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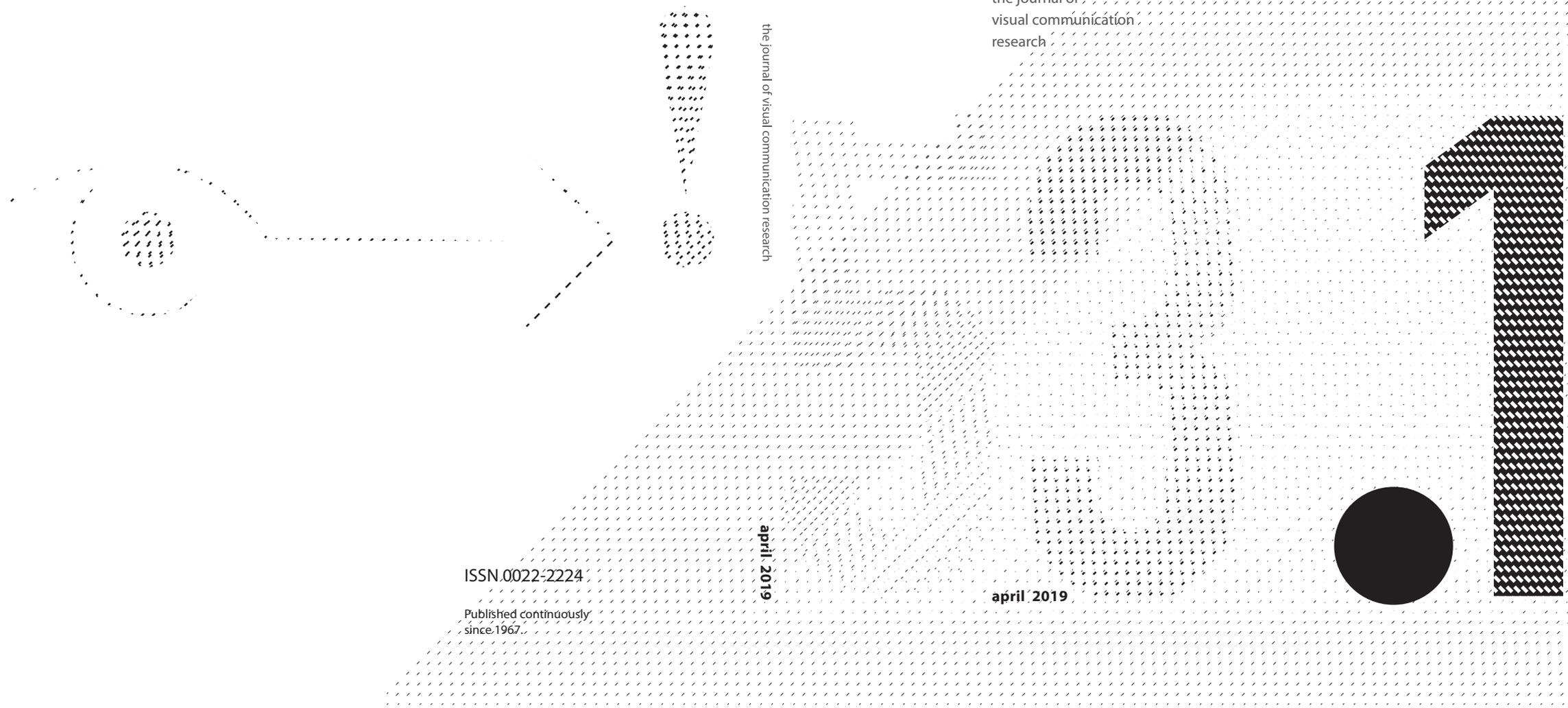
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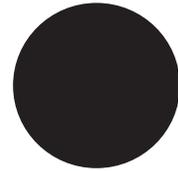
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Visible Language



**the journal of
visual communication
research**

Special Issue:
Histories of
Visual Communication Design

April 2019

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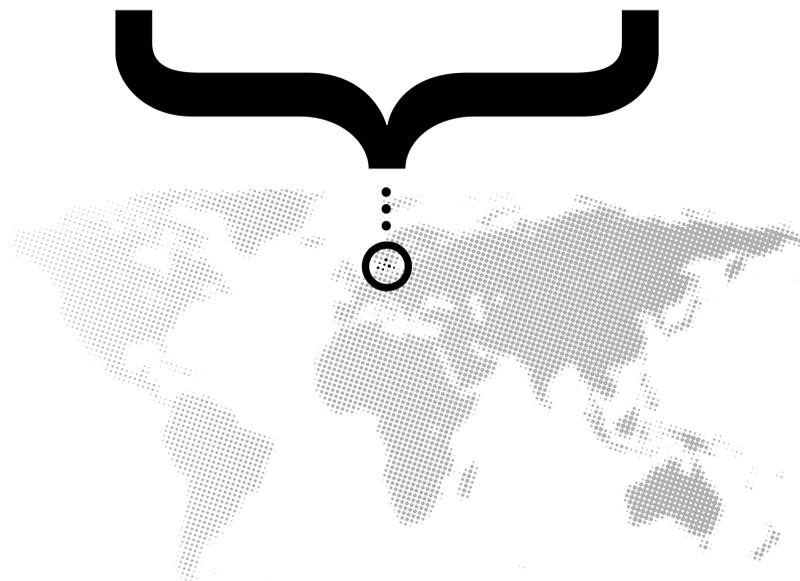
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Lower case **New Typography**
in the flatlands: and
orthographic
reform in a
Danish printing
calendar

case

Små bogstaver
på flad mark: ny
typografi og
ortografisk reform
i en dansk
bogtrykkerårbog



Trond Klevgaard

The orthographic reform program known as *kleinschreibung*, or writing small, was an integral part of the New Typography of the 1920s and 30s. Commonly associated with institutions like the Bauhaus, or groups like the *ring 'neue werbegestalter'* (circle 'new advertising designers'), New Typography was also taken up in the work of numerous printers and compositors across Germany and beyond. In Denmark, where common nouns were capitalized then as they still are in German, one proponent of New Typography amongst printers was *Typografernes fagtekniske Samvirke* (The Compositors' trade-technical Cooperative). In 1934 this educational society published an annual titled *Typografisk årbog 1935* (Typographic yearbook 1935) where it set out how it had chosen to engage with New Typography and *kleinschreibung* by adapting them to Danish circumstances. This article takes *Typografisk årbog 1935* as the starting point for an investigation of the similarities and differences between the German and Danish contexts by tracing their histories of orthographic reform and by linking these to New Typography as practiced in the two countries.

