I would like to revisit it someday. Thanks to *Ginegar*, I have gained a better understanding of the problems involved.

The italic uppercase letters are, for the most part, an optically-corrected slanted version of their roman counterparts. Their serifs (like the few serifs present in the lowercase letters) are trimmed vertically rather than according to the slant angle; I felt this helped counterbalancing the high slant angle and contributed to the modern and mechanical look and feel I was trying to achieve.

Fig. 48  
Text Italic, current  
version

*ABCDEFGHIJK*  
*LMNOPQRSTU*  
*VWXYZabcdef*  
*ghijklmnopqrs*  
*tuvwxyz0123*  
*456789.,*

## Text Ultra

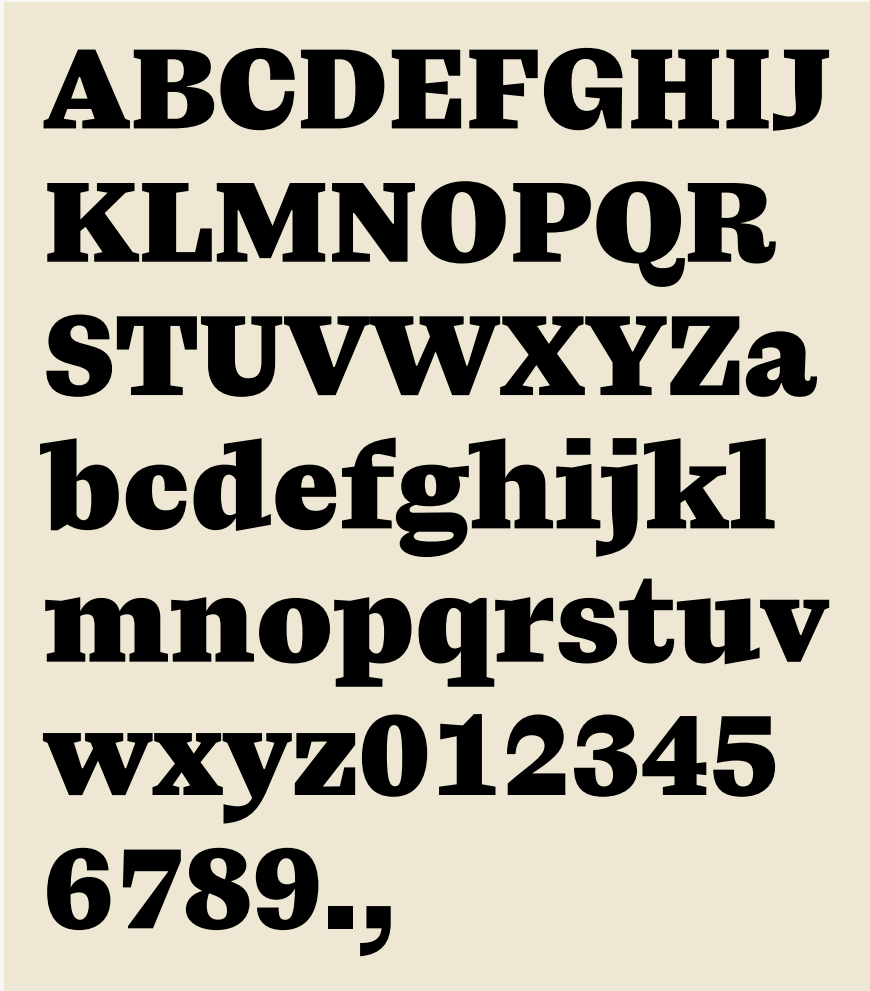
I started working on the text ultra master after I had the regular master mostly figured out, and it was a pretty straight-forward process with little big decision making involved. I think the most interesting decision I made was to make the left half of the *a* and the right half of the *c* and the *e* narrower than full width. My motivation was that I wanted to eliminate the big inner white space that would have been created if I had made them full width, but I think they also look more elegant this way and produce a more interesting texture:

Fig. 49  
Full-width- (blue)  
vs. narrower strokes  
(yellow)



As mentioned, the heaviest instance, Text Black, is slightly lighter than the master.

Fig. 50  
Text Black, current  
version



## Display

As explained before, *Ginegar* had not started with a specific brief, and it was only halfway through the project that, with the encouragement of the teachers, I started considering and labeling *Ginegar* as an editorial typeface.

Once *Ginegar* had been labeled as an editorial typeface, it was natural to add to the menu styles for headers.

