New fonts & site changes

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I just got a couple of new (and rather expensive) fonts. So far, I'm incredibly happy with them and think it was money well-spent for a few reasons. Created by Matthew Butterick, Valkyrie and Concourse are simply beautiful. I don't know which I like more but they both have their places on this website and will find their way onto others in the future. Because Concourse is a sans-serif, it will be the default used all across Secluded.Site. Valkyrie is a serif font and, though the type seems to be losing its place on the web, I think it adds a lot when reading content that's focused on a narrative rather than simply being informative. Because of that, it will be used for my posts about pipe smoking and Dungeons & Dragons. I might come up with other categories where Valkyrie fits as well but it will likely remain limited to those two.

In addition to simply changing the fonts, I've also modified some styles on the site. Headers (such as the title of this post) are now in proper small caps[1] and I did some work to improve font size relative to the content width. Previously, the text was smaller than I would have liked which meant longer lines; there are some studies[2] indicating that lines with a lower character count, while decreasing reading speed,[3] are generally more comfortable and hold the reader's attention more effectively. The width hasn't changed but the size has increased and thus decreased the number of characters per line.

One of the reasons I decided to buy the fonts was simply that I love the way they look and they have a lot of features I wanted. In addition to that, however, I also wanted to support Matthew. His book, *Practical Typography* is an amazing resource for anyone that does anything with text. He has put a massive amount

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[1]Small caps are a font style where the letters that would otherwise be lower case are a shorter version of the upper case form. Many people simulate small caps by reducing the font size of regular capital letters to that of lower case characters but the results are too tall and their vertical lines too thin; they've only been scaled down. *Proper* small caps are an additional set of letters added to a font file as OpenType features. For a comparison, see the related page on *Practical Typography.*

[2]I took mental note when reading an article about it but have since forgotten what it was and can't find it again. There are, however, various other sources, such as *The Elements of Typographic Style Applied to the Web* and *Readability: the Optimal Line Length.*

[3]A rather short study from Wichita State University found that increased line length resulted in greater reading efficiency. However, there were no significant effects on comprehension and the preference for longer or shorter lines was fairly evenly distributed.

of work into it and simply asks readers to pay. There is no pay*wall* and no ads either; it's completely supported by readers. There are a few ways to contribute and one of them is buying his fonts. Interestingly enough, if you read his first, second, and third year summaries, more people bought his fonts for a higher price than simply paid him directly:

> What's most interesting to me, however, is that so many more readers were willing to buy a font license (at \$59–299) than to make a direct payment (at \$5–10). Don't get me wrong—I'm utterly grateful. But it's counterintuitive: I never expected that the cheaper option would be so much less popular. Economists, I invite your explanations.

> — *The Economics of a Web-based Book: Year One*

I won't speculate as to why but it is thought-provoking. Regardless, his approach is very similar to that of any developer who creates open source software. They pour their time and energy into projects they might get no compensation for and rely on the community to fund their efforts. I have a *great* deal of respect for these people and try to support them whenever I'm able. \$200 is a small price for two incredible fonts in addition to *Practical Typography*!