Keywords:

New Typography,
printing,
orthographic reform,
capitalization,
Denmark

Introduction

Kleinschreibung, or writing small, is the German term for an orthographic reform program associated with the New Typography of the 1920s and 30s. As its name suggests, it proposed using lower case letters only and abolishing capital letters altogether. In 1988 the London design group 8vo published an issue of their journal *Octavo* on the topic, positioning *kleinschreibung* as “a microcosm of a larger debate, one which raises pertinent questions about the potential of design to be part of a force for positive social change” (Johnston et al 1988, unpaginated). The following takes a similar stance. The Danish printing calendar *Typografisk årbog 1935* (Typographic yearbook 1935) (1934) is used as a point of departure for a discussion of how Danish printers engaged with the issue of lower case. This discussion can be seen as a microcosm of the larger debate around New Typography in Scandinavia. It also provides a comparison with German developments. In literature on New Typography, *kleinschreibung* is often described as more relevant in German than other languages. For instance, Robin Kinross has claimed it was more of a “live issue” in the German-speaking countries, because capitalizing common nouns was a distinctive visual feature of that language, having been formally instituted in the 18th Century (2006, xxxi). However, common nouns were also capitalized in Danish up until 1948 when a reform was passed on the initiative of Hartvig Frisch (1893–1950), Minister of Education at the time. So, although Denmark has been peripheral to the mainstream narrative of New Typography, it provides a rare comparative instance when it comes to *kleinschreibung*.

Histories of graphic design, like those of Eskilson (2012), Drucker and McVarish (2016), Hollis (2001), Jubert (2006) and Meggs (2016) – as well as more specialised accounts like Herbert Spencer’s classic *Pioneers of Modern Typography* (1969) – typically portray New Typography as a revolutionary approach to print design spearheaded by a small group of avant-garde artist-designers working in the Netherlands, Central and Eastern Europe. They agree that the young typographer Jan Tschichold (1902–74) codified the writings and formal experiments of these artist-designers into ten workable principles which could be used by ordinary printers and compositors. Tschichold’s principles were published in a 1925 special issue of the German printing journal *Typographische Mitteilungen* (Typographic News) entitled ‘*elementare typographie*’, or ‘elemental typography.’ Briefly summarised, these expressed a preference for photography over illustration, for sans serif over serif or blackletter type, for the active use of the unprinted white paper surface in composition and the use of asymmetric type arrangements. They also called for upper case letters to be abandoned in favor of lower case ones, which were to be used exclusively. Over the following years, New Typography was debated fiercely in printing circles, not only in the German-speaking countries, but also in Scandinavia and further afield. Julia Meer’s book *Neuer Blick auf die Neue Typographie* (A New View of New Typography) (2015) argues that German printers did not merely accept or reject New Typography but domesticated it to suit their needs and preferences. As my own research has established, this process also took place in Scandina-

via. Printers and compositors in Denmark, Norway and Sweden modified New Typography by proposing alternatives to photomontage or sans serif type, for instance. In the case of *Typografisk årbog 1935*, Tschichold’s call for *kleinschreibung* was modified by adopting a more moderate proposal for orthographic reform proposed by Danmarks Lærerforening (Denmark’s Association of Teachers). In order to set up a comparison between the exclusive use of lower case in Germany and Denmark, the first section of this article provides a brief overview of *kleinschreibung*’s relationship to New Typography in Germany. The second and third sections discuss *Typografisk årbog 1935* in the context of the moderate Danish program of orthographic reform, and in the context of the absolute *kleinschreibung* of Danish artists and poets, respectively. In Denmark, as elsewhere, lower case was also used commercially to signal a fashionable modernity. Discussing the use of case as part of a wider set of orthographic measures, particularly the proposed new sign “å”, also serves to set up a conclusion where the degree to which different actors were expressing genuine commitment to reform or were simply following typographic fashion is unpicked.

Lower case and New Typography in Germany

Jan Tschichold’s ten principles of elemental typography made the exclusive use of lower case letters an integral part of New Typography. Tschichold’s views were in turn informed by Walter Porstmann’s *Sprache und Schrift* (Speech and Writing) (1920). This book proposed a radical program of orthographic reform which included the abolition of all upper-case letters alongside a number of other measures intended to create a more phonetically accurate written form of German. Written from the point of view of the engineer, “the new kind of man” Tschichold would later idealize in his 1928 book *Die neue Typographie* (The new Typography) (2006, 11), Porstmann’s proposal was grounded in concerns of efficiency. It was therefore a perfect match for a typographic style which insisted that “communication must appear in the briefest, simplest, most urgent form” (Tschichold 2007, 311). As Tschichold explained in ‘*elementare typographie*’, shifting from conventional orthography to *kleinschreibung* for rhetorical effect:

— An extraordinary economy could be achieved through the exclusive use of small letters – the elimination of all capital letters; a form of writing and setting that is recommended as a new script by all innovators in the field. See the book *Sprache und Schrift* by Dr Porstmann (Beuth-Verlag, Berlin SW19, Beuthstraße 8. Price: 5.25 marks). our script loses nothing through writing in small letters only – but becomes, rather, more legible, easier to learn, essentially more economical. for one sound, for example ‘a’, why two signs: A and a? one sound, one sign. why two alphabets for one word, why double the quantity of signs when a half achieves the same? (Tschichold 2007, 311)

The exclusive use of lower case was subsequently taken up in the typographic work of other avant-garde artists, notably at the Bauhaus where *kleinschreibung* was adopted officially towards the end of 1925 as part of the school's reorientation from craft and Expressionism to a more industrially oriented Constructivist outlook. A potent symbol of this reorientation was the school's new letterhead. Designed by Herbert Bayer (1900–85) in lower case sans serif, it contained a statement explaining the benefits of using *kleinschreibung* complete with reference to Porstmann's book. In later revisions the reference to *Sprache und Schrift* was dropped and the statement condensed down to the succinct: "we write everything small, because it saves us time" (Kinross 1988).