The first attempt was a version of Text Regular with thins made thinner. What bothered me the most about the result was that horizontal serifs became very thin, but horizontal curves remained thick, and that created imbalanced mass distribution. For instance, the *m* had its mass concentrated near the top, while the *u* had its mass concentrated near the bottom. I tried to solve this problem and balance the mass in two opposite ways: first, by adding mass to the serifs, and second, by taking mass away from the horizontal curves. The first version did not look so displayish anymore, and the second one lost much character and was not very convincing in general:

Fig. 51  
First attempt (top),  
heavier serifs (middle),  
and lighter horizontals



Hamburg Festival  
Hamburg Festival  
Hamburg Festival

I realized it would be tricky to produce a high-contrast version of Text Regular, because of the way its mass is distributed, and considered other directions. One of those directions was a “slabified” Text Regular, with long, pronounced rectangular horizontal serifs that closed the already-closed shapes even further.

The result was aesthetically pleasing and interesting, I think, and probably deserved further exploration, but, as one of the teachers said, it was more like a caption style than a display:

Fig. 52  
Two “slabified” versions



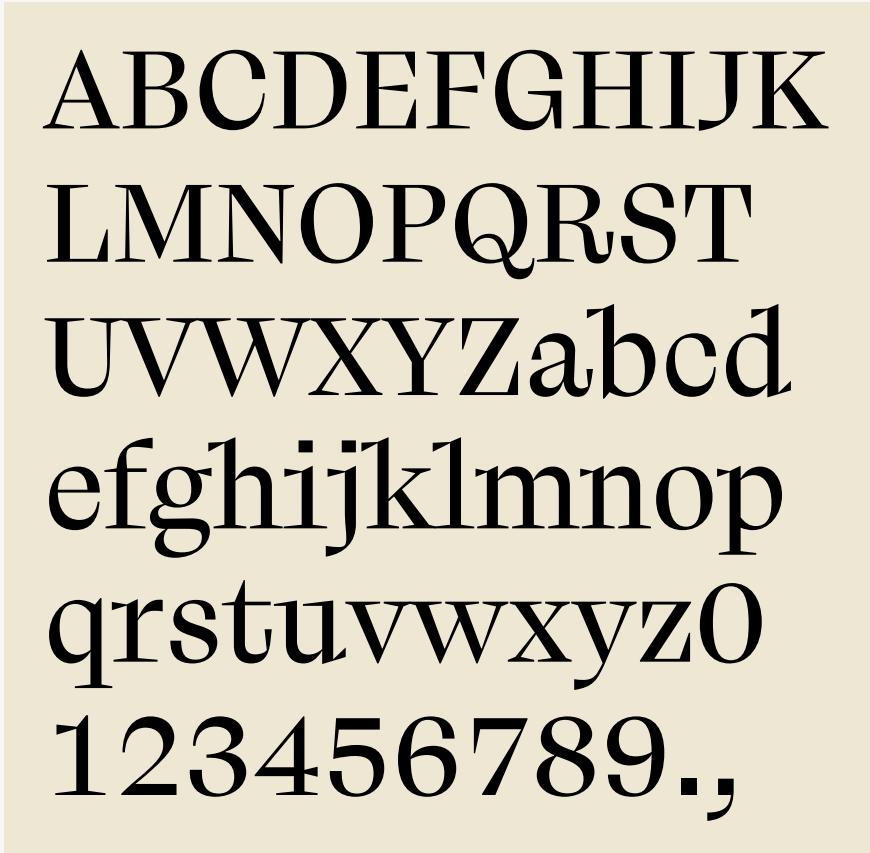
Hamburg Festival  
Hamburg Festival

At this point, in a pure coincidence, I noticed a celebrated typeface by a highly-regarded type designer (which I am not going to name), which seemed to suffer from the same problem of imbalanced mass distribution like my first attempt. That made me question if that was a problem at all, and I came to the conclusion it was not necessarily a problem, after all, especially since it was a display style. In long blocks of text that imbalance would probably cause trouble, but an even pattern is much less important when it comes to display use. As a result I went back to my original attempt, adjusted it to mitigate the problem of imbalanced mass distribution a little, and imported some ideas I liked from the caption-like attempt. I liked the result (or maybe just got used to that imbalance in mass distribution by then), and I moved on to complete the basic glyph set.

Display Regular has longer extenders than Text Regular, and some letters have incompatible new shapes (or sometimes old shapes; for example, the extravagant tail of the *a* made a comeback). By means of interpolation, I have also created a head and a subhead styles. Those two styles are perfectly compatible with Text Regular and have the same vertical dimensions; whenever Display Regular departs from Text Regular, there is a second, compatible version of the same character which is used for the interpolation.



Fig. 53  
Display Regular, current  
version



## Spacing and Kerning

At the time of writing this, spacing throughout the family is generally okay, but I have not had enough time to test and fine-tune it properly, and it could surely be improved.

They say you should not start the kerning phase before spacing is complete, which is not the case with *Ginegar*. However, given that I was working on it as a school project, I decided to do some kerning anyway, so that I could use the opportunity and get help from my teachers in case I ran into problems or had questions.

