Because of invariants, we are able to recognize a ‘r’ from other similar forms, and to consider that ‘r’ a single character across an extreme range of fonts:

Letterforms, like images, also gain meaning by association. Within the context of the phrase “i am” the letter ‘i’ signifies the speaker’s person. However, in this context: “\(x + 4i\)” (assuming one is familiar with the “code” for mathematics) the ‘i’ signifies an imaginary number, the root of negative 1.

As we’ve discussed in class, images cannot be understood purely from a textual meaning. Oppositely, I ask can letterforms be understood as purely visual? Although typographers are versed in the practical use of letters for the conveyance of textual meaning, they also attend to the solely visual element of each letter—its curves, angles, and lines. The typographer is one who even when engrossed in imagining the signifiers of her mystery novel, will pause. She’ll single out a single visual mark—perhaps just the curve of a ‘Q’—forgetting, if just for a moment, the letter’s significance in language and considering it solely for its visual beauty.