However, calls for orthographic reform had deeper roots in Germany than *Sprache und Schrift*. Tschichold acknowledged this in *Die neue Typographie*, where he briefly mentioned the work of Jacob Grimm (1795–1863). Grimm's contribution has been explored in more detail by Robin Kinross, whose article 'Large and Small Letters' (1988) discusses the orthography and typography of *Deutsche Grammatik* (German Grammar) and *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (German Dictionary) (1854). Whilst the first edition of *Deutsche Grammatik* (1819) was set in blackletter and conventional German orthography, the second (1822) was set in a *gemäßigte*, or moderate, *kleinschreibung*. In other words, the second edition of *Deutsche Grammatik* did not omit capital letters altogether but limited their use to the first letters of proper nouns and words at beginning a sentence – just as is done in English today. The *Deutsches Wörterbuch* went further. Although the capitalisation of proper nouns was retained, the only other words capitalised were those beginning each paragraph. Sentences within a paragraph were only separated by punctuation and an increased word space. However, it was not only the orthography which set the second edition of *Deutsche Grammatik* apart from the first. It was also set in roman rather than blackletter type. This was significant, as Grimm thought orthography and typography to be inextricably linked. As he explained in the *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, he suspected it was the German use of blackletter which had led to the capitalisation of common nouns in the first place. Capitalisation and blackletter stemmed from the same fondness for ornamentation, and Grimm thought it telling that the idea of "such a meaningless encrustation of nouns" had simply not occurred to peoples using latin script (Grimm 1854, LIV).¹ As Adolf Loos later summarised in the afterword to *Ins leere gesprochen* (Spoken into the void), the move toward uncapitalized common nouns was for Grimm the "logical consequence of using roman letters" (1921, 165). To this it should be added that Grimm had a particular dislike for blackletter. He found it visually offensive and considered it to have a number of practical disadvantages. Because blackletter and roman were used in parallel, in printed and written forms, in upper and lower case, schoolchildren had to learn eight signs for each sound. The parallel use of blackletter and roman meant German printers had to keep twice as many printing types as their Italian or French counterparts.

¹ This translation is my own, as are all other quotations from sources printed in German or Danish. When quoting from Tschichold's 'Elemental Typography' or *The New Typography* I have made use of Robin Kinross' and Ruari McLean's English-language translations.

Lastly, the use of blackletter limited the spread of German literature abroad as it was "repulsive to all foreigners" (Grimm 1854, LIII). These criticisms would later re-emerge in the debates around *kleinschreibung* during the 1920s and 30s.

Whilst *kleinschreibung* was quickly adopted at the Bauhaus following the publication of Tschichold's 'elementare typographie' special issue, debate continued in the German printing trade. A special issue of *Typographische Mitteilungen* on lower case, published in May 1931, was a notable contribution. Its articles rehearsed the by then familiar arguments of increased efficiency and simplified learning for schoolchildren and offered historical perspectives detailing the origins of capitalised nouns and Grimm's early intervention. It also included a reprint of Loos' afterword to *Ins leere gesprochen*. However, although Grimm was mentioned, only one contributor spoke up in favor of the reformist path set out in *Deutsche Grammatik*. The rest called for an absolute *kleinschreibung* as advocated by Porstmann, with upper case letters abolished altogether. This stance was reflected in the issue's design. All of it, including the reprint of Loos's afterword, was set entirely in lower case. Because Loos's original had appeared in the moderate *kleinschreibung* of Grimm's *Deutsche Grammatik*, this rather disingenuously positioned him as more radical in this question than he actually was. The use of lower case extended to the issue's ads, some of which had been specifically tailored to the occasion. For instance, the back cover announced the publication of Helmut Wagner's *sport und arbeitersport* (sport and working-class sport) (1931) on the progressive Büchergilde Gutenberg (The Gutenberg Books Guild) publishing house under the heading "a book in lower case." However, it soon became clear that the majority of *Typographische Mitteilungen's* readers did not support absolute *kleinschreibung*. Later that year they were asked which of the following statements they agreed with:

- I am in favor of an orthographic reform which keeps capital letters for the beginning of sentences and for geographical and proper names only.
- I am in favor of absolute *kleinschreibung*
- I am in favor of keeping the current official orthography

The results showed that 53.4 percent of the 26,876 respondents favored the first option, with the remainder split evenly between a preference for absolute *kleinschreibung* and the status quo. As a consequence, the journal's publisher, the *Bildungsverband der deutschen Buchdrucker* (The Educational Union of German Printers), adopted a 10-point program of moderate orthographic reform (Grams 1931, 5, 13). Nevertheless, *Typographische Mitteilungen* continued to be set using official German orthography until it folded in 1933 when the *Bildungsverband* was integrated into the Nazi trade union *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (German Labor Front).