Kerning is a tedious process. If done methodologically, it involves going over hundreds or even thousands of pairs of glyphs. Class-based kerning does not save that much time, as two glyphs must have very similar profiles to go in the same class — and that is rare.

When I was preparing for the kerning process, feeling a little despair at the thought of carefully reviewing hundreds or thousands of pairs of glyphs, two memories came to my mind:

The first one was how, a few years back, I had been struck by the fact that metal types, especially at text sizes, did not have kerning at all. That meant to me that kerning, however important, was not truly essential.

The second memory was that of the concept of “good-enough parenting.” Before I started EsadType I studied medicine, and there I was introduced to that concept, derived from the work of [D. W. Winnicott](#), which plays a major role in the way doctors and psychologists presently understand the role of parents in providing their children with a healthy environment as they grow up. In short, what it means is that a parent needs to be just good enough, as opposed to “perfect”<sup>6</sup>. The notion of “good enough” stuck in my mind and popped up as I was considering how to approach the task of kerning.

6

My understanding is that many experts consider “good enough” parenting to be not just “good enough”, but actually better, i.e., healthier for the child, than “perfect” parenting. But that is for another time...

My idea was that instead of aiming at perfect kerning, with a separate, near-optimal value for each individual pair, maybe I could “get away” with rough kerning that would turn out to be “good enough.” Type design is much about making compromises, some of which are inevitable, so why not try and make a compromise between the end user, who wishes for the best possible outcome from the type-design process, and the designer, who wants to limit the time and effort they put in it, and see how it plays out? I did not know if that was a good idea, but after all I was in school, which provided the perfect opportunity to try and possibly fail.

There was one problem, though. On the scale of “no kerning at all” to “the perfect kerning”, how would I know where “good enough” was located? Indeed, I could not really know. So I came up with the idea of getting there iteratively, by starting with a very coarse kerning and gradually refining it until it looked good enough.

I applied that idea to Text Regular.

I started with very few kerning classes, which represented very coarse profiles. For example, all the following letters went into the same left kerning class, as their right side had, very roughly speaking, a profile of a forward (south-west to north-east) diagonal:

Fig. 54  
Forward-diagonal right  
profile



For each side I had four kerning classes (eight in total) of uppercase letters: forward diagonal, backward diagonal, convex, and concave.

Fig. 55  
Four left kerning classes



Obviously, I did not expect *V-A* and *F-J*, for instance, to require the same amount of kerning, but both needed negative kerning, and I was hoping there could be found some negative value that would at least improve both of them, as well as all other pairs from their respective classes, at the same time.

And that turned out to be the case. After just one round, with those very few classes, and after looking at very few pairs of letters in order to determine the kerning amount for each of the very few pairs of classes, there was already a significant improvement. Almost no spacing problem was solved completely, but almost all spacing problems became less severe, often much so.

According to the model, in each round one should take existing classes, split them into subclasses (according to a finer classification of their members into profiles), and then adjust kerning values for each subclass separately. But each subclass should start with kerning values inherited from its parent class from the previous rounds, or all the work from previous rounds would go to waste.

In the model that is no problem at all, but in practice, none of the type-design tools I was familiar with and had access to offered splitting kerning classes while retaining their kerning values (or anything that could be used for mimicking that).

Luckily, most type-design tools are scripting-friendly, and it was easy to write a script that did that.

As soon as I had my script ready, I started splitting classes and refining the kerning. Very soon I reached a point where the kerning seemed to me closer to the

perfect end of the spectrum than to no kerning at all. I stopped there.

What counts as “good enough” is debatable, and I am not claiming the current kerning of Text Regular is commercial level (even spacing is not), but as a pilot, or proof of concept, I think that was a successful experiment. I am hoping to explore this approach further in the future, and turn my script into a plugin for ease of use.

While on this topic, I should probably add that all other masters (except for Text Regular) currently have a very limited kerning, aimed at solving only the most severe problems such as *A-V*.

## Future Plans

Other than the obvious (completing the current glyph set, adding small caps, improving spacing, adding kerning where missing), there is the issue of the design space and the structure of the family.

