

Giambattista Bodoni

Manual of Typography

Manuale tipografico

1818

Edited by Stephan Füssel

TASCHEN

MEDAILLES
SUR
LES PRINCIPAUX EVENEMENTS
DU REGNE
DE
LOUIS LE GRAND.
AVEC
DES EXPLICATIONS HISTORIQUES.
Par l'Académie Royale des Médailles & des Inscriptions.

A PARIS,
DE L'IMPRIMERIE ROYALE
M. DECCIT.

In 1692 the Académie des Sciences de l'Institut de France was commissioned to develop a new roman fount on the basis of scientific considerations and mathematical calculations. Abbé Nicolas Jaugeon and the punch-cutter Philippe Grandjean de Fouchy in 1702 created *romain du roi* (see Fig. 4), a roman fount with letters prepared on a quadratric net, in other words, a fixed grid of squares, which would only be used at the Imprimerie Royale in Paris for printing magnificent folio editions (see Fig. 5).

On the basis of these developments, 18th-century French, British, and Italian type-face designers approached the Baroque roman type faces, the flow of which they continually refined. In the following, further observations on the history of fount development will be embedded in the life and works of Giambattista Bodoni to highlight his groundbreaking typographic principles and the impact of his work on European printing.

Bodoni's life, works, friends, and patrons

Born in Saluzzo in the Piedmont on February 16, 1740, Giambattista Bodoni (see Fig. 17) grew up with his brothers at the printing press operated by his father and his grandfather before him. Hence Bodoni was familiar with the different aspects of making and using type matter from early childhood. There he learned fount design, punch-cutting, typesetting, typesetting, and all the basic tasks related to typography, book printing, and publishing. At his father's small press, which specialised in printing popular writings on cheap paper at affordable prices, all production stages were vertically integrated, not even the formes were bought from suppliers but were developed and cast in-house.

At eighteen, Bodoni was offered the opportunity of moving to live with an uncle in Rome, who arranged for him to train at the Tipografia della Congregazione di Propaganda Fide, a printing press established in 1622 by the "Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith". The Roman Curia had been supporting a printing press since the beginnings of printing in Italy (1464 at the

FIG. 5
*Médailles sur les principaux événements
 du règne de Louis le Grand*
 Paris: L'imprimerie Royale, 1702
 Title-page

The first use of roman du roi in a magnificent volume in a large format in which type, illustration and decoration form an aesthetic whole
 Göttingen, Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek
 cote : 2 H GAL. UN III, 1195

Abbey of Santa Scholastica in Subiaco). In 1587 Pope Sixtus V established a printing press at the Vatican, the *Typografia Poliglotta Vaticana*. This competent multi-language press provided the Jesuit Congregazione di Propaganda Fide, which had its headquarters on the Piazza di Spagna in Rome, with tracts for missionary work and Re-Catholicisation.

While Bodoni at first experimented with the type matter available there, which included founts by Claude Garamond, and, as he ruefully admitted, was set tasks such as cleaning rusty matrices for “exotic type faces”, he was also given the opportunity to attend university lectures at the Università La Sapienza in order to learn the basics of Oriental languages. Promoted by the Abbot Costantino Ruggeri, the superintendent of typography at the printing press where he trained, Bodoni rose to become head of the “exotica” division in only four years, where he set and printed a Coptic-Arabic missal in 1762, as the *imprimatur* verifies: *Romae excudebat Iohannes Baptista Bodonus*. Moreover, he worked on reconstructing a type face for printing the characters of a Tiberian alphabet that had originally been cut by Robert Granjon (1513–1589).

After his broad-ranging experience in Rome, Bodoni planned to go to England in 1768, where he hoped to familiarise himself with the new transitional Neo-Classical typography being developed by John Baskerville (1706–1775): Baskerville had caused a sensation throughout Europe with his type-face specimens for an edition of Virgil in 1754, followed by his celebrated 1763 folio Bible and finally his editions of Latin classics. Much of what is later encountered in Bodoni's *Manuale* reveals Baskerville's formative influence, especially that of the crystalline, crisp, and highly legible roman fount used in the Baskerville Virgil (see Fig. 6). Baskerville had worked primarily on cutting and casting type, improving the appearance of the printed page and using the best papers whilst inventing a new method for smoothing paper as well as developing a deep black printer's ink. In his printer's preface to Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1757), Baskerville was lavish in his thanks to the readers of his Virgil edition: “The improvement in the Manufacture of the Paper, the Colour, and Firmness of the Ink were not overlooked; nor did the accuracy of the workmanship in general, pass unregarded.”

FIG. 6
Publius Vergilius Maro
Bucolica, Georgica, et Aeneis
Birmingham: John Baskerville 1757

FIG. 7
Descrizione delle feste celebrate in Parma
l'anno MDCCCLXIX per le augurate
nozze di Sua Altezza Reale l'Infante
Don Ferdinando colla Reale Archiduchessa
Maria Amalia
Parma: Bodoni 1769

Baskerville's editions of the Classics, published between 1750 and 1775, are notable for the use of modern italics and a uniform double-spread design for facing pages. He eschewed ornament of all kinds, building instead on the impact made by precise, balanced type. In his *Manuale*, Bodini raved about Baskerville: "Indeed, the fame of Baskerville rests on his having banished ornament entirely." The principle of the unity of form and content made Baskerville the founding father of the Neo-Classical typography that prevailed in subsequent decades. Unfortunately, an illness accompanied by fever prevented the young Bodoni from extending his years as an apprentice and journeyman to include England, where he could have met Baskerville in person.

Beginnings in Parma

So Bodoni stayed in Italy after all and in 1768 accepted an invitation to Parma, extended by Ferdinand, Duke of Bourbon-Parma. The Duke of Parma had commissioned Monsignore Paolo Maria Paciaudi (1710–1785) to build up a new library and establish a printing press to advertise the ducal cultural awareness and good taste. Paciaudi, who knew Bodoni from the Congregazione di Propaganda Fide in Rome, arranged for Bodoni to be appointed to a post as typographer in Parma. This enabled Bodoni to set up a typefoundry of his own in the Palazzo della Pilotta at the Stamperia Ducale, where he employed his brothers Giuseppe and Giandomenico. On his arrival in Parma, Bodoni found five presses already working and using founts by Pierre-Simon Fournier.

Pierre-Simon Fournier (1712–1768) had just published his *Manuel typographique, utile aux gens de lettres et à ceux qui exercent les différentes parties de l'Art de l'imprimerie* (1764–1766), containing a remarkable number of founts and display types, including a roman type face with a very wide thick stroke and very thin hair-line strokes, which had rapidly become widespread, especially in France. Fournier set it with wide leading and left broad margins.

PUBLI VIRGILII

MARONIS

BUCCOLICA,

GEORGICA,

DESCRIZIONE

DRILLE

FESTE CELEBRATE IN PARMA

L'ANNO MDCCCLXII.

PER LE AUGUSTE NOZZE

DI SUA ALTEZZA REALE

LE INFANTEE

DON FERDINANDO

COLLA

REALE ARCIDUCHESSA

MARIA AMALIA.

ET

ÆNEIS.



BIRMINGHAMIAE:

Typis JOHANNIS BASKERVILLE.

MDCCCLVII.

IN PARMA,

NELLA STAMPERIA REALE.

One of Bodoni's first publications in Parma was a ceremonial text written in 1769 on the occasion of the nuptials of the Infante Ferdinand of Parma and Archduchess Maria Amalia of Austria: *Descrizione delle feste* [...], with engravings by Ennemond-Alexandre Petitot (1727–1801), architect to the court of Parma. The title-page is illustrated with a vignette (see Fig. 7) which reveals the still rather turbulent transition from older type cuts and close and variable line spacing. Dating from Bodoni's early, experimental phase, this is one of the first works he printed in Parma and as such exemplifies the beginning of a development towards the fount and design aesthetic for which he would be renowned.

The marriage of Ferdinand (1751–1802), Duke of Bourbon-Parma, and Maria Amalia (1746–1804), Archduchess of Austria and daughter of the Habsburg Holy Roman empress Maria Theresa, sheds light on the change in political conditions that had occurred in Parma and to its reigning family since the 16th century. The Duchy (Ducato) of Parma was founded in 1545 by Pope Paul III (1534–1549) for his illegitimate son, Pier Luigi Farnese (1503–1547), who in turn initiated two centuries of Farnese rule in Parma. When the house of Parma became extinct in the male line, Elisabetta Farnese, wife of Philip V of Spain, secured Parma for her sons, that is, for the house of Bourbon. In 1731, her eldest son, Charles III of Spain, also became Duke of Parma. After a brief Habsburg intermezzo between 1735 and 1748, he was succeeded in Parma by Elisabetta Farnese's second son, Philip of Spain, who was also an Infante (crown prince) of Spain and was, therefore, entitled to be addressed as "Your Royal Highness". The marriage in 1769 between Philip's son Ferdinand and Maria Amalia consolidated the Bourbon-Habsburg alliance, ensuring political stability for three decades. These tortuous political conditions and diplomatic relations provided Bodoni with important ties to the Vatican, to Spain, to the Habsburgs and, in the early 19th century, to France.