The annual in the context of orthographic reform

By the time *Typografisk årbog 1935* appeared in 1934, New Typography had established itself in Denmark after initially meeting significant opposition from traditionalist printers. The annual's publishers, *Typografernes fagtekniske Samvirke*, had played an important part in championing the new style. It was an educational society, founded in Copenhagen in 1931 by a group of printers, compositors and machine operators, which hosted talks and arranged evening courses on new tendencies in the trade, like New Typography and photomontage. It was officially affiliated with the German *Bildungsverband*, but the relationship was severed following the events of 1933. For *Typografernes fagtekniske Samvirke* the annual was a prestigious affair, intended as the first in a series rivaling counterparts like *Norsk boktrykk kalender* (Norwegian printing calendar) (1918–70), *Svensk grafisk årsbok* (Swedish graphic annual) (1924–72), and *Deutscher Buchdrucker-Kalender* (German Printers Calendar) (1904–33). Its foreword announced that *Typografernes fagtekniske Samvirke* considered itself closely associated with New Typography, although it would not be applied unthinkingly, but modified to suit their needs and preferences:

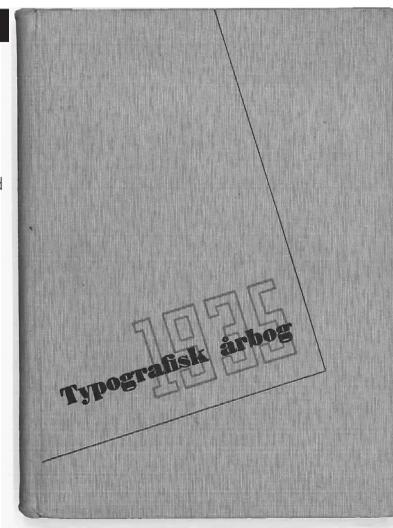
Just as *Typografernes fagtekniske Samvirke* itself is a new creation, a new face in our domestic graphic world, so the annual appears in a design which at several significant points departs from the familiar. Without going to extremes or letting principle reign supreme, we have sought to let the New Typography's views and rules shape the design of the book, as far as circumstances would allow (Redaktionsudvalget 1934, 8).

This stance informed the annual's design. The front cover (figure 1) featured an asymmetric composition and angled typography, two formal characteristics which clearly identified it as a piece of New Typography. However, a bold Bodoni was used in place of Tschichold's prescribed sans serif and a muted mustard yellow was chosen for the shirting instead of a pure primary shade. Other modifications were more difficult to spot. The harmonious proportions and colors of the composition were executed according to principles of "constructive typography." This was a variant of New Typography, developed by the cover's designer Viktor Peterson, which combined Tschichold's teachings with those expressed according to an older sensibility in Rudolf Engel-Hardt's (1886–1968) *Der goldene Schnitt im Buchgewerbe* (The golden Section in the Book Trade) (1919). Another modification, difficult to perceive to the foreign eye, but obvious to any Dane at the time, reflected the annual's stance towards *kleinschreibung*. As the title revealed, the annual was not set according to the official Danish orthography of the time. Instead of *Typografisk Aarvog 1935*, it read *Typografisk årbog 1935* with a lower case 'å'. This single little letter sent out a powerful signal, as detailed below.

The annual's foreword explained that *Typografernes fagtekniske Samvirke* not only aligned itself to New Typography, but to a moderate proposal for orthographic reform put forward by *Danmarks Lærerforening*. The

FIGURE 1.

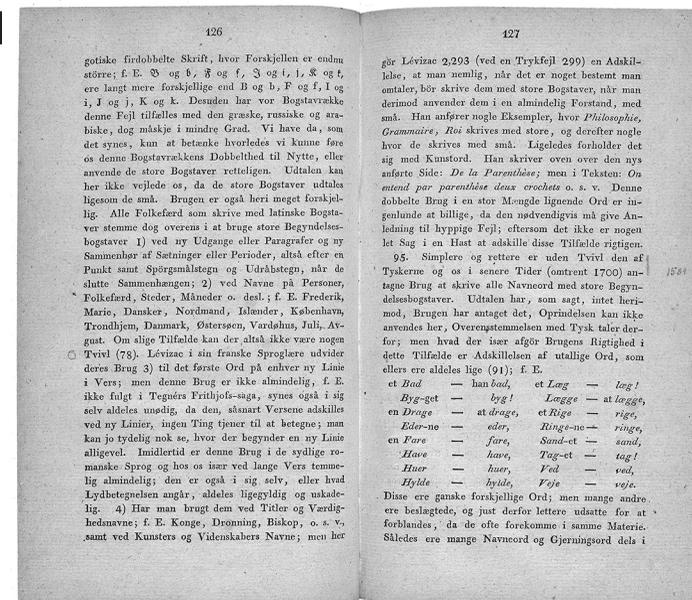
Viktor Peterson, cover design for *Typografisk årbog 1935* (1934), an example of 'constructive design' set according to the Rask-Petersenian reform proposed by Denmark's Association of Teachers. Photograph by the author. Item in the author's collection.



proposal's most high-profile measures were scrapping the capitalisation of common nouns and replacing the digraph 'aa' with 'å'. All the annual's articles were set according to the proposal. The exception was a survey asking four senior figures in Danish education the question: "Should our orthography be reformed — particularly with respect to the use of capital letters?" (Andersen et al 1934, 23). Here, each answer was set according to the respondent's specifications. The answers revealed there to be a long history of proposed orthographic reform in Denmark, as in Germany.

FIGURE 2

Spread from Rasmus Rask's *Forsøg til en videnskabelig dansk Retskrivningslære* (1826), featuring his preferred combination of roman letters and capitalised common nouns. Photograph by Fotografisk Atelier, Royal Danish Library.



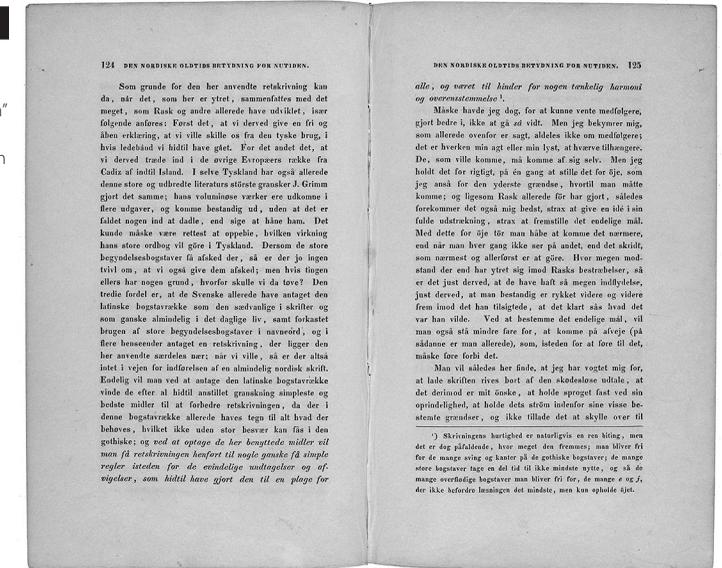
The proposal put forward by Denmark's Association of Teachers was only the latest in a series of repeated calls for a 'Rask-Petersenian' orthography to be implemented, named after philologists Rasmus Rask

(1787–1832) and N.M. Petersen (Niels Matthias, 1791–1862). The basis of this orthography was Rask's 1826 treatise *Forsøg til en videnskabelig dansk Retsskrivningslære* (Attempt at a Danish Orthography) (figure 2). There, Rask proposed several measures intended to bring written Danish closer to its spoken form. He thought the Danish alphabet should consist of thirty letters, ten vowels and twenty consonants, each corresponding to a sound in Danish speech. One of these vowels, present also in French words like *hors* and *encore*, was to be represented by the letter 'å'. This letter was already in use in Swedish and was more satisfactory than the digraph 'aa' commonly used in Denmark as it corresponded to the ideal of one sign per sound. Like his contemporary Grimm, Rask favored roman letters, and argued forcefully against blackletter and the associated gothic handwriting. Blackletter was known in Denmark as gothic, or simply as 'Danish Letters', but for Rask it was a "tasteless remnant of Medieval barbarity" of which there was nothing Danish but the name (1826, 88). Its only purpose was to act "as an expense for printers, as a torment and time-waster for the youth, who have to learn to read thrice and write twice, as a deterrence to foreigners who might want to learn to read our language, and as a partition separating us from other civilized peoples" (Rask 1826, 89). In contrast, roman letters were tasteful to look at, quick to write, and because of their widespread use elsewhere they had been used to print "almost everything learned and beautiful, great and immortal, produced by the human spirit" (Rask 1826, 90). This was reflected in his book's page design which naturally made use of roman type. Whilst abolishing capital letters would have allowed Rask to achieve his ideal of one sign per sound, he did not want to do away with upper case. He even supported the capitalisation of common nouns as they made clear the meaning of homographs like *Bad / bad* (bath / asked) and *Drage / drage* (dragon / pull), and because he thought the similarity with German favorable (Rask 1826, 127–8).

After Rask's death, his friend N.M. Petersen carried on working for his reforms, infusing them with a Scandinavianist purpose. Scandinavianism was a movement which emerged in the 1830s amongst students and academics at Lund University in Sweden and University of Copenhagen in Denmark where N.M. Petersen worked as professor of Nordic languages from 1845 onwards. It was based on the idea that Danes, Norwegians and Swedes make up a unique community due to similarities in language, culture and history, and that this community should be strengthened through political and cultural means. However, calls for political union would later dissipate after Sweden-Norway failed to provide the military support it promised Denmark in 1864's Second Schleswig War. It should also be mentioned that Scandinavianism was not only motivated by the prospect of a closer relation between Denmark, Norway and Sweden, but also by the relationships between these countries and their powerful neighbors. Swedish historian Bo Stråth has observed that Scandinavia is located in a "field of tension" between Germany and Russia, and that this caused political Scandinavianism in Denmark and Swedish to be defined as much by the threat posed to the two countries by their larger neighbors to the south and east respectively as by an interest in Scandinavian union for its own sake (1995,

FIGURE 3

Spread from N.M. Petersen's article "Den nordiske oldtidsbetydning for nutiden" (1845) with common nouns set in lower case. Photograph by Fotografisk Atelier, Royal Danish Library.



44). This dynamic was also evident in Danish Scandinavianists' attitude toward language. In his call-to-arms 'Den nordiske oldtids betydning for nutiden' (Nordic antiquity's importance for the present) (figure 3), Petersen wrote that Danish was already "half Germanified" and that the process could only be reversed by creating a common Scandinavian language (1845, 112).

In turn, this common language was positioned as a powerful tool to be used to foster greater unity amongst the Scandinavian peoples and ultimately a Scandinavian nation. N.M. Petersen's negative attitude towards German also led him to break with Rask over the question of capitalizing common nouns. In a passage intended to highlight the inconsistency in Rask's preference for roman type on internationalist grounds and capitalised common nouns for their similarity with German, he wrote:

The use of capital letters to distinguish nouns is no longer practiced by any civilised nation, except the Germans and us, and it does not serve [even] the smallest [purpose] in the world; it can therefore not be regarded as anything but an idiosyncrasy. We have received both it and the gothic letterform from Germany, and both testify to our dependence and attachment to German literature. It is time that we declare ourselves, that we let the world know, that we want to stop carrying Germany's train and autonomously enter the wider company of civilised European peoples (1845, 123).

Thus reconfigured, Rask-Petersenian orthography was guided not only by the phonetic principle of one sign for each sound, but also by an anti-German and pro-Scandinavianist sentiment. As noted in Peter Skautrup's history of lower case in Denmark (1948, 6ff), it quickly gained popularity amongst teachers and academics but remained controversial and those working for official recognition suffered repeated setbacks. The first of two notable episodes occurred in the wake of a Scandinavian

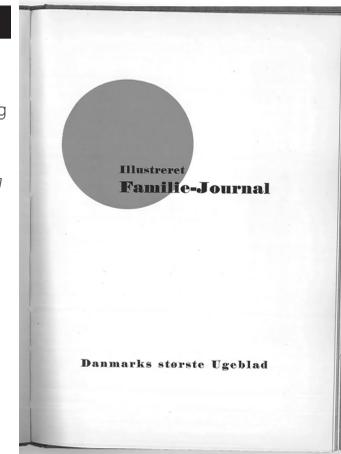
orthographic conference, which was held in Stockholm in 1869. The delegates agreed on a series of reforms for Danish which in addition to a number of spelling reforms included the use of roman type, lower case for common nouns, and 'å' rather than 'aa.' These measures were then incorporated into a new dictionary which was published the following year (Grundtvig 1870). However, the reforms failed to gain governmental approval in their entirety, and a new official dictionary with capitalised common nouns and 'aa' had to be issued two years later (Grundtvig 1872). The second notable episode occurred when the majority on a government committee set up in 1885 were in favour of scrapping the capitalisation of common nouns and introducing 'å,' but found their voices drowned out by the skilful public lobbying of conservative writer Ernst von der Recke (1848–1933). Nevertheless, Denmark's Association of Teachers continued to pursue the issue, and in 1920 a government committee was once again set up to look at the question of orthographic reform. However, this had yet to conclude by the time *Typografisk årbog 1935* was published. As mentioned in the introduction, teachers and printers alike would have to wait until after the Second World War for the proposed Rask-Petersenian reforms to finally be officially adopted.