As a first step, it would make sense to complete the current design space by adding a display ultra master and the two missing display italic masters. Multiple-master technology is based on the idea of moving points (the nodes that dictate the shape of the contour of a glyph) from their default location according to the “deltas” defined by other masters. If Text Regular is the default master, and Text Ultra and Display Regular define such “deltas” (which is actually the case), then it is possible to add both deltas simultaneously to obtain a display black instance. That instance clearly suffers from many problems and needs work, but as a prototype for a display black master it is a good starting point:

Fig. 56  
Generated Display Black



It is worth comparing this generated display black instance with a prototype of a display ultra master I sketched along with my early sketches of the display regular master:

Fig. 57  
Display Ultra sketch

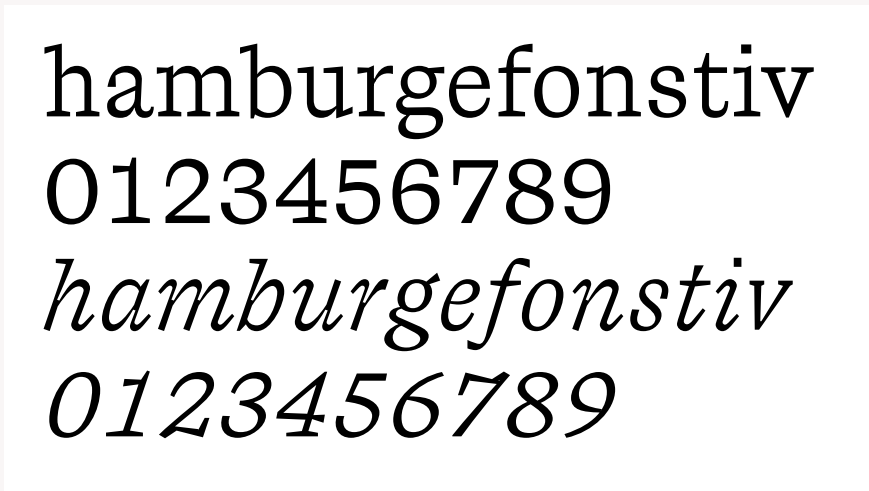


**Hamburg  
Festival**

While the generated instance suffers from technical problems, I think it conveys the spirit of my family better than the early sketch.

The next step could, and maybe should, be adding a lighter weight; currently the lightest weight, the regular, is on the heavy side, which means a light weight would be even more useful than usual. Extrapolated lights already do not look so bad, and so producing proper lights should not take much effort:

Fig. 58  
Extrapolated Text Light  
(top) and Text Light  
Italic



hamburgetonstiv  
0123456789  
*hamburgetonstiv*  
*0123456789*

Another direction, which reflects a personal interest of mine, is a caption style. Beside serving a typographic need, caption styles tend to have a certain aesthetics which I am fond of, much like monospace typefaces. While I still have not officially explored this direction, my attempts at drawing a monospace member of the family, as well as some of the directions I explored when working

on the display cut (those slab-serif-like prototypes), look like a good starting point for a caption style.

Finally, I am hoping to add support for other scripts as well. Naturally, I had originally expected to add support for Hebrew. I contacted [Michal Sahar](#), one of the most prominent Israeli type designers and my undisputed childhood hero, and asked if she would be willing to mentor me on the Hebrew side of the project. Eventually, due to the covid-19 pandemic and its consequences, I could not dedicate time to designing a Hebrew version of *Ginegar* myself. But at some point Michal suggested she would do that — and at the time of writing this, her Hebrew *Ginegar* has made so much progress, that I am not sure which is in a more advanced stage, my Latin or her Hebrew.

What started as a school project has developed into a collaboration with Michal Sahar. Sometimes life is just amazing.



## Acknowledgments

EsadType has been a bumpy road for me. First there was the starting over of my final project after four months, then there was the covid-19 pandemic with all the stress and disruption that came along with it and the switch to long-distance learning that followed, and finally I got infected with covid-19 and suffered from post-covid fatigue; eventually I got better, but for a couple of months I could not make any real progress. There were times when I was not sure if I would be able to get to the finish line.

I needed much support and understanding from the teachers and the school staff, and I received all the support and understanding I could ever hoped for, and then some.

I am so privileged to have been given the opportunity to study at EsadType, and to be taught, guided, and supported by a group of people I could not appreciate more, professionally and personally.

I am forever grateful to the following individuals:

The teachers: Sébastien Morlighem (course coordinator), Frederik Berlaen, Patrick Doan, Roxane Gataud, Jean-Baptiste Levée, and Mathieu Reguer.

The school staff: Barbara Dennys (school director), Thomas Bouville, Catherine Cresson Rondon, Arnaud Fudala, Peggy Letuppe, and Alisa Nowak.

Workshop tutors: Frank Griefshammer, Hélène Marian, and Mike Sabbagh.

My classmates: Salomi Desai, Max Esnée, Léo Gaullier, Léo Guibert, Sirin Gunkloy, Kyeongsik Kim, Emma Marichal, Élodie Tourbier, and Samar Zureik.

EsadType Alumni: Florian Fecher and Emilios Theofanous.

Further feedback and moral support: Michal Sahar.

And finally, a very special thank you to my cat Yotam,  
whose feedback has been most valuable:

