

# VARYING THE M's AND O's DRAFT

By Harriet Tidball

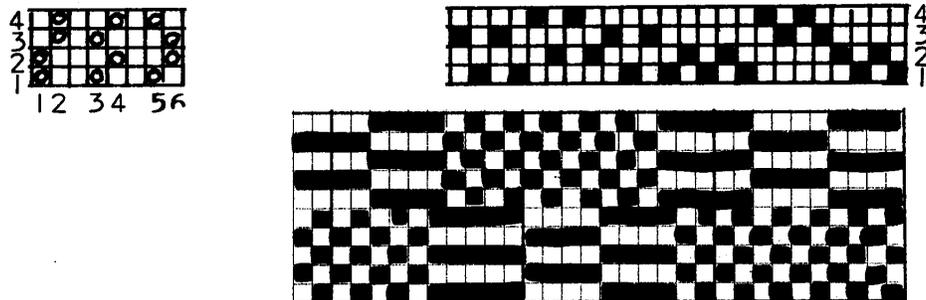
The Classical *M's and O's* with its two-textures of tabby and weft-rep contrasted in block areas to form simple patterns, (see SHUTTLE CRAFT for February 1957) provides a designing start for the modern handweaver. Texture variations may be created by introducing further elements beyond the two basic units, to either add to the basic structure or change it slightly. Since changes disturb the original eight-thread draft units, one must abandon the use of the profile draft and return to the normal thread-by-thread type. This is the reason why the profile draft is seldom used for this technique, even when the draft is pure classic.

The first variation which suggests itself is the enlargement of the unit to lengthen the floats in the weft-rep areas. Although this is quite feasible theoretically, as the twelve and sixteen thread units below show, the threading should be used only after sampling, to make sure that the fabric produced with the particular yarn and warp setting, is practical.

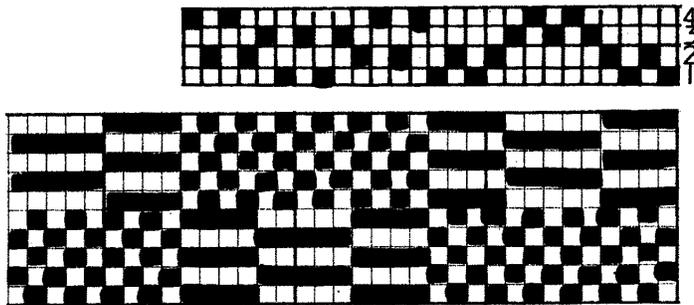


Since the enlarged-unit threading increases the softness of the rep areas, it is best to attempt this for only single-repeat blocks. There are occasions when this extreme texture contrast is desirable, since it increases the curvature tendency of the tabby areas.

The next variation is the addition of a balance unit to each block, to give an uneven rather than even number of rep ribs. For the normal draft, the balance unit consists of the first four threads of each block: 1, 2, 1, 2, for Block A; 1, 3, 1, 3, for Block B. The fundamental draft thus becomes:

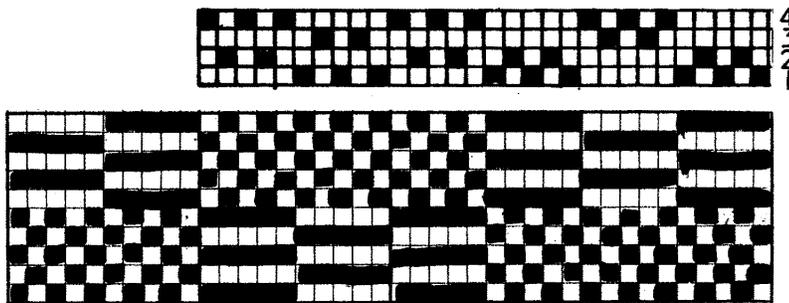


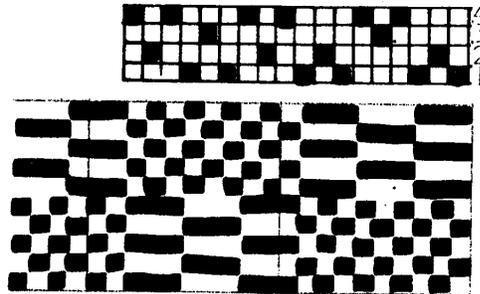
This draft is not unknown in the literature. Marguerite P Davison (who also passes along the historical tib-bit that Weaver Rose called this technique "Buckens and Owls") gives several such drafts in *A Handweaver's Pattern Book*, and there is a draft in *Vavboken* by Montell-Glantzberg. A glance at the structural diagram for this draft shows what the addition of the balance unit does to the texture: it creates an irregularity by bringing a fifth thread into the final rep column of each block, a thread which is snatched irretrievably from the adjacent tabby area and therefore forms an overlapping of blocks. Some weavers can close their eyes to such a structural blemish—and indeed in very fine material it would not be evident—while others will seek a way to eliminate the flaw. A method for doing this is suggested by an unusual "threading schedule" draft in Worst's *How to Weave Linens* (Figure 55), a draft which Mr Worst has balanced for a napkin threading through the odd procedure of coming to a center point and then repeating the draft in reverse. This draft places five threads in the center of a three-rib block, thus:



If this system is carried to its logical conclusion for blocks of more than three rep-ribs, all inside ribs will have five threads, outside ribs four threads. The regularity of the system gives a more pleasing texture for this stylized weave than the previous irregularity, and the slight looseness at one side of each tabby block, caused by the "snatching" of a thread, is eliminated.

The next step is to find a method for drafting an uneven number of ribs in a rep block, while keeping the same number of warp threads in each rib. The uneven number of threads in the center block of the previous draft suggests using an odd instead of an even number of threads for each rib—three or five, instead of four. These arrangements are drafted here:





This works like a charm. By putting an uneven number of threads in each rep rib—either three or five—the regularity of the texture, which is one of its chief charms, remains; the relationships between tabby and floats are smoother, and there is the added value that blocks can be, but need not be, balanced.

Next occurs the question: — is anything gained as far as designing is concerned by adding the balance unit to the pattern? The answer is a very positive *yes*. Through throwing an even number of shots on each of the balanced blocks (as is done in the structural developments) the tendency toward rounding of the tabby areas and curving of the margins of the rep areas is greatly increased, and greater charm is added to the resulting textile. Marguerite Davison gives one draft in this manner, threading 7, page 58, called “Forrest Crook’s Blanket Weave.” This draft also shows the 1, 4 selvage threading — all of which gives us great respect for the ability of the unknown Forrest Crook, who was probably a professional weaver, and may even have specialized in weaving blankets.

There is another type of variation which one occasionally finds in *M’s and O’s* drafts: the addition of areas threaded to twill, herringbone, or broken twill. Twill and Broken Twill have a natural harmony with *M’s and O’s* since the 1, 2, 3, 4 threading actually produces *M’s and O’s* textures with two-thread rep ribs, corresponding to the A unit, while 1, 3, 2, 4 produces the same for the B unit. So drafts in which twill and broken twill successions are incorporated with standard *M’s* and *O’s* are feasible, and can produce attractive textiles.

Another interesting texture variation in the *M’s* and *O’s* draft is shown at threading 18, page 63, Davison’s *A Handweaver’s Pattern Book*, credited to Anna Henriksson. At the end of each unit of the threading is added a 1, 4—just two threads of tabby. This actually makes ten thread instead of eight thread units, as the repeats are:

Unit A: 1, 2, 1, 2; 3, 4, 3, 4; 1, 4.

Unit B: 1, 3, 1, 3; 2, 4, 2, 4; 1, 4.

This draft was recently used very effectively by Russell Groff for his February 1957 WARP AND WEFT project, adapted to casement curtain. (See THE LOOM-SIDE MARKET.) The effect is of two tabby threads separating each pair of rep ribs, stiffening the so-called rep areas, (though making it impossible to weave these as true rep), to give a practical, loosely-woven *M’s and O’s* fabric.