The annual in the context of absolute *kleinschreibung*

Typografisk årbog 1935's cover, title page and articles reflected *Typografernes fagtekniske Samvirke's* support for the moderate Rask-Petersenian reforms proposed by Denmark's Association of Teachers. However, none of the annual's ads followed this proposal. The vast majority were set according to the official Danish orthography instead, with its capitalized common nouns and 'aa.' Still, they all reflected *Typografernes fagtekniske Samvirke's* alignment to New Typography. The design of the ads was credited to two young composers named Kaj R. Svendsen and E. Funder. As Viktor Peterson explained in an article on the annual's typography, Svendsen and Funder were restricted to the Bodoni used on the cover and the roman used for the body text (1935, 56). Nevertheless, many of the ads appeared to be more orthodox examples of New Typography than Peterson's cover in "constructive design." For instance, the ad for *Illustreret Familie-Journal* (Illustrated Family Journal) (Figure 4) was surely an example of communication in its "briefest, simplest, most urgent form" (Tschichold 2007, 311). A single bright orange disk was used to catch the reader's eye and draw attention to the journal's name. This was printed in black ink over two lines and placed asymmetrically on top of the circular device. The only other element was the claim "Denmark's largest weekly magazine," set matter-of-factly at the bottom of the page, separated from the two other elements by an expanse of white space. The orthography used for the remaining minority of ads varied. A handful capitalized every word used and one was set in upper case throughout. Two ads, for German

FIGURE 4

Kaj R. Svendsen and E. Funder, ad for *Illustreret Familie-Journal*, set according to the official Danish orthography of the time. Taken from *Typografisk årbog 1935* (1934). Photograph by the author. Item in the author's collection.



printing-ink manufacturer Hostmann-Steinberg and mutual aid society *Fremtiden* (The Future) (figure 5), were set in absolute *kleinschreibung*. Given the variety it can be assumed that the orthography of the copy had not been challenged, or if it had, then the advertisers had insisted on it being respected. It seems that *Typografernes fagtekniske Samvirke*, unlike the editors of *Typographische Mitteilungen's* special issue on lower case, were either unable to convince its advertisers to conform to their preferred orthographic approach or had made no such demands. Absolute *kleinschreibung* had a number of different connotations in Denmark in the 1930s, as detailed in the following.

FIGURE 5

Kaj R. Svendsen and E. Funder, ad for the mutual aid society *fremtiden*, set entirely in lower case. Taken from *Typografisk årbog 1935* (1934). Photograph by the author. Item in the author's collection.



The author Martin Petersen (1863–1935) had published a number of small books making exclusive use of lower case around the turn of the century. This was remembered by commentators with long memories (S-z 1934). Indeed, although the German poet Stefan George (1868–1933) began publishing works in lower case with 1890's *hymnen* (hymns), Martin Petersen's *kuede planter* (cowed plants) (1892) is the earliest novel to appear entirely without capitals anywhere to my knowledge. Over the following

years he produced a handful of plays and short stories, all of them set in lower case throughout. He also published *de små bogstaver* (lower case), a short theoretical text on orthography which called for “the radical abolishment of all capital letters” (Petersen 1894, 79). For Martin Petersen, the exclusive use of lower case served a social purpose. It was democratic, because learning one set of letters was easier than learning two, and that this in turn meant a broader segment of the population would be able to access knowledge and thereby able to work for the good of society. He dismissed the notion that capitalization of common nouns served to limit the misunderstanding of homographs, arguing that the meaning of such words would nearly always transpire from their context. Moreover, he took issue with the idea that capitalizing the first letter of each sentence served to separate one sentence from another. Instead, he thought they were separated punctuation alone. This, he claimed, was clearly visible from text set according to the official Danish orthography where capitalized words were placed inside as well as at the beginning of sentences. As long as the punctuation was clear enough, sentences set exclusively in lower case would not run into one another. The aforementioned *kuede planter* is therefore of particular interest for its use of periods, which were set slightly larger size than the rest of the text (Figure 6). Whilst this certainly made the periods more prominent, their ability to effectively separate sentences from one another was counteracted by the uneven word spacing of the poorly executed justified setting. Later works were of a higher typographic quality and had the periods replaced by Martin Petersen’s own custom-made punctuation. In 1899’s play *daen gryr!* (the day breaks!) he used a new mark which can be described as an en-dash centered above a period. For 1901’s *fotografier* (photographs) this mark was developed further, with the en-dash giving way to a semi-circle wrapping itself around the period from above. Whilst the density of the latter made it more visually prominent, both marks successfully used the same physical attribute of width to force sentences apart. The success was aided by improved typesetting which consistently rendered ‘sentence spaces’ (including the mark) twice the width of word spaces.

