



**FAT FACE** is the name given to the inflated, hyperbold type style introduced in the early nineteenth century. These faces exaggerated the polarization of letters into thick and thin components seen in the typographic forms of Bodoni and Didot.

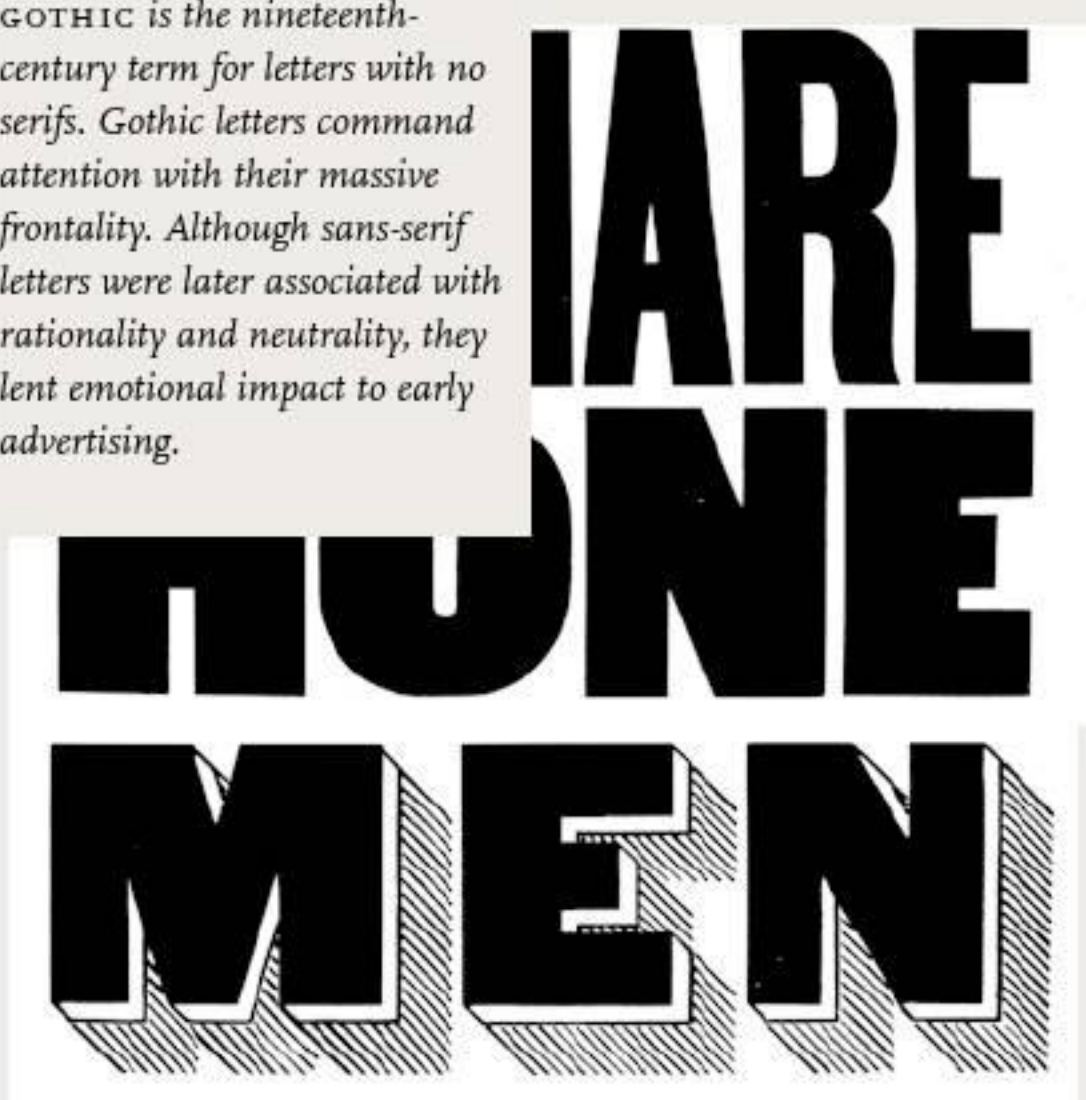


**EXTRA CONDENSED** typefaces are designed to fit in narrow spaces. Nineteenth-century advertisements often combined fonts of varying style and proportion on a single page. These bombastic mixtures were typically aligned, however, in static, centered compositions.



**EGYPTIAN, or slab,** typefaces transformed the serif from a refined detail to a load-bearing slab. As an independent architectural component, the slab serif asserts its own weight and mass. Introduced in 1806, this style was quickly denounced by purists as "a typographical monstrosity."

**GOthic** is the nineteenth-century term for letters with no serifs. Gothic letters command attention with their massive frontality. Although sans-serif letters were later associated with rationality and neutrality, they lent emotional impact to early advertising.

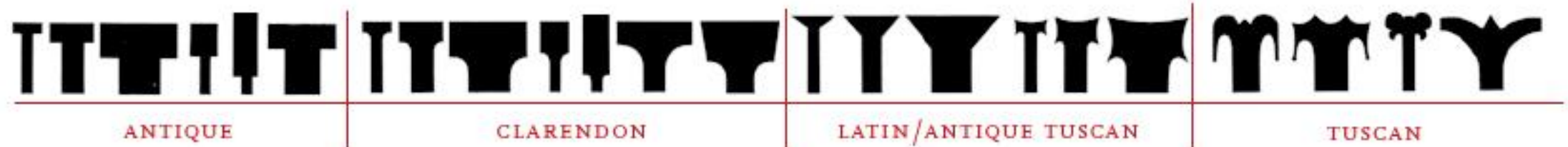


**My person was hideous, my stature gigantic. What did this mean? Who was I? What was I?...  
Accursed creator! Why did you create a monster so hideous that even you turned away from  
me in disgust? — MARY SHELLEY, *Frankenstein*, 1831**

## MONSTER FONTS

Although Bodoni and Didot fueled their designs with the calligraphic practices of their time, they created forms that collided with typographic tradition and unleashed a strange new world, where the structural attributes of the letter—serif and stem, thick and thin strokes, vertical and horizontal stress—would be subject to bizarre experiments. In search of a beauty both rational and sublime, Bodoni and Didot had created a monster: an abstract and dehumanized approach to the design of letters.

With the rise of industrialization and mass consumption in the nineteenth century came the explosion of advertising, a new form of communication demanding new kinds of typography. Type designers created big, bold faces by embellishing and engorging the body parts of classical letters. Fonts of astonishing height, width, and depth appeared—expanded, contracted, shadowed, inlined, fattened, faceted, and floriated. Serifs abandoned their role as finishing details to become independent architectural structures, and the vertical stress of traditional letters canted in new directions.

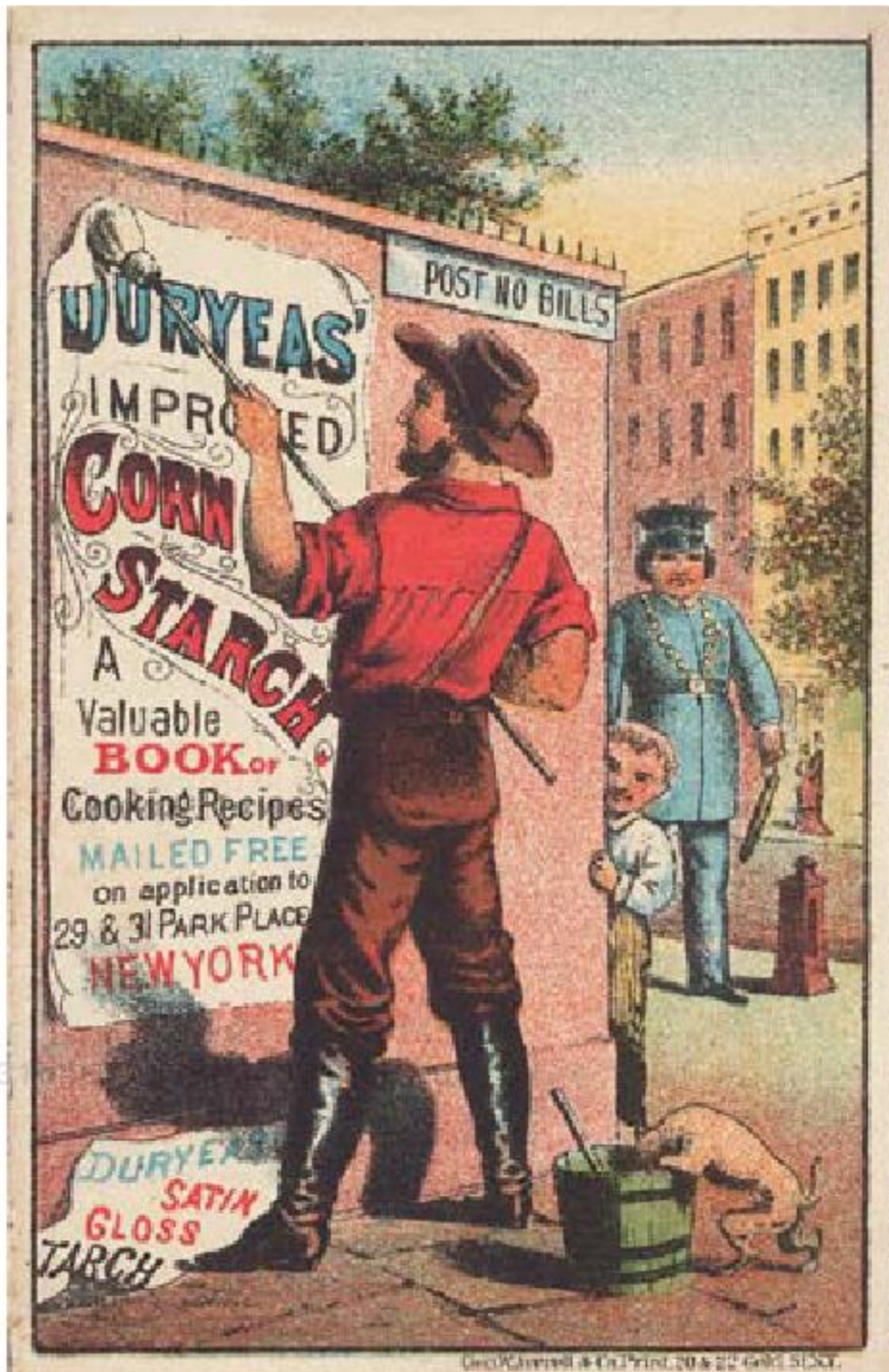


Type historian Rob Roy Kelly studied the mechanized design strategies that served to generate a spectacular variety of display letters in the nineteenth century. This diagram shows how the basic square serif form—called Egyptian or slab—was cut, pinched, pulled, and curled to spawn new species of ornament. Serifs were transformed from calligraphic end-strokes into independent geometric elements that could be freely adjusted.

Lead, the material for casting metal type, is too soft to hold its shape at large sizes under the pressure of the printing press. In contrast, type cut from wood can be printed at gigantic scales. The introduction of the combined pantograph and router in 1834 revolutionized wood-type manufacture. The pantograph is a tracing device that, when linked to a router for carving, allows a parent drawing to spawn variants with different proportions, weights, and decorative excrescences.

This mechanized design approach treated the alphabet as a flexible system divorced from calligraphy. The search for archetypal, perfectly proportioned letterforms gave way to a new view of typography as an elastic system of formal features (weight, stress, stem, crossbars, serifs, angles, curves, ascenders, descenders). The relationships among letters in a typeface became more important than the identity of individual characters.

For extensive analysis and examples of decorated types, see Rob Roy Kelly, *American Wood Type: 1828–1900, Notes on the Evolution of Decorated and Large Letters* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969). See also Ruari McLean, “An Examination of Egyptians,” in *Texts on Type: Critical Writings on Typography*, ed. Steven Heller and Philip B. Meggs (New York: Allworth Press, 2001), 70–76.



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**DURYEAS' IMPORTED CORNSTARCH (LEFT)**  
Lithographic trade card, 1878. The rise of advertising in the nineteenth century stimulated demand for large-scale letters that could command attention in urban space. Here, a man is shown posting a bill in flagrant disregard for the law, while a police officer approaches from around the corner.

**FULL MOON (RIGHT)**  
Letterpress poster, 1875. A dozen different fonts are used in this poster for a steamship cruise. A size and style of typeface has been chosen for each line to maximize the scale of the letters in the space allotted. Although the typefaces are exotic, the centered layout is as static and conventional as a tombstone.

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**Printing, having found in the book a refuge in which to lead an autonomous existence, is pitilessly dragged out into the street by advertisements....Locust swarms of print, which already eclipse the sun of what is taken for intellect in city dwellers, will grow thicker with each succeeding year. — WALTER BENJAMIN, 1925**

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# FULL MOON.

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## ST. MICHAEL'S TEMPERANCE BAND!

Prof. V. Yeager, Leader, will give a

### GRAND

### MOONLIGHT

## EXCURSION

On the Steamer

# BELLE!

To Osbrook and Watch Hill,  
On Saturday Evening, July 17th,

Leaving Wharf at 7½ o'clock. Returning to Westerly  
at 10½ o'clock. Kenneth will be at Osbrook.

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**TICKETS, - FORTY CENTS.**

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G. B. & J. H. Utter, Steam Printers, Westerly, R. I.