By the late 1920s absolute *kleinschreibung* was taken up in a commercial context where it was used to express a fashionable modern sensibility, as Tschichold disapprovingly noted in *Die neue Typographie* with reference to French *Vogue* (2006, 79-80). A well-known Danish example of commercial *kleinschreibung* was the milky soft drink *funkisko*, launched by Tuborg breweries in 1933. The name, which translates to “*funkis-cow*,” capitalized on the fashion for Functionalism, or *Funkis* as it was known colloquially, which had been raging all over Scandinavia since the Stockholm Exhibition 1930. This was reflected in form through the bottle’s slim design and its label composed entirely in lower case sans serif lettering. However, absolute *kleinschreibung* also became closely associated with Communism. Hartvig Frisch, a member of parliament for the Danish Social Democrats and leading figure on the left wing of the party, certainly expressed this view. In 1931 he published an article titled ‘Bogstavkommunisme’ (Letter-Communism) in his party’s newspaper *Socialdemokraten* (1993, 293):

FIGURE 6

Comparison showing the development of customised punctuation in Martin Petersen’s work. From top to bottom: *kuede planter* (1892), *daen gryr!* (1899) and *fotografier* (1901). Photograph of *kuede planter* by the author. Item in the author’s collection. *Daen gryr!* and *fotografier* digitised by Royal Danish Library. Items in the public domain.

fortonende sig med hvide og brogede seil mod den fjærne fastlandskyst, som tegner sig lige overfor i svage, utydelige linier lig omridsene på et landkort. ind over land fortsætter kysten sig med bugnende marker og bakkede enge, hist og her oplivede af stråtekkede bøndergårde og græssende kvæghjorde, over mod de mørke, flankerende bøgeskove i horisonten.

de ær, såm førerne har velled udtale de befrienne or, å a di kon egge har hafd lai-
lighed dærtel – nu ær de annerledes, da di
moderate ær usgadeligjord – dær fennes
någ bland refærmpartied ængelde, tvivlsamme
ægsisdænsær, sgønd je værgen vè nævne a
æller b, mæn hællere tie sdelle, får ialfal
egge a drage mai en prosæs på halsen –
mæn partied ær i de hele enid, å de sga
nu ta fad!

dugvådt er fælledens græs, og over den udstrakte plæne sprænger i hastig gallop de løsslupne, vælige heste, medens der af og til lyder et brøl fra det døsende hornkvæg. fjærnt på den afsides vei, der er skærmet af løvrige træer, ser man bøndernes vogne, der langsomt bevæger sig fremad. forrest der ager et hølæs afsted, og den kraftige bonde retter sin krogede ryg, og skygger forsigtigt med hånden op mod den stigende sol, der atter forynger naturen,

When I receive letters from fairly young people, I can see already from the envelope if they are convinced revolutionaries. Then they write not only nouns, but also names small, such as this:

hr. hartvig frisch,
socialdemokraten,
copenhagen.

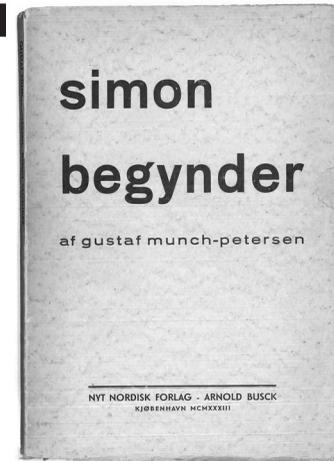
Frisch was a proponent of a moderate Rask-Petersenian reform who as Minister of Education would oversee its official implementation in 1948. As he explained in ‘Bogstavkommunisme,’ he thought the official orthography with its capitalized common nouns was an unnecessary nuisance which made learning to write difficult for large parts of the population. However, he did not think there was anything democratic or radical about absolute *kleinschreibung*. Instead, this was a misunderstanding based on blind faith, quite literally following Communism to the letter. He thought capital letters provided a useful way of emphasizing proper nouns and the

beginning of sentences, so banning them altogether made as much sense for him as banning italics which also provided a way of emphasizing words. That Frisch, as a prominent Social Democrat, set his own position up against a “revolutionary” absolute *kleinschreibung* raises the question of whether Rask-Petersenian reforms were considered Social Democratic. Indeed, F.C. Kaalund-Jørgensen (Frederik Christian, 1890–1962), one of the respondents to *Typografisk årbog 1935*'s survey, claimed the moderate proposal put forward by Denmark's Association of Teachers represented a Middle Way between “the current complicated and excessive use of upper case” and “the total abolition of everything called capitals” (Andersen et al. 1934, 40). Thereby, he anticipated the title of Marquis Childs' *Sweden: The Middle Way* (1936) – the best-selling book which described the Scandinavian Social Democracies as ideal societies that had managed to carve out a path between the extremes of Communism and Capitalism.

The figures most closely associated with the exclusive use of lower case in Denmark in the 1930s were painter Vilhelm Bjerke Petersen (1909–57) and poet Gustaf Munch-Petersen (1912–38). Although neither were party members, both identified as Communists. Bjerke Petersen had studied at the Bauhaus between 1930 and 1931 where he received tuition from Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) and Paul Klee (1879–1940). Upon returning to Copenhagen, he formed the group *linien* (the line) with three other artists, Ejler Bille (1910–2004), Sonja Ferlow (1911–1984) and Richard Mortesen (1910–1993). Although not a member, Munch-Petersen was also closely associated with the group. Bjerke Petersen had surely been exposed to *kleinschreibung* at the Bauhaus, and Munch-Petersen likely came into contact with the practice through Bjerke Petersen. Certainly, Munch-Petersen's first poems, published in the newspaper *Ekstra Bladet* (The Extra Paper) and the literary journal *Vild Hvede* (Wild Wheat) (1930–1951), before or shortly after the two met in late 1931, were set according to the official Danish orthography. Munch-Petersen was nevertheless the first of the two to issue a publication set exclusively in lower case. Although the cover and title page of his debut collection *det nøgne menneske* (the naked human being) (1932) were both set with roman letters in a centered traditional style, the poems themselves were in lower case. The following year Munch-Petersen published a short, fragmentary novel entitled *simon begynder* (simon begins) and another collection of poetry, *det underste land* (the lowest country). This time the covers and title pages were also set entirely in absolute *kleinschreibung*. The only exception was the publisher's name. This was set centered and in upper case on both title pages and on *simon begynder*'s cover in willful ignorance of the surrounding asymmetrical compositions (Figure 7). Printed in dark brown ink on buff card, the title *simon begynder* was set over two lines in a sans serif type which filled the breadth of the format. Under the title, the author's name was set much smaller, in a single line in and in a lighter weight of the same type face, thereby creating a powerful contrast in size, form and shading. The cover for *det underste land* was quieter.

FIGURE 7

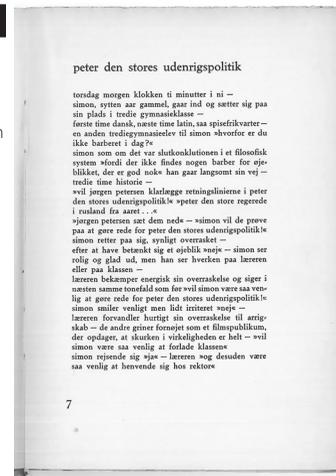
Cover design for Gustaf Munch-Petersen's *simon begynder* (1933), with title and author name in lower case and publisher's information in capitals. Photograph by the author. Item in the author's collection.



Here, a comparatively much smaller contrast between title and author name was further subdued by having been printed in dark blue ink on light blue card. Nevertheless, the asymmetric arrangement with its active use of the unprinted paper surface clearly identified the composition as an example of New Typography. The interior pages of both books were set without periods, which were replaced by em-dashes. In Munch-Petersen's work this practice can be traced back to some of *det nøgne menneske*'s poems. However, the benefit of the innovation only truly became apparent in the context of *simon begynder*'s continuous text (figure 8). Although Munch-Petersen was probably unaware of the fact, his use of em-dashes and quotation marks efficiently separated sentences from one another using the same principle of width that Martin Petersen had applied in his books some thirty years earlier.

FIGURE 8

Page design for Gustaf Munch-Petersen's *simon begynder* (1933), in lower case throughout. Photograph by the author. Item in the author's collection.



1933 also saw the publication of Vilhelm Bjerke Petersen's first book *symboler i abstrakt kunst* (symbols in abstract art). It was set in lower

Conclusion

This article has traced histories of orthographic reform in both Germany and Denmark and tied these to debates around the New Typography of the 1920s and 30s with particular emphasis on its demand for *kleinschreibung*. The practice of capitalising common nouns was criticised for the same reasons in both countries. Proponents of reform viewed it as a provincial throwback which unnecessarily complicated teaching in schools. Conversely, the orthographic reform proposals of Grimm and Porstmann, Rask and N.M. Petersen, were positioned as modernising initiatives intended to bring German and Danish in line with other European languages. They were also thought of as 'democratic,' in that they would make it easier for disadvantaged students in the two countries to master their respective languages. However, although protagonists in the two countries agreed on the problem and its connotations, their proposed solutions differed. Although the majority of its members actually favored Grimm's moderate *kleinschreibung*, the *Bildungsverband der deutschen Buchdrucker* went considerably further in its support of Porstmann's absolute approach than its Danish counterpart by publishing the special issues on lower case in 1931 and elemental typography in 1925. As stated in *Typografisk årbog 1935's* foreword, *Typografernes fagtekniske Samvirke* clearly supported New Typography but thought it needed modification. The same sentiment guided the organisation's approach to orthography, resulting in the support of Denmark's Association of Teacher's Middle Way between revolution and the status quo.

Although there were many similarities between the German and Danish context, there was also a significant difference between the two. In Germany absolute *kleinschreibung*, as formulated in Porstmann's *Sprache und Schrift*, was seen as the latest development in a history of orthographic reform proposals beginning with Grimm's *Deutsche Grammatik*. In Denmark, there was no direct parallel to Porstmann's book. Although Martin Petersen had convincingly argued in favour of abolishing capitals at an early date, his writings had little impact on practice or debate and the writings of Grimm's contemporaries Rask and N.M. Petersen continued to provide the theoretical underpinning for orthographic reform in Denmark. Here absolute *kleinschreibung* was not linked to orthographic reform. Instead it found use in Gustaf Munch-Petersen and Vilhelm Bjerke Petersen's publications, and in commercial art as exemplified by the label for *funkisko*, as a visual device which connoted modernity and which in the case of Munch-Petersen and Bjerke Petersen also served to tie them into the visual language of an international avant-garde. In this sense, the Danish printers and compositors of *Typografernes fagtekniske Samvirke* were not simply striking a balance between two extremes. Instead of unthinkingly following principles of elemental typography, or imitating formal characteristics of continental models, they were also choosing to align themselves with what was the only genuine force for orthographic change in Denmark.

case throughout, as were his later publications *surrealismen* (surrealism) (1934) and *mindernes virksomhed* (the working of the memories) (1935). Like Munch-Petersen's publications these were all set in roman type. However, in 1935 Bjerke Petersen published the first book in a series on young Scandinavian artists. This book, on the Danish surrealist Wilhelm Freddie (1909–95), was the most orthodox application of New Typography associated with Bjerke Petersen (Figure 9).² It was not only set entirely in lower case but in sans serif, with paragraphs separated by line breaks rather than indents, and sentences by single word spaces and conventional punctuation.

FIGURE 9

Page design for Vilhelm Bjerke Petersen's *freddie* (1935), in lower case sans serif throughout. Photograph by the author. Item in the author's collection.



In other words, the page was constructed entirely rationally in accordance with the prevailing modernist idiom. However, in that it did not make any concessions to the problem of separating sentences it was arguably less successful than Munch-Petersen's *simon begynder* or Martin Petersen's *fotografier* as a piece of text design. In addition to authoring books, Bjerke Petersen also edited the journals *linien* (1933–34) and *konkretion* (concretion) (1935–36). In these journals, titles and many of the signatures were set in lower case sans serif, whilst the body text was set in a moderate *kleinschreibung* and roman type. However, although this moderate orthography resembled the Rask-Petersenian reforms advocated by Denmark's Association of Teachers on a superficial level, it did not extend beyond the issue of capitalised common nouns to the wider set of orthographic issues the teachers sought to address. All of Munch-Petersen and Bjerke Petersen's publications made use of 'aa' and other features of the official Danish orthography. For them, the use of lower case was a purely visual device used to signal kinship to avant-gardists elsewhere in Europe and modernity to their Danish readers.

² Later books in this series departed from the exclusive use of lower case, but they were published in Swedish because they were on the Surrealist artists of the Swedish Halmstad group. As common nouns were (and are) not capitalized in this language, these books are therefore not comparable to the Danish examples discussed in this article.

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